**Supporting People Programme**

**Provider Innovation Fund**

**Guidance notes**

**October 2021**

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**1. Introduction to the Provider Innovation Fund**

The Provider Innovation Fund (PIF) is a competitive fund that aims to support improvements to the delivery of Supporting People Programme (SPP). Existing SPP providers are able to bid for support to help them improve their delivery of the SPP Programme.

Department for Communities (DfC) have confirmed approximately £0.5m is available for financial year 2021/22.

In each financial year there may be more than one application round with two tiers of funding, as the fund is limited funding cannot be guaranteed, even if an application scores highly.

Please note that applying for funding is a competitive process and awards are subject to the availability of funds and may be subject to change.

Any change to existing service delivery/outputs must be agreed in advance by the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB).

**2. Applying for Provider Innovation Funding**

It is important to remember that applications will be assessed on the information you provide. Any information that you do not include in the application will not be taken into account at a later date.

For some questions a maximum number of words you can have in your answer has been set, the word limits are not just for guidance, any words over the word limit will **not** be considered.

Your responses should be well structured and clearly linked to the question. It is recommended that you use bullet points and headings where possible.

The PIF has been designed to make the application process as easy and straightforward as possible, any costs, commission or fees that consultants may charge you to make an application will not be covered by the PIF. It is important that you complete the form yourself, and apply directly to Supporting People via the application form hosted online at Citizen Space.

Please do not try to influence the decision by lobbying Supporting People, directly or indirectly, any instances of this will immediately disqualify the application from assessment and funding.

The following is basic eligibility criteria that your organisation must meet to be able to apply to the PIF.

**Eligibility criteria**

PIF aims to be flexible and support improvements in the delivery of the SP programme. The aim of this call for PIF applications is to continue to focus on innovation and innovative projects and also transformational projects which facilitate clients with complex needs.  We would also encourage projects which are collaborative, improve service resilience and capacity building to enable service users to continue to live independently in a home setting.

The impact of Coronavirus has been far reaching, in light of this we would also welcome PIF applications which assist the delivery of housing support within the current environment and also when we enter the next stage and clients start to transition to the “new normal”.

Examples of funding themes are outlined below;

* **Collaborative/Partnership working**
* **Joint Ventures to deliver SP services**
* **Assistive Technology**
* **Software Development**
* **Research – as a forerunner to transformation**

Fundable interventions from previous PIF projects will also be considered if they can demonstrate innovation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Examples of fundable interventions | Examples of non-fundable interventions |
| Service Redesign   * Process improvement * User experience * Needs and impact analysis * Service co-design * Shared services * Best practice and benchmarking * Research and development | * Market or service exit funding * Market or service entry funding * Redundancy costs * Directly funding current service provision * Large capital costs * Projects relating to the provision of SNMA services * Projects which are required by law or to meet legal requirement * Projects which do not support existing service provision under SP |
| Organisational Development   * Leadership and management * Shared services * Coaching/mentoring |
| Technology   * Digital Services * Effective use of data |

Organisations must be SP accredited.

Organisations must be in receipt of SP funding in the current year they are applying for (Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA) funded services are not eligible to bid for funding).

Applications that are not complete or do not provide the requested information will not be eligible.

We are unlikely to fund an organisation that is in poor financial health or cannot show effective financial control.

Individuals involved in the delivery of the project, that is, staff (permanent, temporary, agency, or contracted) or companies that staff (permanent, temporary, agency or contracted) own or are affiliated with, volunteers or board members of the applicant organisation, cannot benefit personally from the award of this funding. This means that they or their companies cannot be paid for the provision of goods or services from the funding.

**3. Application process**

The indicative dates for the current round of funding are shown below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Applications Open** | **Closing Date** | **Notice to applicants with decision** | **Proposed activity begins** | **Proposed Activity ends** |
| 26/10/2021 | Midnight 23 November 2021 | 10 December 2021 | 17 December 2021 | 31 March 2022 |

Projects must occur between 17 December2021 and 31 March 2022, any activity outside these timescales will not be eligible for funding.

We will not accept applications that are received after the closing date and time. Only applications made via Citizen Space will be accepted.

We will only consider applications that provide improved value for money.

**Funding**

There will be two tiers of funding:

* Tier 1 will have a funding range of £20,001 to £150,000.
* Tier 2 will have a funding range of £5,000 to £20,000.

Providers will have the opportunity to submit one funding bid, to one tier only, this may be as an individual organisation or part of a collaborative bid.

In the event that more than one bid is received from any organisation, the application received first will be the application considered; any further bids will not be scored.

SP reserves the right to change the amount of funding assigned to each tier to enable the maximum benefits to be realised from the PIF.

SP is conscious of the need to ensure fairness in the assessment of applications, in the context of ensuring that funding awards are spread across all SP Thematic Groups.

The maximum award value will be capped at 40% of current 2020/21 funding. In the event that this is lower than the minimum funding level, the minimum funding level will apply.

Any savings identified as part of the intervention will not reduce main programme funding. Savings made within individual organisations should be:

* Re-invested to improve quality of existing services; or
* Used to potentially increase the quantity of SP service provision if agreed by the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB); or
* Surrendered to the main SP programme.

**4. Filling in your application form**

Application forms should reflect the objective of the PIF which is to support the SP provider base and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the SP programme, particularly through innovative projects.

All applicants must complete:

Section 1- Organisation details

Contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses should be provided for the nominated person in the organisation who is in charge of the application for funding and who will be able to answer any queries with the application or provide further information if required.

Section 2- Project details

The project name and an outline description should be entered in this section; a 200 word limit has been applied to this.

Section 3- Selection

The four statements contained in this section will be assessed on a **Pass/Fail** basis. Applications which do not confirm all of the 4 statements will not progress for further consideration. A confirmation letter from a board member, director or comparable authority which permits the organisation to apply to the fund must also be uploaded in this section.

Section 4-Award

Organisations must complete details of:

* How the project focuses on innovation and transformation
* Why the project is required and what the impact would be if the project did not take place;
* How the project will improve the delivery of the SP service to end users;
* How the intervention will be supported after the PIF ceases;
* Main barriers and risks to the project succeeding;
* How the project will deliver value for money :
* Breakdown of project costs;
* Evidence of match funding (if applicable);
* A minimum of five SMART Key Performance Indicators aligned to the project for Tier 1 and a minimum of three SMART Key Performance Indicators aligned to the project for Tier 2; and
* How any savings made as a result of the project will be used.

Section 5- Declarations

The three declarations in this section must be answered by all applicants. Applications which do not confirm all of the 3 statements will not progress for further consideration.

Completing your budget for PIF

You must show that all costs are reasonable and necessary to complete the project, and you should give us enough detail to assess this. For example, you should give us the unit costs and quantities needed, 10 units x £50 = total cost £500.

We will not consider your application as eligible if you do not provide full details of the project budget.

Ineligible costs for PIF

* Costs from before the project start date shown in your letter of offer;
* Financial charges, such as bank charges and interest;
* Contingency costs;
* Purchase of land;
* Fines;
* Costs which are not clearly linked to the project;
* Costs that are associated with filling in the PIF application form;
* Costs that are poor value for money;
* Costs that are already covered by other funding or income sources;
* Costs for projects which are required by law or to meet legal requirement e.g. GDPR training etc;
* Costs related to private or unfunded pensions;
* Amounts for gifts and donations, including vouchers;
* Reclaimable VAT;
* Redundancy;
* Alcohol, subsistence, hotels and catering; and
* Equipment costs unless they have an ongoing use throughout the project and are essential and necessary to complete the project.

Other considerations

* Small capital projects can be considered provided all other conditions of the funding are met; and
* A proportion of staff costs can be claimed for project management.

Restricted costs

Costs must be proportionate to the overall cost of your project and essential for delivering it. If we do not think that the amount you have asked for is good value for money, we may also offer you less than the amount you applied for, if your bid is successful, these costs will be shown in the letter of offer.

You must clearly list any costs for facilitators, mediators, consultants or project evaluators clearly in the budget. You must also describe the work they intend to carry out and how it is reasonable and necessary to your project.

You must take reasonable steps to obtain Value for Money when acquiring goods and services in connection with the project by obtaining quotations or applying competitive tendering, unless there are overwhelming reasons why this would be inappropriate, this must firstly be discussed with Supporting People.

The following demonstrates the action to be taken dependent on the level of expenditure involved:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item cost** | **Required action** |
| **Less than £5,000** | **Written quotations (2 minimum)** |
| **£5,000-£30,000** | **Minimum 2 invited tenders or open advertisement** |
| **In excess of £30,000** | **Open advertisement** |

Staff time claimed for the project:

* Any staff time charged to the project will only be paid at the normal hourly rate of the post and only where the post is not funded from another source.
* If you have an appropriate paid member of staff in post (funded from another source) that could deliver all or part of the project we will not provide funding for that part of the project. If you cannot use your member of staff, we will pay external/sessional rates, but you must explain why your own member of staff cannot work on the project, and provide the appropriate information, e.g. this might be that another project already has a claim on the member of staff, with evidence of the dates and times of the two projects clash or confirmation that your member of staff doesn’t have the skills needed and so on.

Internal costs - costs for use of own facilities or internal charges within an organisation (notional costs) will only be eligible if they are normally used for commercial activity.

Conflict of Interest - should any potential for a conflict of interest arise such as where a member of your organisation, (permanent, temporary, agency, or contracted) or companies that a member of your organisation (permanent, temporary, agency or contracted) own or are affiliated with or members of their family receive personal benefit/payment from the grant, you must notify Supporting People immediately. You will also be asked to provide confirmation of how this has been effectively dealt with when you complete project monitoring.

**5. Submitting your application**

You must tick the boxes to confirm that your organisation:

* meets the basic eligibility criteria;
* has uploaded the documents asked for;
* has completed the project budget information;
* has provided a minimum of 3 SMART Key Performance Indicators which the project will be monitored against, these must include details of what evidence will be supplied to demonstrate the achievement of these ; and
* has completed the declarations at the end of the application form.

**6. Assessment process**

1. SP-PIF team will log all applications when we receive them.

2. SP-PIF team will check your application to make sure it meets the eligibility criteria. If we find that there is information missing at this point, we will contact you and give you one day to send it to us. If you fail to send all of the missing information to us in this period, or if the application fails to meet other eligibility criteria, your application will fail at this stage and not go forward for further assessment.

3. SP-PIF team will forward eligible applications to the independent panel for blind scoring against the specific criteria of the funding. Panel members will then hold a moderated meeting to discuss and reach a moderated score.

4. Each question score will be recorded, weighting will be applied and the combined score recorded.

5. Applications will be ranked in order of the combined score.

6. The panel will recommend bids for funding based on highest ranked bids in each tier and also ensuring that a proportionate funding spread across all SP Thematic groups is achieved. In the event full funding is not available on the final successful bid, a partial award may be offered.

7. Each applicant will be informed of the decision, a waiting list will also be compiled which will be used in the event an organisation decides not to take up their offer of funding. No individual feedback will be given.

**Criteria for making our decision**

If your organisation has met all of the eligibility criteria, the following criteria will be used to score your application:

Criteria Weighting (%)

Application form Section 4

Bidders should provide full explanation and detail to the following questions / criteria

Question 12. How does your project focus on innovation and transformation – 25%

Question 13. Why is the project needed and what would the impact be if the project did not take place-20%

Question 14. How will this project improve your delivery of Supporting People services to end users-20%

Question 15. How will the impact of the intervention be supported after the PIF ceases-10%

Question 16. What are the main barriers and risks to completing this project and how can they be addressed- 10%

Question 17. Please provide details of how your project will deliver value for money-15%

In addition the methodology by which items of expenditure will be scored would assume an initial score of 5, and would be negatively marked in the event of inclusion of inflated unit costs; inflated quantities and/or unnecessary items of expenditure.

Scoring award responses:

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| --- | --- |
| Scoring System for Award Criteria | |
| 5 points | * Indicates an excellent response to the criteria with no weaknesses * Detailed supporting evidence is tailored specifically to the proposal * No obvious areas of weakness |
| 4 points | * Indicates a good response to the criteria with few weaknesses * Supporting evidence and analysis have been provided to demonstrate the competence of the proposal |
| 3 points | * Indicates a compliant response to the criteria, but lacks specific information or analysis on some aspects to award a higher mark * Strengths outweigh weaknesses |
| 2 points | * Indicates that the response to the criteria is limited in detail with some reservations * Medium risk that the proposed approach will not be successful * Weaknesses and/or risks outweigh strengths |
| 1 point | * Indicates evaluation panel have major reservations about the response to the criteria and there is insufficient detail to award a higher mark. * Weaknesses far outweigh the strengths |
| 0 points | * Indicates the response fails to provide sufficient detail to allow the panel to assess the response against the criteria * An unacceptable response with serious deficiencies.  High risk that the proposed approach will not be successful * Very limited evidence provided against the criteria |

Any questions receiving a score of zero will immediately make the application ineligible.

**7. What happens next?**

**Letter of offer**

If your organisation is successful, we will send you a letter of offer outlining:

* the general conditions of the funding;
* any special conditions of your terms and conditions within your letter of offer;
* the stages we will pay the funding in; and
* your project and its targets.

If the funding we offer your organisation does not correspond with the amount you have asked for, you will need to resubmit a project budget reflecting the amount we have awarded.

Before we can release any funding payments, you must sign the letter of offer to say you accept it. At the latest, this must happen within one week of the date of the letter of offer or we will withdraw the offer of funding.

We will not fund any project costs you pay or agree to pay before you have signed and returned the letter of offer.

You must get approval from Supporting People before you make any changes to the project or the budget.

If you receive a funding offer and no longer want to take it up, please tell Supporting People in writing as soon as possible.

The panel’s decision on whether to recommend funding is final, no appeals will be considered. If you have concerns about the way an assessment has been undertaken this should be raised through the Housing Executive’s complaints procedure.

No individual feedback will be given, generic feedback will be compiled and sent out to all SP providers.

8. **Monitoring and reporting**

As you are receiving public funding, you must be accountable for what you do with this money. Because of this, we will complete monitoring checks, theses may include visits as well as quarterly monitoring form completion, based on information provided in your funding application to check how the funding was spent and that the terms and conditions of the funding were met.

If your project does not meet its agreed SMART Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets and outcomes, we can review and reduce the amount of funding awarded.

**Paying the funding**

Payments will be made in stages, including the final payment, at agreed timescales in the project, subject to:

* achievement of agreed SMART KPI’s;
* satisfactory monitoring compliance; and
* evidence of expenditure being supplied.

If an organisation has been awarded PIF funding from the first call for applications in 21/22 and also has an ongoing PIF project from 2020/21 all project monitoring forms must be fully completed, reviewed and signed off by the SP-PIF team before any monies for the additional 21/22 project can be released.

Failure to successfully provide completed project monitoring forms for both the 2020/ 21 and first 21/22 PIF project will result in the offer for the second PIF 2021/22 funding being withdrawn.

Marketing and promotion

You must acknowledge our support by including the SP logo on all printed materials associated with your project.

Contact

Please e-mail Pauline Allison ([pauline.allison2@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:pauline.allison2@nihe.gov.uk)) if you have any questions regarding completion of the application form or the PIF process and criteria.