

Improvements to Reaching Communities

On Wednesday 28 April Big Lottery Fund introduced a series of improvements to the Reaching Communities programme designed to make it easier to apply.

Reaching Communities continues to be one of our major programmes and most of its grants will go to the voluntary and community sector. The Big Lottery Fund has a target that 80 per cent of funding should go directly to voluntary and community groups.

There is no change to who can apply, what we will fund, or the difference we want to make with this programme. The programme will continue to make awards between £10,000 and £500,000 and will continue to provide funding for up to five years.

Funding available

At least £300 million will be awarded to projects making a difference to the lives of individuals and communities most in need through this programme until 2013.

Improvements to Reaching Communities

We have made a series of improvements to Reaching Communities to enhance our customers' experience:

- If you apply for less than £40,000 for each year there will be a simpler application process and quicker decision making than if you are asking for more than this. This improvement should benefit smaller organisations in particular.
- You will have a better chance of being funded if we invite you to complete a full application form..
- We will provide more support for applicants at every stage of the application process, particularly in those areas, and for those groups, that have received less funding than we would have expected.
- If you are not successful, we will give you better, more detailed feedback on your application.

How to apply

The new improved outline proposal form is now available to download. We will tell you if we are inviting you to complete a full application form within 20 working days.

If you are not invited to submit a full application, you will receive detailed feedback. We will highlight the areas that you will need to improve to enhance

your chances of being invited to complete a full application, should you decide to reapply. If you are not successful at the outline proposal stage, you can resubmit when you are ready, but must take our feedback into account.

If you are invited to proceed to a full application, you will need to submit your form within four months. We anticipate that if you are invited to submit a full application you will have a much better chance of success than in the past.

We have speeded up the assessment process for smaller projects so if you are asking for less than £40,000 per year we will tell you whether or not your project will be funded within 9 weeks. For larger projects, we will tell you within 17 weeks.

If you downloaded the old outline proposal form you must send it to us by Friday 14 May, but you will still have six months to submit a full application. If you are unsure which form you have, check our website for the current form.

Further improvements in the pipeline

- We are also in the process of developing a community buildings programme which will launch later this year. More information on this will be made available as we develop the programme .
- We will build sustainable development into all our future programmes.
- We will support networking and learning opportunities for those we fund to learn from each other and encourage them to share good practice.