

3SIF Coproduction meeting 15th December 2022

It had been planned to hold the meeting in person, but due to rail strikes and inclement weather, the meeting was held online.

Julius Olu, Assistant Director of Adult Social Care led the meeting. He is new to post, and so is not yet fully up to speed with the discussions held at previous 3SIF Coproduction meetings, both those organised by LBHF and those organised and hosted by Sobus.

Timescale:

- Current position is that current contracts have been extended until September 2023, with the hope of tendering new contracts, to be in place by October. HOWEVER, officers are also allowing for “slippage” with attached timescale:

Phase 2 – Governance and decision-making (Procurement strategy)	
Officer governance and challenge (CAB, CMB, SLT)	Apr 23 to May 23
Cabinet approval of procurement strategy & business case	Jun 23
Phase 3 – procurement and mobilisation	
Development of documents	July 23
Tender submission and Evaluation period	Sept 23 to Nov 23 (At least 6 weeks for tender and 4 weeks for evaluation)
Cabinet Member approval for contract award	Nov 23 - Dec 23
Contract mobilisation	Jan 24 to Mar 24
Service commencement	1 Apr 24

- Not clear whether 2-stage application process as designed by VCS will be implemented as proposed at this time, but likely to be part of the overall process.
- Online procurement system (capital eSourcing) will be used for administering the applications. However, will make sure that we differentiate to ensure it is clearly a grant, not a commissioned service.
- LBHF have a lot of work to do to progress this – further information will be provided in January.

3SIF priorities

- Likely that 3SIF funding will need to address current LBHF priorities, including Cost of Living Crisis, Food Poverty and Climate action.
- Service specification still to be drawn up by LBHF

Funding term

- Likely that funding will be awarded for a 3 year term, with possible option to renew for a further 2 x 12 month periods, but this needs to be agreed by Cabinet.

Questions and points raised:

- Ethnic minority communities have been disproportionately affected by Covid. Will new contracts ensure these communities are prioritised for support?
 - Public Health are working on a wider report on the impact of Covid-19 and wider inequalities issues. We need to ensure grants are reflecting local need.
- Will a consortium approach be required, as it has been recently with commissioned services for youth?
- Stressed that consortia take time to develop – if the application window is tight, it will not be feasible to establish robust consortia in time to develop a good quality application.
- Good communication, including any changes being considered by LBHF is critical – recent tendering processes have been very poor in terms of keeping groups updated with critical changes – and these changes were only discovered at the time that the tender went live.
- Communication:
 - LBHF proposing to provide update communication on 3SIF at least monthly
 - LBHF proposing to hold coproduction/update meetings quarterly
- Noted that organisations need to be putting their budgets together for 23-24, and with uncertainty with 3SIF funding, this is quite tricky.
 - The response from LBHF was that organisations should budget for 23-24 irrespective of 3SIF funding. *(Sobus view is that there remains a lack of understanding by LBHF senior officers that, particularly where 3SIF is a significant portion of an organisation's funding, setting a budget with such uncertainty is*
- Is 3SIF budget still £3.2m?
 - At this stage the position is that the 3SIF budget remains intact. If anything changes, we will let you know immediately.
- Noted that there has been no inflationary uplift on 3SIF budget since grants were awarded in 2016. VCS organisations already operate on a shoestring, and funding to uplift salaries is virtually impossible to secure.
- Whilst statutory service salaries were frozen, it wasn't unreasonable perhaps that the VCS should follow suit – but especially with cost of living crisis affecting VCS own staff and volunteers and organisations running costs – LBHF are asked to give better consideration to ensuring VCS services are appropriately funded, and to take account of rising costs that all organisations are incurring, and the difficulty of securing other funding to meet increases in costs.
- Funding is easier to secure for *new* projects and staff, but not for *existing* costs. The expectation by LBHF that the sector will be “creative and flexible” in raising

funds from other sources is unrealistic in the post-Covid, Cost of Living crisis economic climate.

Fast Track Small Grants

Katherina Herrmann informed the meeting that LBHF are looking at ways to make this scheme quicker. An online system may be introduced, which would make the administration of the grants much quicker. However, it's still the case that most applications will take at least six weeks to turn around due to internal processes required.

- It was asked if the level of funding under Fast Track Small Grants could be reviewed – as groups often need a slightly higher amount.
- Whilst a welcome grant scheme – it being only short term does not allow groups to build services with longer lasting impact.
 - LBHF will consider both issues as part of its process of reviewing their grants scheme.