

Cost of Living – Digital Tools Grants Prospectus

Key information

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Summary

The rising cost-of-living has quickly become the most important issue facing Londoners.[Reference:1](#) The current situation is unprecedented in terms of the projected squeeze on living standards, and inflation is already at a 40-year high.[Reference:2](#) We know that lower-income Londoners will be even more affected as a higher proportion of household income is spent on essentials such as housing, energy and food.

In response to the situation, the GLA has developed a Cost of Living hub to provide Londoners with information and advice on what support is available. The GLA has limited direct powers on the main forms of support available, which is why we are focused on raising awareness and access to all the support that is available to Londoners. The hub sets out, under different categories, the support available to Londoners and signposts to a range of online resources. It will be further developed and promoted via a high-profile mayoral marketing campaign over the coming months.

The call for proposals set out in this prospectus is an opportunity for organisations to receive grant funding to develop their existing tools, or create new digital tools, which will be hosted on their own websites and digital

platforms and promoted via the Cost of Living hub. These tools should be user-facing; and provide Londoners with new, additional or currently unavailable information on accessing different forms of support. The tools should focus on Londoners with more complex needs, and those who are not currently being served by existing tools. The aim of the programme is principally to improve awareness and access to the different forms of support available to Londoners.

Funded projects will be expected to have a delivery timeline of around three and six months; and a value of up to £50,000 for smaller projects, and up to £200,000 for larger projects. It is expected the grants programme will fund between two and six projects in total, and must be completed within the 2022-23 financial year. We invite organisations to make applications for more than one project, and to propose different options for the scale for the same project. This could mean an organisation could apply for funding exceeding £200k for more than one project, where appropriate.

The digital tools will be hosted and managed by the successful applicants, and referred to through the hub and GLA communications.

Introduction

The Mayor of London is investing an additional £3.7m into a cost-of-living programme in 2022-23, alongside his existing support for Londoners experiencing financial hardship to support Londoners through the current and worsening crisis. There are three elements for this funding:

1. Developing and promoting digital content, products, and tools.
2. Investing in community-based advice and support services.
3. Improving London's energy-advice offer.

This programme is meant to serve a different range of needs. The Cost of Living hub provides signposted support across a range of issues, and is the GLA's main universal offer for Londoners who are confident using online resources. The digital tools are meant to provide a more targeted form of digital support. Investment in the advice sector will provide Londoners with personalised advice and access to additional legal support. Improvements to the energy-advice service in London will seek to provide a more personalised offer focusing on one of the main drivers of the increase in the cost of living. We have met with organisations that create digital tools, and those using such tools, to understand need and the viability of the project.

1. The project

The main objective of this grants programme is to improve Londoners' awareness of, and access to, their rights and entitlements, in order to mitigate the effects of the cost-of-living crisis.

The aims of the project are to provide grant funding to organisations, in order to carry out the following:

- Develop existing user-facing tools to make them more widely available to Londoners who cannot currently access them fully; and/or develop existing tools to better respond to the cost-of-living crisis. This can be done by, for example, adding new content; making content more accessible through translation or

accessible formats; or better integrating different forms of support.

- Develop new user-facing tools to respond to the unmet need of groups of Londoners or in response to certain issues. This can be done by, for example, creating digital tools focused on particular rights and entitlements; creating tools for specific groups of Londoners; or addressing particular issues.

These tools are meant to serve the needs of target groups, and to better respond to the complex needs of Londoners compared to other universal digital products. The tools should be exclusively user-facing. Any data from these tools to inform the strategic approach taken by the GLA, or by other partners, would be of interest, but can only be incidental to the project and not a primary goal. We cannot use this grant funding to fund back-office tools for organisations; for example, tools that help organisations identify Londoners in need of support.

We would expect a maximum project bid to be in the region of £200k, with a delivery timeline of around six months. However, if applicants would like to go above this amount and timeline (meeting the programme objectives), we could be open to increasing the upper limit. Please contact us directly as soon as possible if this applies.

We encourage a range of bids with different size budgets and timelines. This includes projects with smaller budgets that could be delivered sooner; for example, smaller bids with a maximum budget of £50k and a shorter delivery time of around three months.

We are looking for a range of projects with smaller-to-larger budgets and timelines. Organisations are welcome to apply for more than one project, as long as they can demonstrate that they have the capacity to deliver multiple projects. Organisations are also invited and encouraged to propose different scales, for the same project, that vary in budget and timeframe.

Applications must demonstrate how the digital tools proposed meet an unmet need; or complement or interact well with what is already available to Londoners. We expect the tools to draw on what organisations know works, and contribute to learning in this area.

The tools will be managed and hosted by the successful applicants. Applications must explain: how the tools will be made available; and the quality of user experience.

2. Deliverables

Successful bidders will ultimately be expected to deliver the following:

- A project plan including outputs, timings, costs, risk assessment and contingency plans for the project. This will be how we agree project milestones and payment schedule. The project plan will be completed with support from GLA staff, who will agree on regular check-in meetings and offer support connecting with relevant partners.
- A minimum viable product or beta version of the tool for user testing.
- A final digital product available in the public domain free at the point of use.

We expect organisations to set out how they will measure the impact of the tools through monitoring of how the tools are used. We are also interested in how organisations could go beyond analytics to better understand use of digital tools; for example, through surveys of service users or user tracking. We expect the deliverables to go through user-testing, and potentially be co-designed with target groups of Londoners. Officers from the GLA

would be happy to work with successful bidders to facilitate this.

We will require organisations to provide details about how the digital tool will be made available to Londoners, and how this will be managed in future.

3. Eligibility

Eligible organisations include those with charitable status and social enterprises. Organisations must be delivering support to Londoners – particularly those on lower incomes. It is important that the digital tools do not have a commercial money-making purpose to them, and are free at the point of use for all Londoners.

4. Partnership bids

It is not a requirement, but organisations are welcome to make joint bids if they would like to. This may take the form of, for example, a charity that works with groups of Londoners impacted by the cost-of-living crisis partnering with an organisation that develops digital products focused on access to rights and entitlements. Please contact us directly as soon as possible if this would be of interest to you. We would be pleased to support partnerships between different organisations as part of this grants programme.

5. Application process

Successful applicants will be selected following a competitive application process.

Applicants should respond to all questions in the application form within the stated word limit. If doing this in a separate document, applicants should send their responses to LowIncome@london.gov.uk.

Applicants may complete the [online form](#) or [create a separate document](#) and submit the application using the email address above.

If you are applying for more than one project, please make this very clear in the form and observe the word count for each project. You can use one form for more than one project.

The deadline for applications is 12 noon on Wednesday 13 July 2022.

5.1 Assessment

Applications will be assessed by a panel of three GLA officers. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday 22 July 2022 at the latest (see 'Application form guidance' section below for more information on how bids will be assessed).

5.2 Approvals

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant-funding letter with the GLA for the delivery of the project. Grant-funding letters will all be signed in the week commencing Monday 18 July 2022.

5.3 Due diligence

Please provide the following documentation with your application:

- a copy of your organisation's most recent signed set of financial statements/accounts
- a statement of your organisation's cash flow for the current year
- evidence of public liability and employer's liability insurance
- submission of your organisation's financial regulations.

5.4 Timeline

Successful applicants will be selected following a competitive application process. Key dates are highlighted below:

1. Launch of programme – application documents published: Wednesday 22 June 2022.
2. Deadline for applications: Wednesday 13 July 2022, 12pm.
3. Successful organisations informed and grant letters in place: week commencing 18 July 2022.
4. Start of delivery: week commencing 18 July 2022

6. How to apply

To apply, please complete our [online form](#) or [download the form in a Word format](#) and submit the application to LowIncome@london.gov.uk.

Deadline for submissions is 12pm on Wednesday 13 July 2022.

If you are successful in receiving a conditional offer of funding you will be asked to provide due diligence documentation as set out in the application process section.

7. What we would welcome

This is an open grants programme designed to provide organisations with funding to develop existing or create new digital tools. Based on our own understanding of need and discussions with partners, we would be interested

in applications that address the issues below. However, we remain open to new ideas and approaches. Applications will be neither rewarded for addressing these issues, nor penalised for not doing so.

Rights and entitlements

- Universal Credit (UC) (broadly, all elements of UC – particularly those that go unclaimed, and when UC goes completely unclaimed).
- Disability benefits (such as Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Allowance and Attendance Allowance).
- Healthy Start.
- Pension Credit.
- Local forms of support (such as council tax reduction, local welfare assistance, Household Support Fund, discretionary housing payments).

Groups of Londoners

- Deaf and disabled Londoners (adults and children).
- Londoners with no recourse to public funds (both officially, as part of their immigration status, and/or unofficially, being undocumented).
- Migrant Londoners (e.g. EEA citizens with pre-settled and settled status).
- Older Londoners.
- Families with younger children (especially where there are children aged 0-5, and where all children are under 10).
- Larger families (families with two or more children).
- Londoners who do not speak English, or do not speak it well.

Issues

- Improving access for Deaf and disabled Londoners.
- Improving access for Londoners who do not speak English or do not speak it well.
- Support for Londoners in insecure work and on lower incomes.
- Challenging decisions, and having conditions on eligibility removed.
- Making applications and preparing for assessments – including making the process easier for applying for similar but different schemes.

More information

For more information about the grant programme or the application process, please contact LowIncome@london.gov.uk. We are happy to take questions via email or with meetings.

We will compile and publish questions we respond to from potential applicants – so please check the webpage regularly.

Appendix

We have listed below some of our areas of interest for developing existing tools and creating new tools as well as some useful links to resources for completing the application.

Summary of potential areas of focus

Developing existing tools

- Improved accessibility for deaf and disabled Londoners.
- Improved accessibility for Londoners who do not speak English and/or do not speak English well.
- Improved integration of information and advice within the tools. For example, what is made available at the local level and recently announced cost of living support.

Creating new tools

- Support for Londoners in insecure work on lower incomes.
- Application guides (such as How to guides) for state benefits and other forms of support.
- Assessment guides for state benefits and other forms of support (for example what to do during an assessment).
- Helping Londoners make similar applications across different schemes.
- Challenging decisions and having conditions on eligibility removed.
- Creating a more integrated point of access for Londoners to access different forms of support. For example, a single point of access for Londoners to approach their local authority for support.

Links to other useful resources

- [Cost of Living Hub](#) (GLA)
- [The rising cost of living and its effects on Londoners](#) (GLA) and [Labour Market update](#) (GLA)
- [Poverty in London 2020-21](#) (GLA)
- [State benefits](#) (Gov.uk)
- [Nearly half of Londoners now struggling to make ends meet](#) (GLA Press release with supporting polling)
- [Design and build government services](#) (Government Digital Service)
- [The Green Book](#) (HM Treasury)

Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

Public Liaison Unit
Greater London Authority
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE

Telephone 020 7983 4100

www.london.gov.uk

You will need to supply your name, your postal address and state the format and title of the publication you require.

If you would like a summary of this document in your language, please phone the number or contact us at the address above.

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References

- [Reference:1](#) Online poll on challenges facing London, IPSOS MORI for London Councils, December 2020. Available at <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/londoners-say-cost-living-top-issue-facing-...>
- [Reference:2](#) The rising cost of living and its effects on Londoners, GLA, February 2022. Available on London Datastore at <https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/the-rising-cost-of-living-and-its-effec...>