

Third Sector Capacity Fund Grants Panel

Terms of Reference

Background to the Third Sector Capacity Fund, 2009-13

At the end of 2008, the One North East Board approved single programme funding to establish a £6M Third Sector Capacity Fund. The purpose of the fund is to support activity that will build the capacity of third sector organisations to engage in sustainable economic regeneration and associated activities which support the aims of the North East's Regional Economic Strategy (RES). The fund will be open for applications and support activity taking place between 2009/10 – 2012/13.

One North East has appointed Rocket Science UK Ltd. as the Fund's managing agent, responsible for the administration and management of the fund. One North East is responsible for the strategic direction of the fund, while Rocket Science is responsible for management of the application, appraisal and approval process, payments, monitoring and evaluation.

The overall aims of the Third Sector Capacity Fund are to:

- build the capacity of the third sector to engage and contribute strategically to sustainable economic development;
- grow and demonstrate the contribution that the third sector makes to sustainable economic development;
- develop or expand activities that lead to greater financial and/or organisational sustainability within third sector organisations; and
- support the third sector to contribute to the region's response to the recession.

These aims will be achieved by:

- supporting cross sector collaboration to enable the third sector to develop innovative approaches and solutions;
- enabling the third sector to compete effectively to win and deliver public service contracts and activities;
- supporting the third sector to contribute fully to the achievement of RES objectives;
- taking manageable risks by piloting new approaches;

- demonstrating the impact of the Fund on third sector organisations and the achievement of economic regeneration outcomes; and
- funding time-limited interventions that lead into mainstream activity, e.g. referring organisations that are developing commercial activities to Business and Enterprise North East (Business Link).

The Third Sector Capacity Fund will offer grants up to a maximum level of £150,000 in total, and projects of up to 3 years duration.

Purpose of the Panel

The purpose of the Grants Panel is to provide an objective assessment of applications to the Third Sector Capacity Fund that have been scored and recommended for approval by the managing agent. Full details of the assessment process are set out in Appendix 1.

In addition to assessing and selecting the projects to be funded, the Panel's role is also to provide guidance and feedback on applications to the applicant via the Fund's managing agent.

Objectives

The objectives of the Panel will be to:

- ensure projects receiving support are fully aligned with regional priorities, particularly with regard to the Regional Economic Strategy (and emerging Integrated Regional Strategy) and, where appropriate, the Regional Employability framework;
- ensure projects align with other funding streams and activity to promote the third sector's capacity and, where possible, avoid duplication;
- advise and support applicants to access funding and support from other, more appropriate funding programmes or mainstream provision where relevant;
- maximise the impact and coverage of the available funding for the benefit of the region; and
- oversee and manage the programme-level output and match funding requirements.

Membership

Membership of the Grants Panel will comprise representatives from:

- ONE North East (Panel Chair);
- Government Office North East;
- Business & Enterprise North East;
- Learning & Skills Council;
- BIG Lottery;
- Capacitybuilders;
- Futurebuilders (England);
- Northern Rock Foundation;
- The third sector (to be confirmed – but to avoid any conflict of interest, this will either be from a national organisation or one based outside of the region and unable to benefit from the Fund); and
- A regional equality and diversity representative (to be confirmed).

Meetings

The Panel will meet twice a year (June and October), in line with the Fund's anticipated twice yearly funding rounds, to assess and approve applications. We anticipate each meeting lasting a maximum of 3 hours.

The panels will be organised and managed by the managing agent who will provide Panel members with relevant papers at least one week before scheduled meetings. Minutes and key actions/decisions of each panel will also be recorded by the managing agent to ensure an accurate record of the meeting.

Panel responsibilities

In participating in the Panel, members will be expected:

- to adopt a fair and objective approach to assessing all project applications on their individual merit;
- to treat circulated information and discussions held in a confidential manner;
- not to discuss decisions outside of the meeting until such time as all applicants have been informed of decisions and these have been made publicly available; and
- to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Appendix 1

Grants Panel Assessment of Applications

The Panel is asked to assess the range of applications received under each of the Third Sector Capacity Fund's thematic strands and to agree projects for funding. Panel members will be equipped with four types of information and analysis to aid their deliberation and inform their recommendations.

a. A short overview report of each strand, which:

- summarises what is required of projects that will be funded under that strand, including the type and level of outputs being sought;
- outlines the process the applications went through prior to their consideration by the Panel.

b. An overview of the applications, ranked by score within each strand.

This will give:

- the total applications received;
- the number deemed ineligible;
- the score of the eligible applications ranked in order with the amount of funding requested;
- an indication of which projects fall below the minimum criteria for consideration; and
- those which, by virtue of their scores, are recommended for confirmation by the panel.

c. A summary for each application that:

- provides an overview of projected outputs and outcomes as well as the proposed activity; and
- gives the scores for that application by question.

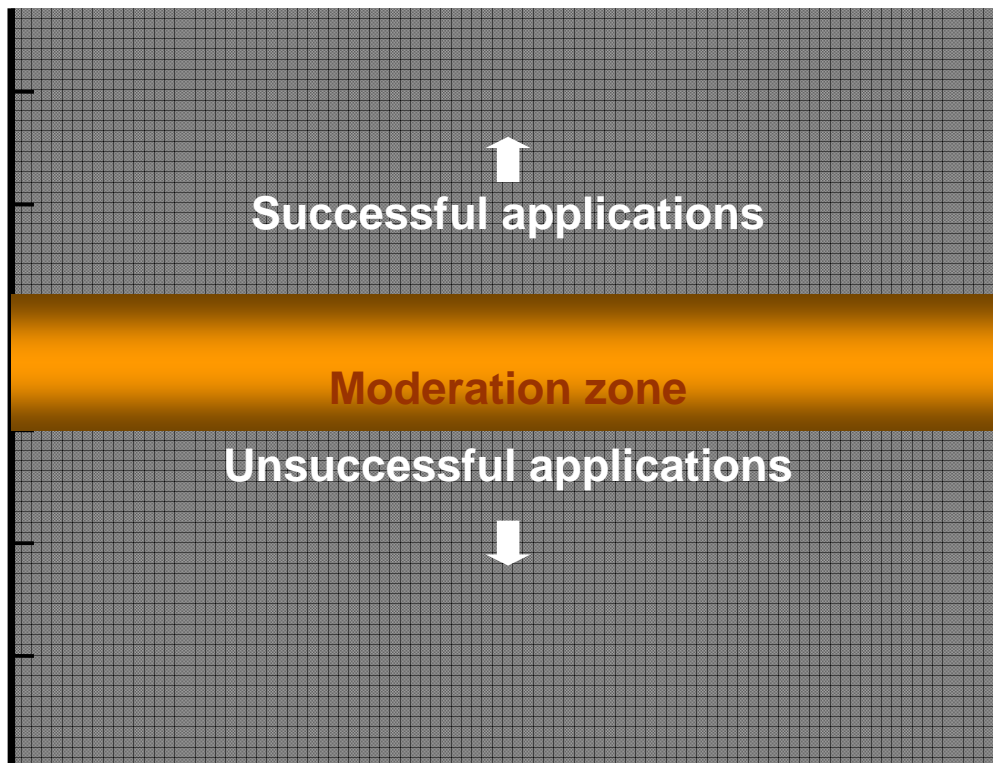
d. The recommendations of the scoring team

2. In advance of the meeting, Panel members are requested to look at the projects, paying particular attention to those that fall below the proposed quality threshold [***to be determined***]. This is in order to bring to the meeting's attention any projects that might deserve another look, and/or possible rescoreing. **The meeting itself will then use the time to focus on**

moderating only those projects scoring above an agreed minimum score.

3. Drawing on their own experience of project delivery as well as regional/local knowledge, members of the Panel are asked to consider:
 - a. high scorers where there is a previous history of a poor track record (i.e. possible indication of a good bid writer involved);
 - b. usually reliable project applicants which have uncharacteristically scored low;
 - c. geographical and thematic coverage – whilst not compromising on the quality of the projects (as scored) it will be important to try to get a reasonable spread of projects across the region and different themes; and
 - d. synergy and fit with other funding programmes across the region.

The intention is for the Panel not to have to review all the applications received, but to assess and moderate only those which fall within the middle band (as illustrated below). Copies of the full applications will be available for consultation at the meeting, but it is anticipated that the other summary information provided should be sufficient to reach a decision in most cases. In the interests of achieving greater efficiency and focusing the work of the Panel, we are also proposing to set an upper score threshold above which a project/application is automatically funded thereby focusing the work of moderation on a band of projects which scored between [to be determined].



Appendix 2

Current members of the Grants Panel

Grants Panel:

Jo Morrissey	ONE North East (Chair)
Beverly Park	ONE North East
Michelle Duggan	ONE North East
Suzanne Martin	ONE North East
Ian Dodds	Government Office North East
Hilary Porter	Learning and Skills Council
Sheila Stowers	Job Centre Plus
Peter Gilson	Futurebuilders
Neil Bennett	Capacitybuilders
Pat Lowes	Big Lottery Fund
Rhiannon Bearne	Business and Enterprise North East (Business Link)
Suzanne Devlin	Equalities and Human Rights Commission
Richard Walton	Northern Rock Foundation

Secretariat:

John Griffiths	Rocket Science
Cherri Blissett	Rocket Science
Freddie Wong	Rocket Science