Hall Aitken

Guide to Bid Writing

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This *Guide to Successful Bid Writing* will help Voluntary Sector, Council and public agency staff write more successful bids. Staff need to have an understanding of how to write successful bids. There is increasing pressure to bring in more external funding. Local authorities and others are being encouraged to lever money. At the same time, organisations need to maximise the impact of their own resources and bring additional benefits to their target groups and communities.

Our guide will answer many of your questions when you first face completing an application. Our guide will:

o   Give an overview of bid writing;

o   Show the basic principles and the key steps to achieve these; and

o   Present you with a checklist to make sure that you keep focused on writing successful bids.

When writing bids we will advise that you should:

o   Follow the general rules and principles;

o   Complete the checklist;

o   Do not over-promise – you will one day have to deliver; and

o   Make sure you have the time and support to complete the application.

It always takes a lot longer to put an application for funds together than you think. Don't leave things to the last minute.

Fear and loathing

There is no silver bullet or magic formula to writing a successful bid. When confronted by many pages with multiple sections that require to be filled in people run a mile. They feel that there must be a secret code and specific language that must be used. Without experience of submitting funds their initial tendency is to avoid it if possible.

There is no need for any of these things. Follow the basics, describe your project truthfully and succinctly. Break down requests into bite-sized pieces, even spread the load amongst colleagues and you will soon have everything you need.

Sorry – but you *will* fail

There is competition for funds. No matter how well you develop and describe your project they are often scored by individuals using a set of criteria. You may not even be aware of their present priorities at the time you submit. They may score another project that is equally good very slightly higher. When final scores are totalled then it is the projects above a certain point that can be funded. Your project will not always be funded. Resources are finite and you must simply give yourself the best chance of success.

Use the support available

Funders are not trying to trick you. The questions that they ask all have answers. Funders can often be described as bureaucratic and process-driven. They are driven by transparency in decision-making and procurement rules. They do however want and need to get their funds out to organisations like you. They need you to deliver against the objectives and targets that they have. They cannot support local communities, build skills or refurbish needed facilities - they need you to do this.

Funding Programmes with significant sums to give out often have programme managers. They are responsible for supporting eligible organisations to get money. They will help you understand the application process, put your project together and make sense of their procedures. Use their skills to help you. That is what they are paid to do.

Bid writing – Before you start

There are a series of questions that you need to answer before deciding on writing a bid:

- Is your organisation eligible? Or is the organisation you are writing the bid for eligible?

- Can you clearly define and describe the project on one sheet of A4 (or 250 words)?

- Does the funding support what you are intending to achieve? (Don't chase the money!)

- Can your project be made to fit the funding priorities or are you fundamentally altering the project to make it eligible? (are you twisting it on its head – if so, don't apply)

- Are partner organisations needed? If so, what partners? These could be from the private, public or third sector

- Has your organisation applied for this funding or similar, in the recent past?

- If so, how successful was this and can you get a copy of the application?

- How much will the project cost?

- What is the likely grant rate?

- Where are the match funds to come from? Can you get agreement before you submit?

- Are 'in-kind' contributions acceptable and, if so, up to what limit?

- Is it cost-effective for your organisation to pursue the application? Will the funds make a contribution towards your overheads, or will it be more cost-effective for another partner, who is eligible for this support, to lead on the project?

- Is the proposal realistic and deliverable in the proposed timescale?

- Can you (and your partners) provide the information needed for monitoring purposes at reasonable cost?

- Can you get all approvals of final content by the required deadline?

- Is the project likely to be sustainable beyond the grant period? What is the exit strategy?

A useful approach will be to get some group discussion going with colleagues. Brainstorm a few ideas and develop a plan.

Don't even begin to write an application until you have all the details agreed that you need. Try to organise yourself at the outset so that effort is not wasted.

Discuss

Plan

Draft

Complete

The five Ms of grant application

There are five Ms of grant applications. You need to provide information on the project's:

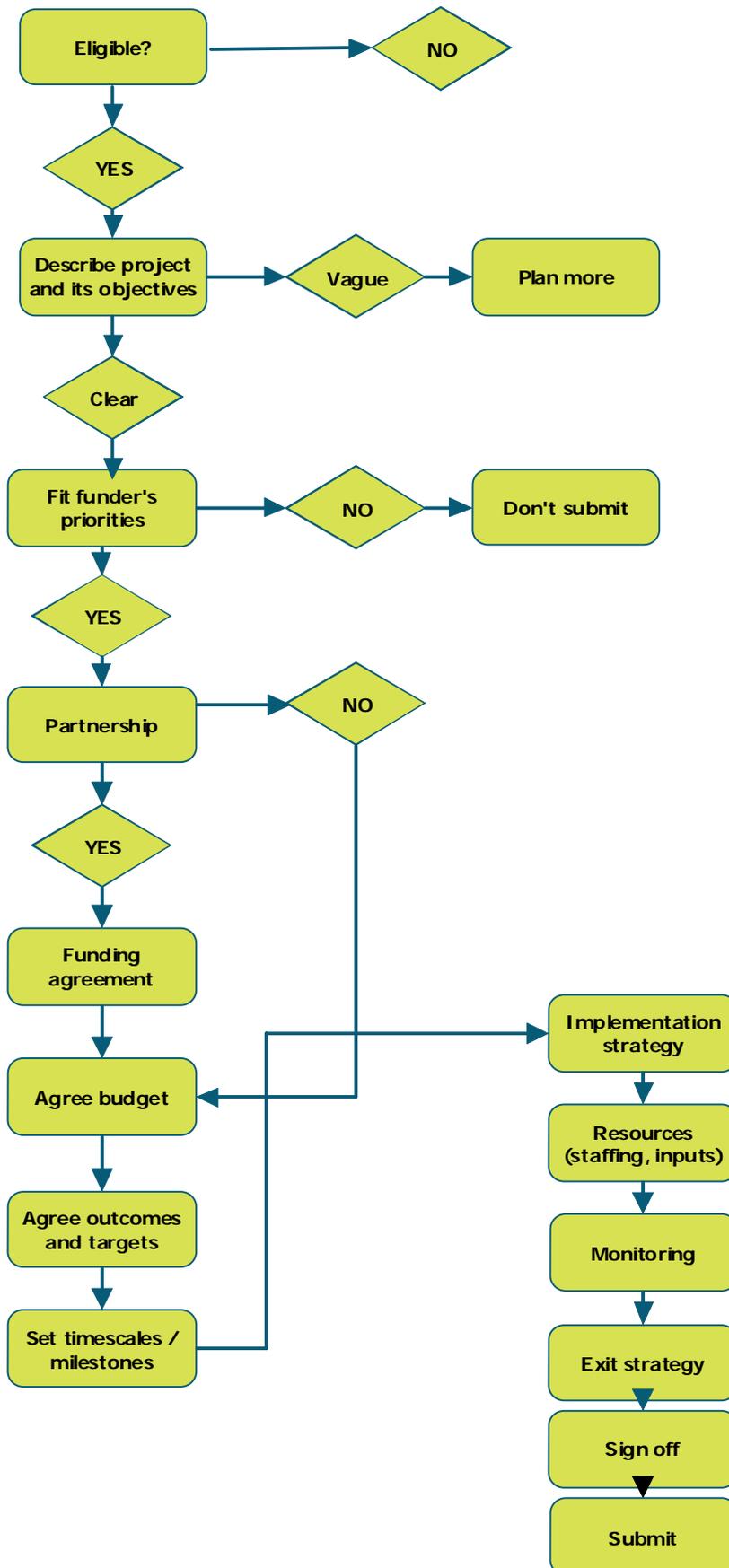**Mechanics**: What? Where? When? Aims and Objectives?

Market: Why? For whom? Scale of demand and local support?

Management: Who will manage the project? What track record do you have?

Money: How much will it cost to set up and run? How much money will be raised locally? From whom do you expect to get other funding?

Monitoring: How will you measure the project's success? What targets will you set?

Bid writing – Checklist

```
Eligible? ──────────→ NO

  │ YES
  ▼
Describe project ──────→ Vague ──────→ Plan more
and its objectives

  │ Clear
  ▼
Fit funder's ──────→ NO ──────→ Don't submit
priorities

  │ YES
  ▼
Partnership ──────→ NO

  │ YES
  ▼
Funding                         Implementation
agreement                       strategy

  │                               │
  ▼                               ▼
Agree budget ←──────            Resources
                                (staffing, inputs)
  │                               │
  ▼                               ▼
Agree outcomes                  Monitoring
and targets
  │                               │
  ▼                               ▼
Set timescales /                Exit strategy
milestones
                                  │
                                  ▼
                                Sign off
                                  │
                                  ▼
                                Submit
```

Ten principles of bid writing

Principle 1 - Be clear on your legal status, mission and objectives

1a. You must specify the **type of organisation** making the request. Sometimes only certain groups are eligible to apply. For example, most charitable trusts only support registered charities.

1b. You need to provide details such as:

- Name of the organisation;
- Legal status, organisational status, with memorandum and articles of association, mission;
- Aims of the organisation;
- Staffing and volunteers – staff professionalism / experience, numbers of volunteers, how you support them (for example training), etc;
- Management and governance – staff structure, inductions, organisation chart, policies, business plan;
- Current funders; and
- Location.

1c. Once you decide on a bid give it a sensible name. Names and titles may need further explanation unless they are self-explanatory such as 'Guide dogs for the blind'. Potential funders may have no knowledge of how your organisation or the potential project translates into changing people's lives. You can rebrand it after approval but until then keep the project title descriptive.

Principle 2 – Be clear on the specific objectives of your application

2a. You need to provide brief information on the purpose of your project. What do you want to do?

2b. You need to consider who the beneficiaries of the project will be. Often, the mistake is made in asking for contributions for features or particular aspects of what you are doing, for instance to provide swings for a playground, or equipment for a village hall. It is much more important to translate these into benefits for your group. For example to provide facilities in the village to limit the danger of children playing in the street.

2c. You must be able to prove there is a need for the project. There are two aspects to proving need:

- proving demand (for example if you want to open a new community centre, have you consulted local people to see how many are likely to attend activities there); and
- proving the need for subsidy (that is why money needs to be put in from outside sources).

Principle 3 – Establish clear lines of project management

3a. You must develop implementation strategies and consider a project plan, timetable and potential outputs.

3b. You must be clear on the resources to deliver the project in terms of staffing, volunteers and inputs. They must decide on who, within the organisation, can drive the project forward.

3c. You must think of monitoring and evaluation measures. It is important that monitoring issues are considered at the earliest point. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will help you track whether you are making progress towards achieving the outcomes you wish. (We have a separate guide on this and a training Programme that can build the capacity of project staff.)

In short, your application should have objectives that are SMART:

Specific – Objectives should specify what you want to achieve.

Measurable – You should be able to measure whether you are making progress and meeting the objectives or not.

Achievable – Are the objectives you set achievable and attainable?

Realistic – Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?

Time – You should have a time-frame within which you will achieve the set objectives.

Principle 4 - Understand the funders

4a. You must understand why the funder is offering the money and meet the funder's objectives. For example, if the funder's aim is 'to decrease social isolation within disadvantaged communities', you have to ensure that this information is within the answers that you offer to their questions.

4b. You must show that your project is additional as external funders are not keen to fund core or mainstream projects. That is activities that the local authority or government should be delivering.

4c. Funders need to have confidence in the applicant. They must believe the group has credibility. (How can you do this? An independent evaluation of previous projects is often asked for).

4d. Funders need to be convinced there is a problem. The problem must be: the result of a demand by 'real people', concrete, to do with people's needs.

4e. Funders like to see a 'multiplier' effect: the effect of their grant is greater than the actual sum of money suggests. How can they get a 'bigger bang for their buck'?

4f. Funders want evidence that applicants can handle money efficiently and efficiently.

4g. You can contact the funder before you prepare the application to ensure your project fits the funders' criteria. Show them your one page summary.

4h. Many funders also wish to see that you are being innovative and creative in your approach. This does not mean inventing something completely new but it does mean learning about what works elsewhere and bringing some of these ideas to bear on your own project. Can you show that you have done this?

Principle 5 – Manage your money

5a. You need to be clear on both the amount sought from the funder and the total budget.

5b. You may need to provide financial information such as:

- o your organisation's annual income / expenditure (Previous annual accounts may be asked for);
- o the projected annual budget;
- o what financial safeguards you have; and
- o the degree of financial skills and knowledge within the organisation.

Principle 6 - Secure match funding

6a. You may secure match funding for your own application and combine funds. There are three guidelines in combining European Union funds:

- o one EU fund cannot be matched with another EU fund;
- o one EU fund can be matched by several UK funds; and
- o one UK fund can be matched by other UK funds.

6b. You must check the individual programmes for details on funding periods. Are there time limits on completing project expenditure and if so, do they vary greatly? What are the eligible costs? Some things are eligible while others are not.

6c. Give senior staff notice and time to sign off match funding.

Principle 7 - Partnership[1]

7a. For many funding programmes, you must select, approach and work with partners.

7b. All partners must agree on mission, values, goals and measurable outcomes for the partnership.

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[1] Hall Aitken wrote a guide on the Ten Principles of Partnership. This is available at
http://www.hallaitken.co.uk/newsletter/aug052.htm

7c. The relationship between partners should be characterised by mutual trust, respect, honesty and commitment.

7d. The partnership should build on identified strengths and assets, but also addresses areas that need improvement.

7e. The partnership should balance power among partners and enable resources among partners to be shared.

7f. There must be clear, open and accessible communication between partners.

7g. Roles, responsibilities and processes for the partnership should be established with the input and agreement of all partners.

7h. Feedback is needed to, among, and from all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.

7i. Partners should share the credit for the partnership's accomplishments.

7j. Partnerships need to take time to develop and evolve.

7k. The partnership should work in an effective and efficient manner.

Principle 8 - Sustainability

8a. You must be clear on whether the project is:

o   a pilot project;

o   a one-off piece of work; or

o   an ongoing activity.

8b. You must be clear on how the project will continue after the funding period. What is your exit strategy?


Principle 9 – Use plain English

9a. You must be clear and concise. Avoid the use of jargon. You must express yourself succinctly. KISS (**k**eep **i**t **s**imple, **s**tupid!). For example, write 'We aim to help' and not 'We believe that our work will help…'.

9b. You should use one word instead of four and use short sentences. (Have pity on the person reading these bids!)

9c. You should be enthusiastic and persuasive. AIDA (**a**ttract the reader's attention; create **i**nterest in your problem; make the reader **desire** to help; inspire **a**ction).

Principle 10 – Do what you are told!
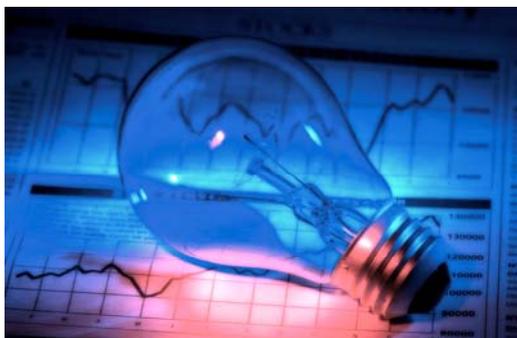
10a. The application form should be typed and able to be photocopied. It should be submitted in the format requested (electronically? Paper? Or both?)

10b. All the documentation requested must be enclosed. The structure and layouts are often prescriptive so be sure to follow the guidance.

10c. Give yourself time to plan. Plan out your application before writing (see our bid writing operation plan).

10d. The deadline must be met! Deadline dates and time are absolutes, failure to submit on time will mean your bid is rejected. Keep the funder updated on your progress if that is possible. There may be a possibility of supplying further detail <u>after</u> your bid is submitted so just get it in on time!

No structured application form

Sometimes (for example applications to Grant Making Trusts), there is no application form. In these cases, the application should still provide the same details as outlined in the basic principles.

To sum up, your application should cover:

o   Project title;

o   Introduction – who you are;

o   Proposal summary;

o   The problem or need and who will benefit from the project;

o   The demand for the project;

o   What you want to achieve;

o   How you will do it;

o   How you will monitor your results;

o   How much money you will need;

o   How much money you will raise from your own and other funding sources; and

o   Who is the lead partner and get it all signed off by the authorised signatory.

Potential sources of funding

European sources of funding

"I try to keep up-to-date with most funding streams, but this is a never ending task and obviously some are missed."
Lincolnshire County Council employee

Structural Funds

## Structural Funds 2007-2013: Current situation

The new European Structural Funds Programming period started in 2007. In general, the UK will not get as much Structural Funds monies as in 2000-2006. Between 2000 and 2006, the UK received €15.85 billion. However, between 2007 and 2013 the UK will receive €9.4 billion. This will be distributed regionally as follows:

	ESF	ERDF
East of England	£152m	£75m
East Midlands	£174m	£182m
London	£324m	£120m
North East	£157m	£240m
North West	£460m	£500m
South East	£151m	£16m
South West	£229m	£391m
West Midlands	£246m	£277m
Yorkshire and the Humber	£264m	£388m
Scotland Highlands and Islands Lowland and Upland	£34.7m £405m	£81m £250m
Northern Ireland	£110m	£204m
Wales West Wales/Valleys East Wales	£589m £42m	£833m £48m

The objectives of the European Structural Fund in the UK are:

- **Convergence Objective** – this replaces the previous Objective 1. (Areas include West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) Convergence areas can attract ERDF and ESF funds as well as Cohesion Funding. To be eligible as a convergence region the area must have under 75% of the EU average GDP.

- The **Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective –** this replaces the previous Objectives 2 and 3. (All of the UK is eligible for this programme except Convergence regions as well as the Highlands and Islands.) ESF and ERDF operate within the competitiveness objective.

- The third objective is the **Co-operation Objective.** This replaces the Interreg Community Initiative.   This supports cross border and transnational cooperation projects on issues of common interest (for example, in the areas of environment, transport, maritime, sustainable communities or tourism.) This is an ERDF programme only.

Figure 1 Programmes in the UK 2007-13
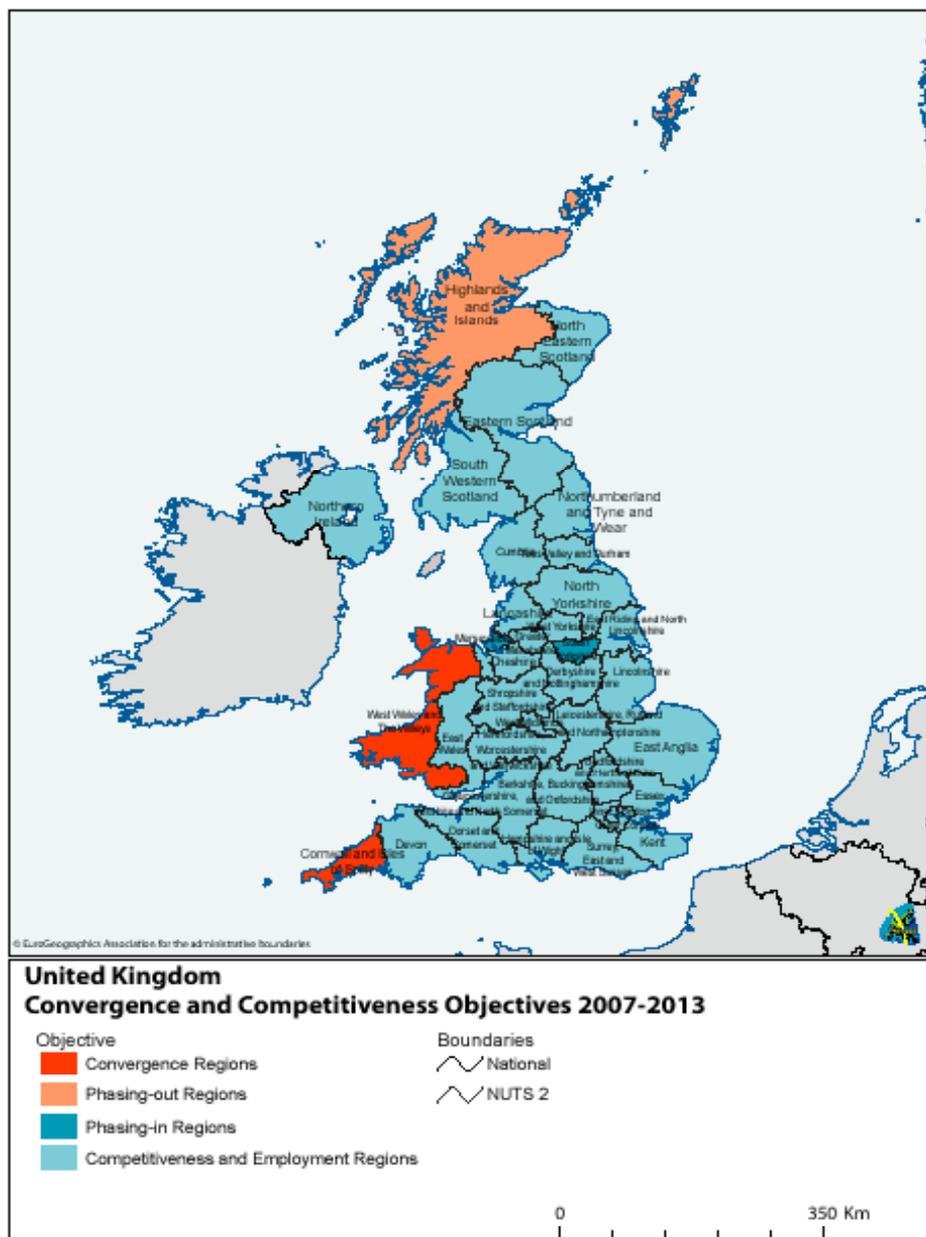
ESF

For the ESF programme between 2007 and 2013 there is a single ESF programme for England. There are separate programmes for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The DWP has overall responsibility for ESF in England. Each region will have its own allocation to address its regional jobs and skills needs. Then at the regional level ESF will be distributed through agencies like Learning and Skills, Councils RDA, some local authorities and DWP. ESF will complement domestic programmes. The co-financing organisations (CFO's) will contract with the providers that deliver ESF projects on the ground (See Appendix A).

Taking England as our example there are two key priorities for ESF in England. These are:

- **Priority 1 (£1.2 billion)** - Extended employment opportunities (for example overcoming barriers to work faced by disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities or health conditions); or

- **Priority 2 (£670 million)** - Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce (for example training men and women if they want to enter sectors where they are under represented and training people who do not have the basic skills and qualifications needed in the workforce).

To apply:

Applicants will apply to CFO's in two stages with a pre-qualification questionnaire (or outline form summarising the project) followed by the Stage 2 full applications. Contracts will then be awarded and project activity can commence. Across England the average start dates will be around March 2008.

Further information is available from the co-financing organisations www.esf.gov.uk/esf_in_action/co-financing_organisations.asp

ERDF

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is the managing authority for ERDF funding. Previously the programmes were delivered by Government Offices. However, for the 2007-2013 programmes, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) will be the delivery agents. The RDAs have developed their operational plans. For example, the London Development Agency has developed the operational plan for London. These plans were submitted to the European Commission between May and July 2007. It is expected that the ERDF projects will start between April and May 2008.

ERDF operational plans

ERDF priorities are based on three sections:

- Innovation and knowledge-based economy;
- The environment and risk protection; and
- Transport and telecommunications.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) identifies four main priorities for ERDF. These are:

- Promoting innovation and knowledge transfer;
- Stimulating enterprise;
- Ensuring that there is sustainable development, production or consumption; and
- Building sustainable communities.

Further information is available from your Regional Development Agencies website. For example in the North West, www.erdfnw.co.uk.

Further information is available in a paper that we wrote in November 2007 called *Changes to EU Funding: What's happening?* Available on www.hallaitken.co.uk

Revising your awareness of European funds and maximising your funding opportunities available

There are many non-structural funds programmes such as LIFE (funding for environmental projects) and LEONARDO (vocational training) or Culture 2007 (Cultural Cooperation projects).

The vast majority of these programmes have to be transnational, namely involve partners from at least two (often three) EU member states.

Calls for proposals are issued in the Official Journal of the European Communities. These can be accessed on http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/JOIndex.do?ihmlang=en

Information on non-structural funds programmes is available on http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index_en.htm#envi

Lottery sources of funding

There are six National Lottery Funding bodies. Further information is available through http://www.lotteryfunding.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund

Supports projects which enable communities to celebrate, look after and learn about our diverse heritage. http://www.hlf.org.uk

Big Lottery Fund

Awards funds to charity groups and community groups and projects which cover health, education and the environment. http://www.biglotteryfund.org/

An example of the BLF's programme is the Young People's Fund. The Young People's Fund supports young people, aged 11-18 to make a difference in their communities. The next deadline is 4/04/08. http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/index/apply-uk.htm

Awards for all

This funds small projects (up to £10,000) that make a difference to communities from across all the disciplines. http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_a4a_eng.htm?regioncode=-uk&progStatus=open&status=theProg&title=Awards%20for%20All%20England

Arts Lottery Funding

Distributed by the English or Scottish Arts Council and the regional Arts Council, this supports arts related projects. http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/index.php

Sports Lottery Funding

Funds projects which develop sport and physical activities. http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_funding/how_funding_works.htm

Grant Making Trusts

'It is easy to have a tunnel vision with 'favourite funds' due to past success.'
Lincoln County Council employee

There are around 11,000 trusts and foundations in the UK that provide grants of about £1.25 billion to charitable causes.

Examples include:

BBC Children in Need – provides funding for disadvantaged children and young people. Website: www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey/   Example: Lincolnshire Centre for Grieff and Loss received £9,550 in 2005/2006.

The Chase Charity - Arts, heritage, social welfare. Telephone: 01235 820044. or

The Allen Lane Foundation - Social welfare, community development. Website: www.allenlane.org.uk

UK sources of funding

There is a vast number of funding streams from the UK Government. Further information is available at http://www.governmentfunding.org.uk

Examples of funds include:

Working Neighbourhood Fund

Announced on the 6th December 2007, the Working Neighbourhoods Fund is a new dedicated fund for local councils and communities to develop more concentrated, concerted, community-led approaches to getting people in the most deprived areas of England back to work. It replaces the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and incorporates the Department for Work and Pensions Deprived Areas Fund (DAF) to create a single local fund. The total Working Neighbourhoods Fund of £1.5bn will be allocated over the next three years with more than £450m in 2008/2009, and £500m in 2009/10 and 2010/2011. Allocations are based on the new Indices of Multiple

Deprivation 2007. 66 local authority districts will receive full WNF funding from April 2008 and a further 21 authorities which currently receive NRF but will not receive WNF will receive transitional payments. These are listed at http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/xls/10

In addition to the up-front element of the WNF, at least £50m will be available as a reward fund which will go to areas that have made good progress over the first two years on tackling worklessness and improving enterprise levels. These rewards could be used to fund innovative community schemes such as outreach schemes in council estates or councils who help residents access jobs by looking at the kind of transport available.

A copy of the policy document is available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/566881 and in the library (Community Regeneration).

Museums, Libraries and Archives Funds

Further information is available on www.mlanorthwest.org.uk/fundraising/

Additionality	Work which is additional to the statutory regulations on local / national government
Assessment	The process the funder uses to check the application
Beneficiaries	The people for whom the cash / gifts are given
Budget	A breakdown of how much everything will cost
Building	Equipping organisations or individuals with the skills they need to progress.
Capacity	The scope and ability of an area or organisation to manage the delivery of services or a Programme
Criteria	Definitions of what sort of activity and organisation a funder will support
Evaluation	The assessment of the monitoring data and learning for the future implementation of similar work
Evidence of need	The hard data that demonstrates there is a need for the proposed project
Exit strategy	A plan to exit from the funding – either by winding down the project, or by generating income from it, or by finding new sources of grant aid. Projections of generated income need to be realistic and backed by evidence of demand and the prices people will pay. If more grant aid will be needed, the exit strategy should contain at least some suitable examples of possible funders and when they will be approached.
Funders	Organisations offering grants or other funds
Gap funding	Where a single funder will not cover the total project costs, other sources must be found from 'partner' funders, to 'match' funds from one source and to bridge a 'gap' in the total funding needs. Most European funds, English Partnerships and some of the Lottery Boards want it.
Grant programme	A particular theme which grant givers set. May be changed yearly. Some larger funders might have several different programmes running at the same time.
Grants	Set amounts of cash given to help projects, reduce need
In kind	Goods and services people provide free can often be considered for 'match funding'

Leverage	Leverage is using one funder's grant aid to 'lever' in (ie attract) further money from other sources, so increasing the value of their grant.
Match funding	The balance of need funding from another source to allow a programme to proceed
Monitoring	The mechanisms by which you collect data at the beginning, middle and end of the project, to measure change
Outcomes	The overall changes the project will make that cannot be expressed as numbers; increased confidence, recovery from addiction, etc
Outputs	The concrete achievements of the project – numbers of people involved, numbers employed, etc
Project	An activity of a group that includes some or all the following features: new, short-term and aiming at achieving particular and definable things
Sustainability	Will the project result in any lasting benefits without further subsidy? If not, where is the subsidy likely to come from?
Trustees	Those whose final responsibility for cash / gifts raised