Frequently Asked Questions

Organisations applying for the Mayor’s Community Grants Programme have raised a number of questions in relation to the Programme.

**Mayor’s Community Grant Programme (MCGP)**

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| **1** | **Does the prospectus requirement for organisations to have operated in Tower Hamlets for two years relate solely to last two years?**Yes, it relates solely to the last two years.  |
| **2** | **Do small organisations had to complete the same monitoring requirements as large organisations, as has been the case for the Local Community Fund programme?**The format for project monitoring requirements under MCGP will not be dependent on the size of the organisation providing a project. Monitoring requirements for individual projects will take account of the size of projects – e.g. in terms of number of specific KPIs to be delivered.  |
| **3** | **What support will be provided to smaller organisations applying for projects under Theme 1, Tackling Cost of Living, as it is expected that they will be competing against consortiums for funding under this theme?**The assessment process for applications across all MCGP themes takes account of applicant organisations’ size – please see page 11 of MCGP prospectus for definition of organisations’ size and table in *Organisation Assessment* section of the prospectus (pages 12-21).  |
| **4** | **Some Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) organisations in Tower Hamlets delivered services to local residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, but did not receive funding from the Council for this work. Will these organisations be supported by the Council to continue to provide advice and support to local residents?**The Council is very grateful for VCS organisations’ significant contribution in providing services to local residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, both through Council funded and non-Council funded services. With the end of the pandemic the Council will not be funding COVID-19 specific work through MCGP. VCS organisations providing advice and support to local residents are free to apply for MCGP funding for projects relating to Programme theme priorities – e.g. applying for funding under Theme 1 Tackling Cost of Living for information, advice and representation work relating to residents’ legal rights.  |
| **5** | **Do organisations applying for funding for advice work need to be Advisory, Concilitation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) accredited?**There is no specific requirement for organisation applying for MCGP funding for advice work (including partner organisations) to be ACAS accredited. However, organisations should show in their application that they and their partners have achieved a relevant quality assurance standard or some other evidence which shows that they are actively trying to improve both the quality of their management and the services that they provide.  |
| **6** | **Is the size of an organisation, as outlined in the MCGP prospectus, defined by its audited or projected income?**The definition will be based on an organisation’s most recent audited income.  |
| **7** | **Will assessments be done internally?**Assessments of MCGP applications will be carried out by Council staff.  |
| **8** | **What is the decision making process in regard to MCGP applications?**Council staff will assess organisations’ applications for MCGP to determine whether the organisations meet the required criteria to deliver MCGP. Each application submitted by organisations assessed as meeting the above criteria will be assessed and scored by two Council officers. These scores will determine which applications are recommended for funding. Officer recommendations on applications to be approved for funding will be submitted to the Council’s Chief Executive, who will make a decision on August 2023 on which applications should be funded. |
| **9** | **Who informs organisations if the Council needs more information in relation to information provided in the application on the organisation and/or the proposed project?** Council officers will liaise with applicant organisations to obtain any required additional information. |
| **10** | **If there is information missing from an application does it automatically fail to progress to the next stage or does someone contact the organisation for additional information?**If information is missing from an application then Council officers will not contact the organisation for additional information. The absence of required information for an application will not automatically prevent an application from being considered for funding. However, it may lead to an officer judgement that the application has failed to answer a question that requires a pass mark for the application to be recommended for funding – please see MCGP prospectus for more information.  |
| **11** | **As organisations can apply for a maximum of five projects there is potential for one organisation to be approved for MCGP funding of £200,000 per annum. Should there not be a cap to prevent this potential level of MCGP allocation to an organisation?**There is a general aspiration for MCGP to be allocated to a wide number of organisations. Individual applications for projects will be judged on their own merit. There are no plans for the Council to introduce a cap below £200,000 per annum in relation to MCGP allocation to individual organisations.  |
| **12** | **If an organisation does not have an office space as all its staff work at home, is it eligible to apply for MCGP?**An organisation can apply for MCGP if it does not have an office or base in Tower Hamlets if it can demonstrate a track record of successful service delivery within the borough for at least two years. |
| **13** | **Are there rules about the total number of trustees/directors an organisation needs to have?** There are no requirements in relation to the number of trustees/directors. Large organisations (those with an annual income over £250,000) should have a committee structure to facilitate good governance. |
| **14** | **Is the application form currently available as a Word document so that organisations can produce a draft application offline?**The form is not available as a Word document. Organisations have the option of copying the text from their application to a Word document to edit and re-draft it, before copying it back into the form. This process can be supported by selecting the “printer friendly version” of the form to create a saveable document with text to copy to Word. |
| **15** | **What sort of evidence is required for organisations based outside Tower Hamlets that work within the borough?**  Organisations should provide information on their registered address, a copy of their rental agreement for the premises where they deliver activities in tower Hamlets (this should cover a period of at least two years) or provide other evidence that they have successfully delivered services in Tower Hamlets for at least two years. |
| **16** | **Must proposed projects address both priorities and outcomes relating to the MCGP theme that they are applying for?** Yes, both must be addressed.  |
| **17** | **Can organisations access the project form’s questions before submitting the organisational form?**  MCGP prospectus clarifies how to respond to both the organisation and project questions. |
| **18** | **Can tenants and residents associations, including those constituted by statutory sector organisations, apply for MCGP?**Yes, they can, providing that they are formally independent of any statutory sector organisation.  |
| **19** | **The maximum potential allocation for a project is 40,000 per annum.  Does this mean that a partnership involved in an application can only apply for £40,000 per annum for the partnership or can each organisation in the partnership potentially receive £40,000 per annum?**Applications for partnership projects should be for a maximum of £40,000 per annum per project, not organisation, with the exception of those under Theme 1, Tackling Cost of Living, where an application can be for a maximum of £900,000 per annum per project.  |
| **20** | **Can applications be made to fund the continuation of existing projects, from November 2023 onwards?**Yes. In order for such applications to have a chance of being approved then the project proposed for continuation funding through MCGP must address this programme’s requirements.  |
| **21** | **What information should be provided in response to question relating to LBTH funding for an organisation?**Information should be provided on the type, level and time-scale of all LBTH funding and financial support for applicant organisations and their partners – e.g. LBTH grants and/or contracts, Community Benefit Rent Reduction Scheme. |
| **22** | **Can organisations request feedback from the Council on their applications? Will there be an appeal process?**Yes, organisations can request information from the Council on the scores awarded to their application. The Council will also examine other information requests submitted by organisations in relation to their unsuccessful applications. There is no appeal process in relation to the outcome of applications.  |
| **23.** | **Are there any online support sessions for organisations from Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service (THCVS)?**Yes, on the 16th and 23rd May 2023. A place on the sessions can be booked at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mayors-community-grants-training-online-tickets-615556444897> |
| **24** | **Can organisations receive one-to-one support from THCVS in relation to their applications?**Yes.Organisationscan book an online one to one session by e-mailing THCVS on info@thcvs.org.uk  |

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| **25.** | **Can consortia or partnership bids be submitted for funding through all of MCGP’s Schemes?**Yes. |
| **26.** | **What would be the most appropriate Scheme to submit an application for Programme funding for Early Years provision?**Applications should be submitted under Theme 2 Accelerate Education - Scheme 2A Education Attainment and Development of Children and Young People. |
| **27.** | **If an organisation intends to apply in partnership with another organisation does each organisation make a separate application or would there effectively be a lead partner that submits on behalf of both organisations?**One organisation needs to take lead on the application and submit it on behalf of the agreed partners. The application form will need to demonstrate how the partnership will work, its proposed management arrangements and the proposed funding allocation for each partner. |
| **28.** | **If an organisation has been approved for a LBTH Small Grants Programme award in 2023 can it still apply for MCGP?**Yes. |
| **29.** | **If an organisation has applied for a council funding programme that required the completion of an Organisation Information Form must it complete a new Organisation Information Form for MCGP?**Yes. |
| **30.** | **Does an application need to be for one MCGP scheme or can it be for more than one scheme?** An application must be aimed at only one MCGP scheme. A separate application is required for each theme that an organisation is seeking funding from. |
| **31.** | **What is the maximum amount of funding that an organisation can apply for?**£40,000 per annum with the exception of consortium applications under Theme 1, Scheme 1 Tackling Cost of Living Crisis, for which there is no limit. |
| **32.** | **Can an organisation factor in the cost of inflation for each year of the project?**Yes, it can, but the Council has no set directive to uplift the grant awards each year to take account of inflation. |
| **33.** | **Will the Council provide a budget template to support the MCGP application process?**Information is available at [Mayor's Community Grants Programme (towerhamlets.gov.uk)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/community_grants/Mayor%27s-Community-Grants-Programme.aspx) in the **What is the application process** section. |
| **34.** | **Where the funding is, for example, £700,000 for a Theme, and there are two Schemes (A and B), is the funding allotted equally at £350,000 per Scheme? How is the funding split between the Schemes within Themes?**The Theme allocations have not been sub-divided by Schemes. The overall allocation for each Theme is across its Schemes. |
| **35.** | **Can partnership/consortia bids be submitted for all Themes and Schemes?**Yes. |

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| **36.** | **If an organisation has applied to the Council before for grant funding can it use the same Organisation form in its application for MCGP?**Organisation will need to submit a new Organisation Information Form for the MCGP. It should hopefully be possible to copy some of the information from the previous form to the new one, possibly after having copied the information into Word in the first instance and then copying the information into the new application. |
| **37.** | **Is MCGP specifically aimed at funding projects to support residents of Tower Hamlets?**Yes. |
| **38.** | **Can national charities that are exempt from registration as a charity under the Charity Commission - but are regulated by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport - apply for MCGP?**Yes. |
| **39.** | **Can Community Interest Companies (CIC) that are limited by shares and that have an asset lock clause apply for MCGP?**Yes, as long as the CIC exists primarily to benefit a community or with a view to pursuing a social purpose, rather than to make a profit for shareholders. All CICs require an asset lock clause, so this is not a barrier to applying for MCGP. |
| **40.** | **Do applicant organisations require a minimum number of committee members?**There is no set number, but the [Charity Governance Code](https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en) suggests a board of at least five, but no more than 12 trustees. |
| **41.** | **Does an organisation applying for MCGP need to have its management committee/board meetings to be formally minuted?**LBTH expects organisations to take notes of each committee/board meeting, particularly when decisions are made, and that these notes are agreed at the next meeting. |
| **42.** | **Are organisations that are applying for MCGP expected to have a reserves policy?**Yes. |
| **43.** | **As the first year of MCGP funding is not a full year, would the potential maximum allocation of £40,000 be proportionate or be the full amount?**Budget allocations for MCGP will be based on 12 months of funding, rather than financial years. The first full year of funding would be from November 2023 to October 2024.  |
| **44.** | **Can schools apply for MCGP?**Schools can only apply for MCGP if they meet the eligibility criteria as set out in MCGP prospectus on pages 5 to 6. |
| **45.** | **Can LBTH look at an organisation’s draft application for MCGP, or any of the proposed supporting documents for MCGP, and provide advice and support in developing the application or documents?**No, it would not be appropriate for LBTH, as the funding body for MCGP, to provide this type of support. LBTH is funding THCVS to provide support to applicant organisations. A place on these sessions can be booked at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mayors-community-grants-training-online-tickets-615556444897> Support is also available from THCVS-run [Drop-in sessions and individual support for organisations](https://thcvs.org.uk/tower-hamlets-cvs-mcgp-support/) |
| **46.** | **If an organisation does not have an office space, as all its staff work at home, is it eligible to apply for MCGP?**If an organisation can demonstrate a track record of successful service delivery within the borough for the past two years it can apply for MCGP even though it does not have an office space in the borough and its staff work at home. |

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| **47.** | **Can an organisation apply for MCGP funding under more than one Scheme under a Programme Theme?**Yes. |
| **48.** | **Can an organisation submit an application that can be considered for funding through more than one Scheme?**No. If an organisation plans to apply for funding for a project under more than one scheme then the applications should be for separate projects, with each application relating to a specific Scheme. |
| **49.** | **Do organisations need to submit the volunteering documents only if the project for which they are applying for MCGP funding involves volunteers?  Or do they have to submit the documents if their organisation as a whole involves volunteers in other projects, but not the one they are applying for MCGP funding for?**Documents should be submitted if organisations as a whole involve volunteers. These documents are requested in order to provide information on the overall quality of organisation, in addition to how it manages volunteers. |
| **50.** | **If an organisation’s volunteer policy includes all the evidence requirements around volunteer role description, reimbursement etc, should the policy submitted as part of the application just indicate that the policy addresses these issues on the front page, or will the policy be scrutinized sufficiently by officers without this being pointed out?**LBTH officers assessing the documents and policies that organisations submit as part of their applications will have the responsibility of checking these submissions thoroughly in order to carry out the organisation assessment properly. |
| **51.** | **Do organisations definitely need to have or be working towards a recognised Quality Assurance (QA) standard or is a description of how they ensure quality enough?**To secure a pass score for the question on QA organisations must have QA accreditation in place, with evidence of action to maintain standards. A partial pass can be awarded if no QA accreditation is in place, but an organisation can show evidence of working towards QA accreditation and/or evidence that a quality standard framework or appropriate processes are in place. If an organisation just describes how it ensures quality this would not be sufficient to achieve either a pass or partial pass for the QA question. Organisations awarded MCGP funding after securing a Partial Pass for the QA question will not be paid MCGP until the Council has agreed with the organisation an action plan to achieve the required QA standards over time. If an organisation does not achieve the required standards within an agreed timescale then the Council may withdraw its MCGP funding.  |
| **52.** | **Does LBTH expect organisations funded under the programme to be working towards a more formal QA certificate? If so, can the cost of working towards this certificate be added to the budget for the project? Should the process to secure QA accreditation be included in the business plan submitted by the organisation with its application?**As outlined in the response to Q51, organisations awarded MCGP should either have achieved an appropriate QA standard or can show evidence of working towards QA accreditation and/or evidence that a quality standard framework or appropriate processes are in place. Organisations working towards QA accreditation can include the costs of this accreditation in their project budget. This should be on an apportioned basis – i.e. the percentage of the budget for QA accreditation included in a MCGP project budget should be based on the percentage of the organisation’s work that would be related to the MCGP project. If an organisation is planning to work towards QA accreditation then this should be covered briefly in the business plan submitted with a MCGP application. The process to secure this accreditation does not have to be included in the overall description of the project included in the project submission. |
| **53.** | **Does LBTH accept the passporting of current QA standards as evidence of meeting criteria in the organisation assessment?**It would depend on individual circumstances.  If an organisation does not have satisfactory QA in place, but a project is recommended for MCGP funding, LBTH would follow the process set out in Question 51 above. |
| **54.** | **Would evidence of completion of free quality standard tools be accepted as QA standards?**Yes, if the above process can be confirmed as leading to formal QA accreditation or can be confirmed as part of an action plan leading towards a formal QA accreditation. |
| **55.** | **Do a percentage of trustees from a certain background need to be represented on the board of organisations working with diverse communities?** An organisation’s governing document may require specific representation and it would be good practice for an organisation to actively seek to recruit trustees/board members from the communities that they are working with. |
| **56.** | **What is the likely average sized grant that would be awarded, and how should groups prepare for receiving less than the amount requested?**It is not possible to confirm in advance the average size of grant that would be awarded under MCGP. It is possible that LBTH would offer organisations smaller MCGP awards than what they applied for. For such a case LBTH would make a MCGP grant offer to an organisations and negotiate with it to agree on revised level of activity, outcomes and KPIs to be delivered the by project in proportion to revised budget. |
| **57.** | **Would LBTH still fund projects that have been delivered online since the pandemic or should organisations plan for in person provision in their bids?**If organisations can confirm that its on-line provision is as effective in reaching and supporting its target groups as in-person provision then an application for a project offering on-line provision can be considered by LBTH as a potential project for MCGP funding. |
| **58.** | **What safeguarding training is LBTH expecting organisations to provide evidence of having completed?**Organisations need to demonstrate that staff and volunteers who would be working on projects supporting children and/or vulnerable adults are appropriately trained. Evidence should include safeguarding training, completion certificates or safeguarding qualification certificates relating to the safeguarding responsibilities and client group supported by staff and volunteers.  |
| **59.** | **With the maximum grant being £40,000 per annum (with the exception of Theme 1 Tackling Cost of Living), where does the capacity come from within organisation to do all of the back office work that supports project delivery? How will smaller groups cope with this?**LBTH will be revising its monitoring policy for grants to see how it can reduce the administrative burden for VCS organisations that it funds. Any revisions of monitoring will take account of the size of grants that LBTH offers. |
| **60.** | **With consortium bids, does the lead applicant need to be the only organisation submitting an organisation assessment form or do all applicants within the partnership need to complete an organisation assessment form?**Only the lead applicant organisation needs to submit the organisation assessment form. |

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| **61.** | **For a partnership bid does the larger organisation need to complete the project form?**The lead partner for a project, which does not have to be the largest organisation in the partnership, should take responsibility for submitting the project form. It should consult with all partner organisations to ensure that they agree to the project submission. |
| **62.** | **On the borough connection, what percentage of activity do organisations applying for projects need to have delivered in the borough to be considered?**There is no set percentage. Organisations need to demonstrate that they have delivered activity that was either fully based in Tower Hamlets or had a significant element of activity based in the borough.  |
| **63.** | **Can organisations based outside the borough, but with experience and access to Tower Hamlets’ residents, apply?**Yes, as long as they can demonstrate that they have successfully delivered services in Tower Hamlets for the past two years |
| **64.** | **On the project assessment form, does the half score rule apply to each of the project assessment sections, or to the total points overall?**It applies to each of the project assessment sections. LBTH will not consider funding any project which scores less than half the available score in any section. |
| **65.** | **Under Theme 3 – Culture, Business, Jobs and Skills - will LBTH consider applications for MCGP funding for projects to support homeless people looking for employment?** Yes, applications for projects covering this work can be considered by LBTH for funding through Theme 3 of MCGP. |
| **66.** | **What does ‘including’ mean in the context of who the Theme and Scheme descriptions are geared towards in terms of beneficiary groups?**Beneficiary groups listed in this way, in relation to specific Themes and Schemes, are priority and potential beneficiary groups of projects funded through these Themes and Schemes. If a potential beneficiary group is not listed in this way it does not necessarily mean that a project focused on this beneficiary group would not be funded by a specific MCGP Theme or Scheme. |
| **67.** | **Would MCGP grant payments be made in advance or arrears?**MCGP grant payments would be made in advance, at the start of each funding quarter. |
| **68.** | **The MCGP prospectus states that if there is a difference in the scores of the two Council officers of more than 10% then a senior manager will moderate the two scores to reach an agreed score. Does this mean 10% of the higher score from one of the Council officers or 10% points between the higher and the lower score from the two officers.**It means 10% points between the higher and the lower score from the two officers. |
| **69.** | **If an organisations is making more than one application must they be all under different themes?**An organisation can make more than one application under a particular theme or scheme. The potential maximum of five applications does not have to be for five separate themes or schemes.  |
| **70.** | **Organisations who give advice or training to members of public, what amount of Professional Indemnity Insurance cover to they need to have?**This has been revised down to £2 million and is reflected in the updated prospectus.  |

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| **71.** | **Can an organisation apply for MCGP funding for two projects in the same Theme or Scheme?** |
|  | Yes. |
| **72.** | **Can the geographic area for a MCGP project be the whole of Tower Hamlets?**Yes. |
| **73.** | **Will the monitoring and reporting requirements for MCGP be the same as those for the Local Community Fund programme?**The monitoring and reporting requirements for MCGP have not yet been decided upon. Organisations approved for MCGP funding will be fully informed of these requirements before their projects commence. |
| **74.** | **Does every beneficiary of a MCGP project have to be living in Tower Hamlets and is the funding awarded on that basis? Can applications for MCGP funding focus on people living in other parts of London, in addition to Tower Hamlets residents?**Applications for MCGP should be concerned with obtaining funding for projects solely aimed at Tower Hamlets residents. |
| **75.** | **Can consortium applications under themes other than Theme 1 Tackling Cost of Living apply for funding that exceeds £40,000 per annum for a project?**No, the maximum potential allocation per annum for a consortium project not funded through Theme 1 is £40,000 per annum for the project as a whole. |
| **76.** | **Can organisations based in boroughs other than Tower Hamlets apply for MCGP?**If an organisation is based or has a head office in another borough it can apply for MCGP if it can demonstrate one of the following in its MCGP application:* has a registered office in Tower Hamlets
* has a base within Tower Hamlets
* has a track record of successful service delivery within Tower Hamlets for at least two years.
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| **77.** | **Can housing associations apply for MCGP?**MCGP is open to organisations that areclassified as one of the following:* a voluntary and community organisation
* a registered charity, including the option of a charitable incorporated organisation
* a registered not-for-profit company
* a registered community interest company.

Please see page 5 of MCGP prospectus. |