**The Call**

This specification document relates to the Call for a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Managing Partner to deliver the Community Recovery Fund (CRF) across the West of England on behalf of, and in close partnership with, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA).

The West of England (WoE) Regional Recovery Plan (September 2020) sets out the region’s plan to support recovery and renewal following Covid-19. Key responsibilities of the recovery plan include identifying challenges and opportunities and finding ways to help people to access employment, skills and training to support economic renewal and resilience.

The Recovery Plan priorities are:

* Rebuild business
* Get residents back into jobs
* Strengthen inclusion – which includes ‘Launch new Community Grant scheme to build local capacity and resilience in the ‘hardest hit’ communities creating pathways to employment and skills.’
* Green recovery
* Renew Places.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/West-of-England-Recovery-Plan.pdf>

The CRF is one of several programmes which have been funded through the £9m Recovery Fund and relates to the ‘strengthening Inclusion’ priority. It will run from May 2021 – November 2022.

**The Role of the VCS Managing Partner**

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is seeking a VCS Managing Partner to manage the fund and its delivery (by way of grants) to voluntary and community groups across the WoE. The successful partner will have responsibility for ensuring the fund is delivered against the approved outcomes, impacts and benefits (see Logic model). Key responsibilities will include:

* promoting the CRF and funding rounds/deadlines to appropriate groups, organisations and communities;
* reaching out to VCS groups and encouraging them to come forward with appropriate proposals;
* supporting VCS organisations in writing high quality applications (thus helping to build capacity and experience). These applications will be assessed by a Board made up of local authority and WECA representatives);
* undertaking all due diligence and administering the grant funding to the approved projects;
* ensuring the grant funding is being used by all successful organisations as per any agreed conditions and delivered against approved outcomes and measures;
* undertaking monitoring and evaluation throughout the lifetime of the fund;
* producing regular monitoring, evaluation and management reports for the WECA Senior Team overseeing the delivery of Recovery Fund projects; and
* working closely with the WECA Project Manager (daily) and local authorities (weekly – at local authority offices where required) to ensure that the overall targets, outcomes and benefits are achieved.

As the successful VCS organisation will become the ‘Managing Partner’ for the CRF and its delivery across the West of England, applicants will need to demonstrate that they have:

* A minimum turnover of £800K-£1M per annum;
* the relevant capacity (in terms of resource, experience and knowledge),
* proven track record of delivering similar funds and
* extensive links with the voluntary and community sector across the West of England.

In terms of the administration of the fund, the VCS Managing Partner must ensure that the fund is administered on time, within budget and to agreed timescales.

One of the key rational for bringing in a VCS Managing Partner to help with the delivery of the CRF is that not all voluntary and community groups have the experience, skills or capability to submit a strong application. This could be a major barrier to both the delivery of the CRF funding and its overall aim of supporting the most vulnerable and in-need groups within our communities, thus posing a significant risk to the overall success of the fund. Therefore, one of the key responsibilities of the managing partner will be to assist VCS groups (where needed) with developing and writing high quality proposal(s)/application(s).

**Funding Rounds**

Aside from the funding used to cover the Managing Partner costs, the bulk of delivery funds will be administered through funding rounds which may be up to quarterly (though may be fewer, depending on funding allocated at each round). The Managing Partner will establish, promote and receive applications under each funding round as set out below, ensuring that a viable set of projects are brought to the Steering Group for review. The Steering Group (made up of representation from WECA, the three unitary authorities and the VCS partner) will assess proposals and agree which projects are to be supported in order to achieve a full and representative level of support according to need across the region. WECA reserves the right to make the final decision on any application.

As part of this process the Managing Partner will be expected to:

* Promote the fund and deadline dates to VCS groups/projects;
* Work with VCS groups/projects (where needed) to help them compile a quality application;
* Check applications received, undertaking any due diligence and background checks required;
* Work with WECA’s Project Manager/Project Coordinator to schedule the assessment and review process; circulate all relevant paperwork; facilitate the assessment panel and present results to the Steering Group; circulate post-Board minutes which record the outcome of the applications and undertake all other duties pertaining to the robust selection of delivery projects
* Notify the applicants of the outcome and provide support or guidance as needed to successful applicants

**Project payments and delivery**

Once projects have been selected and approved, the Managing Partner’s role will be to work with successful applicants to establish and oversee delivery. This will include setting up processes to capture and make payments to the successful delivery organisations. To be clear, the Managing Partner’s costs are referred to as ‘management costs’, while the funds to be transferred to the successful applicants are referred to as ‘delivery projects’ and ‘delivery costs.

As part of this process the Managing Partner will be expected to:

* Manage and make grant payments to delivery projects. Funds will be transferred by WECA in arrears to the Managing Partner based on an aggregated payment profile for that period (the total of payments that will need to be made to all successful delivery organisations in support of delivery). The Managing Agent will compile the payment profile and submit this to WECA for review. Once agreed, funds will be transferred by WECA (in arrears either monthly or quarterly) and the Managing Partner will use these funds to pay projects their delivery costs according to their individual payment profile.
* The Managing Partner’s own management costs will be paid quarterly in arrears based on an agreed payment profile (monthly in arrears may be possible if necessary, at setup stage).
* Ensure that grants are spent according to the approved project plan. There will be a requirement to monitor the progress of the approved delivery projects, addressing any underperformance and ensuring that projects meet the approved outcomes, impacts and benefits.
* Underspend / under delivery will be monitored closely and any risks or issues in this, or any regard, will be flagged to the WECA Project Manager as soon as possible, so that remedial solutions can be found.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The VSC Managing Partner will also be required to produce regular update, monitoring and evaluation reports including:

* Monthly highlight reports– to be submitted to the Project Manager at WECA by 25th of each month;
* Quarterly monitoring and evaluation reports to be submitted to WECA’s assurance team as part of the grant conditions and for reporting on Recovery Fund delivery;
* Other regular project level monitoring reports (including total amount of funding administered, number of residents engaged, participant feedback, evaluation of individual projects etc) for each Steering Group meeting (quarterly reports and Steering Group reports can be aligned where possible to avoid duplication); and
* End of scheme Evaluation.

**VCS Managing Partner costs**

It is expected that the VCS Managing Partner will bring at least 10% match to the programme in the form of revenue and/or in-kind contributions which may cover some of the above management. However, it is acknowledged that the role of the Managing Partner (as outlined above and in the accompanying scoping paper) is a substantial one and accordingly, a percentage of the fund will cover the VCS Managing Partner’s management costs. This must not however exceed circa £91,000 - £98,000.

No additional funds will be available outside of the above to cover the management of the fund, therefore applicants must provide details of how they will administer the fund within the agreed budget, timescales and targets. A full financial breakdown and plan of the management costs covering the lifetime of the fund must be submitted with the application.

WECA will pay the VCS Managing Partner’s management costs on a quarterly basis (in arrears) throughout the lifetime of the contract unless otherwise agreed.

WECA reserves the right to terminate the contract at any point throughout the lifetime of the contract if the performance of the VCS Managing Partner does not meet the agreed targets.

**Benefits and outcomes**

The application form sets out a number of ‘success targets’ which align with the outcomes, impacts and benefits contained within the Logic Model.

Section 2 of the Application Form sets out a number of ‘core targets’ which must be delivered (as a minimum) by the VCS Managing Partner and the fund. However, it is expected that as a key delivery partner within the VCS, the Managing Partner will have the ability to deliver additional outcomes, impacts and benefits which must be specified within the application form. These are subject to negotiation with WECA as part of the selection process.

**Geographical coverage**

The West of England area includes the devolved local authority areas of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The VCS Managing Partner must set out in the application form how it will ensure that the fund is delivered to communities across this geographical area.

**Sustainability of the project**

The Recovery Fund has been made available as a result of Covid 19 and thus is a ‘short-term’ fund. WECA is particularly interested in proposals which help to deliver a sustainable legacy impact beyond the lifetime of the project (see question 4c of the application form).

**Key timescales**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Call launched for VCS Partner, full criteria published |  | w/c 22 March 2021 |
| Opportunity to book a 1-2-1 slot to discuss proposals (this will be a max 30 min slot on a day tbc – please contact [skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)if this is of interest) |  | w/c 5 April 2021 |
| Application deadline |  | 28 April 2021 |
| VCS Partner proposals assessed & due diligence |  | By 12 May 2021 |
| Selection of a VCS partner organisation.  Applicants informed & GOL issued |  | By 14 May 2021 |
| Mobilisation |  | Late May/early June 2021 |
| CRF Programme Delivery starts |  | Late May/early June onwards |
| Delivery |  | June 21 - November 2022 |
| Monthly Monitoring Reports produced and circulated by the PM |  | By the 20th of each month |
| Task & Finish Group review meetings |  | Dec 2020, March 2021, June 2021 and September 2021, Dec 2021, March 2022, June 2022, Sept 2022 |
| Mid-point evaluation |  | January 2022 |
| Full project evaluation |  | November 2022 |

**If you have any questions regarding the application process, please email** [**skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk**](mailto:skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)