



Community Legal Service Grants



Information for Applicants

Introduction to the Legal Services Commission

The Legal Services Commission (“the LSC”) is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and created under the Access to Justice Act 1999.

The LSC provides legal aid and legal advice and information in England and Wales through two schemes: the Community Legal Service (CLS) and the Criminal Defence Service (CDS). The LSC contracts with firms of solicitors, not-for-profit organisations and other commercial organisations (collectively known as our “Providers”) to provide frontline services, either through face-to-face advice or telephone advice.

The vast majority of the £197 million that the Commission spends on Legal Help goes directly into funding frontline services, either through: face-to-face advice provided by contracted solicitors and not-for-profit organisations; or telephone advice provided by Community Legal Service Direct. Last year this money was used to provide a record level of over 800,000 acts of advice and assistance.

A small proportion of the Legal Help budget, currently around £3.5m, is used to fund services that complement those frontline services. These are known as Supplier Support Services and include: the Specialist Support Service, which provides second tier support to eligible advice organisations and the Community Legal Service (“CLS”) Grants Budget, which provides funding to advice-related projects and activities.

In funding these services, the Commission is acutely aware that every pound spent on Supplier Support Services is money that could otherwise be spent on providing frontline advice to people who need it. It is therefore essential that we ensure that the money we spend on these services is used both effectively and efficiently.

The CLS Grants Budget, is a mechanism that has allowed the Commission to consider ad hoc funding proposals from a variety of organisations and award funding to projects and activities that do not necessarily provide direct advice solely to eligible clients.

Having undertaken a detailed consultation and reviewed the future of the CLS Grants scheme we have concluded that CLS Grants are an effective mechanism for funding complimentary services that could not be funded from other sources. However, our view is that the criteria originally used to determine which organisations received grants are out-dated and need to be more consistent with the CLS Strategy and current LSC corporate objectives.

As a result of the review we have increased the annual grants budget to £1million and have amended and enhanced the selection criteria.

We now invite applications for grants to commence in April 2008 and for up to three years.

We hope that these amended criteria and our commitment to CLS Grant funding will allow both existing recipients and potential recipients the opportunity to put forward new proposals for the utilisation of this budget.

The revised process will place greater emphasis on awarding funds for 'deliverables', albeit implementing this principle sensibly and flexibly.

What are we looking to fund?

We are looking to fund projects / activities which contribute towards that objectives of the Community Legal Service and which cannot be funded through a normal LSC Provider Contract.

Projects / activities may be ongoing or "one-off" though we will be looking for proposals with long term / ongoing impact. You can apply for the grant funding for up to three years although we will be looking for evidence that the proposed project, or the benefits of it, can continue under other funding streams when the grant period ends.

The total annual CLS grants budget is £1million. You can apply for an annual grant of up to £300,000.

In deciding whether to award a CLS Grant we will be looking for proposals that meet the following criteria:

1. The proposed project / activity must relate to civil categories of law.

The Community Legal Service is enacted to fund the provision of legal services across civil law rather than criminal law and therefore it is essential that the proposed project / activity relates only to civil areas of law. Proposals relating to criminal law issues will not be considered.

We will favour proposals that relate to more than one category of law and greater weight will be given to proposals relating to multiple categories.

2. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that a need for the project or activity exists.

It goes without saying that grant funding will only be made available if the Commission is satisfied that there is a real need for the proposed project or activity.

3. The proposed project / activity must not be capable of being funded under LSC mainstream contracts however it could complement services provided under an LSC contract.
4. Applicants must demonstrate financial stability and sound financial management.

The Commission will be looking for proof that the applicants are able to offer financial security and longevity such that the proposed project / activity is likely to happen.

5. The applicant must be able and willing to deliver the proposed project / activity:
 - a. on a national basis; or
 - b. on a regional basis where the project / activity forms part of a national project / activity.

The Commission is seeking to fund national projects or projects which, whilst locally based, are part of national projects or have the potential to be rolled out as national projects. In particular we will favour projects that address issues across both England and Wales (and would expect the application to specifically and separately detail the benefits in both England and Wales).

6. The proposed project / activity must be linked to at least one of the priority areas of work designed to deliver the CLS Policy objectives.

These can be found in the Commission's CLS Strategy and include the provision of education and information, strategic action and the development of integrated services. We will favour applications that can demonstrate clear links to more than one CLS Policy Objective.

7. The proposed project / activity must have specific and measurable outcomes with mechanisms in place to monitor, evaluate and report the outcomes of the project/activity.

It is essential that we are able to demonstrate value for money and therefore we will look for evidence that each proposed project / activity will have specific and measurable outcomes and these outcomes will become conditions of the grant.

8. The proposed project / activity must support the transformation of legal aid in accordance with the lines set out in *Legal Aid Reform: the Way Ahead* and *Making Legal Rights a Reality*, and either deliver:
 - a. National services that support the transformation of the not-for-profit provider base to deliver reformed civil legal aid; or
 - b. Unique national services focussed on the priorities set out in the Lord Chancellor's Directions, namely:
 - i. Special Children Act proceedings;
 - ii. Civil proceedings where the client is at real and immediate loss of life or liberty, e.g. asylum and mental health;
 - iii. Help with social welfare issues that will enable people to avoid or climb out of social exclusion.

9. The application should demonstrate that the proposed project / activity will benefit (directly or indirectly) those who meet the eligibility criteria for Legal Help. At least 50% of those benefiting from the project/activity should be eligible for Legal Help.

We recognise that this will be difficult to demonstrate but we will favour proposals which clearly benefit individuals who would be financially eligible for Legal Help as these are likely to be the most socially excluded.

10. Does the proposed project offer additional or match funding?

Is there additional or match funding? We will view favourably applications which can demonstrate that the LSC funding will be matched or supplemented by funding from other streams (this may even include funding under an LSC provider contract).

11. Is there a proposal for continuation funding?

We will be looking for evidence that the proposed project / activity will be able to continue when the grant funding comes to an end (either by becoming self financing or through other funding streams).

12. The applicant must demonstrate that it is the organisation best placed to undertake the proposed activity / project (i.e why it should be your organisation that receives funding for this project).

The Selection Process

A panel of senior LSC employees will consider each application and that panel will then make recommendations to the Commission's Director of CLS.

Each of the above criteria will be scored out of 5, with 0 meaning that a criterion is not met and 5 being the highest available score against a criterion. These scores will then be totalled and then the evaluation panel will decide which proposals should be recommended for funding.

The proposed project / activity must, as a minimum, meet criteria 1 to 8 above and a score of zero in respect of any of these criteria will result in the application being refused. If your proposal does not meet these criteria then do not apply for grant funding.

In making this decision the panel will have regard to the scoring but will also have regard to the amount of grant being sought and the duration of the grant period being sought. In doing so the panel will seek to best utilise the available budget for the available period. This may mean that projects with lower scores may receive grants if there is insufficient money to fund higher scoring projects or if funding these lower scoring projects reflects better usage of the grant budget and better value for money.

This decision is entirely at the discretion of the evaluation panel. We reserve the right to amend the application process or evaluation criteria at any time.

Applicants may be contacted by or on behalf of the panel to discuss their application and, if appropriate, whether part of the proposed project / activity could be funded or whether the proposals could continue with a lesser amount of funding.

The Application Process

To apply, you must complete the CLS Grant Application Form which can be found on the LSC website or appended to this document. All applications are made at the applicant's risk and cost and the Commission is not responsible for any losses or expenses associated with the application, evaluation or award process, however caused.

There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions before you decide whether to submit an application. Questions must be submitted to the Commission in writing before **12 noon on 25th January 2008**. We will consider the questions and post our answers on our website on **Friday 1st February 2008**. Applicants which submit questions should visit our website for the answers on that date; we will not respond to applicants individually.

You are advised to review the questions and answers section on our website on or after that date, prior to finalising your application.

The closing date and time for applications is **12 noon on Friday 15th February 2008**. Completed applications must be received by the Commission before 12 noon on the day. Unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. fire or accident), late applications will not be accepted. Applications should be sent by registered / guaranteed post or email, but not by fax. If you send your application by Royal Mail or DX, please note that this is at your risk, as there is no guarantee we will receive it. It is your responsibility to telephone us to check we have received your application (however it was sent). We are not responsible for any failure of post, DX or email.

If submitting your application by email, please provide an email address to which we can acknowledge receipt. Unless you receive an email acknowledgement, you should not assume we have received your application. We would advise you to email us **before 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 14th February 2008** so that, if you do not receive an acknowledgement back from us, you can email it again before the Friday deadline.

All applications must be accompanied by:

- Where available, copies of your audited accounts for the last two years;
- Where appropriate, a funding matrix;
- A bank or credit reference;
- A detailed financial plan showing how the grant will monies will be utilised over the lifetime of the grant;

All applications, however sent, must be marked "**CLS Grant Application – Private & Confidential - for the attention of Simon Stanley**".

Please return postal applications to:

Simon Stanley
Civil Policy Team
Legal Services Commission
First Floor

12 Roger Street
London
WC1N 2JL
DX 328 London/Chancery Lane

Please return email applications to:

simon.stanley@legalservices.gov.uk.

All applications will be considered by the evaluation panel in late February / early March 2008 and applicants will be notified whether they have been successful (wholly or in part) in mid March 2008. Successful applicants will receive a letter setting out the terms upon which the grant is awarded and the terms upon which the grant / funding may be withdrawn.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Applicants should note that under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act"), the Commission may be required to disclose details of your application to third parties. If you have concerns in this area, you should identify which parts of your application should be subject to an exemption under the Act and you should explain clearly why that exemption should apply. You should be aware, however, that the Act is likely to be interpreted to allow details generally to be placed in the public domain and you should note that details of all LSC Grant Funding will be placed in the public domain.



Community Legal Service Grants



Application Form

Name of Applicant:	
Address:	
Telephone No.:	
Email address:	
Contact name:	
How much funding are you seeking:	
Over how many years are you seeking funding:	

In no more than 1,000 words please outline the proposed project / activity for which you are seeking funding:

How does the proposed project / activity relate to civil categories of law and to which categories does it relate?

Please demonstrate that a need for the project or activity exists.

Please explain why your proposed project / activity is not capable of being funded under LSC mainstream contracts.

Please outline how the proposed project / activity will be delivered on a national basis; or, if it is regionally based, how it forms part of a national project / activity. Please explain specifically how your proposals will benefit individuals in both England and Wales.

Please explain how the proposed project / activity is linked to the CLS Policy objectives and, where appropriate, how it will assist the Commission in meeting one or more of our corporate targets.

Please outline the specific and measurable outcomes that the proposed project / activity and what mechanisms will be place to monitor, evaluate and report those outcomes.

Please outline how the proposed project / activity will support the transformation of legal aid in accordance with the lines set out in *Legal Aid Reform: the Way Ahead* and *Making Legal Rights a Reality*, and either deliver:

- National services that support the transformation of the not-for-profit provider base to deliver reformed civil legal aid; or
- Unique national services focussed on the priorities set out in the Lord Chancellor's Directions, namely:
 - Special Children Act proceedings;
 - Civil proceedings where the client is at real and immediate loss of life or liberty, eg. asylum and mental health;
 - Help with social welfare issues that will enable people to avoid or climb out of social exclusion.

Please demonstrate how your proposed project / activity will benefit (directly or indirectly) those who meet the eligibility criteria for Legal Help. In particular explain how at least 50% of those benefiting from the project / activity would be eligible for Legal Help.

Does the proposed project offer additional or match funding and if so (a) what is it, and (b) where will it come from?

How will the proposed project / activity continue when the grant funding comes to an end?

Why are you (is your organisation) best placed to undertake the proposed activity / project?

Please provide any further information that you think will help us in assessing your application.

I confirm that the information contained within this application form (and its accompanying documents) is true.

Signed:

Print Name:

Date: