Covid-19 Good Practice Funding Recommendations

Based on early evidence from the Covid-19 crisis, funders should follow these steps. These were developed by the Covid-19 equity and inclusion working group convened by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport[1] and sector bodies with input from funders and umbrella organisations representing groups highly impacted by Covid-19, and are based on a rights-based approach:

1. Funders should provide additional and tailored funds to support groups, who have historically been excluded or found it difficult to access funding.[1]

2. Build trust and acknowledge unequal power relations. Take steps to reduce barriers to access, involvement and fairness in decision making.

3. Application processes should be simplified, accessible[2], and non-discriminatory. Where needed, costs of ensuring access and inclusion should be funded.

4. Invest direct in organisations led by people with direct lived experience[3][4] of injustice or inequalities, as they have community reach and trust.

5. When you fund mainstream organisations, ask for evidence of how they work alongside trusted grassroots and specialist organisations in the local community.

6. Have a clear outreach strategy using different communication channels. Work with umbrella groups and equality organisations, who can provide support.

7. Address unconscious bias in grant making. Ensure funding staff receive appropriate training to reduce risk of discrimination against marginalized groups.

8. Consult and meaningfully involve representatives of communities in funding decision-making process. Do this through open and transparent dialogue, listening and responding appropriately.

9. Ensure decision-making panels meaningfully include people with lived experience and experts who can reach into specific communities and issues.

10. Ensure that payment models work for smaller and specialist lived experience organisations. This should include payment in advance, flexibility on overheads, core or unrestricted funds where possible.

11. Ensure that funding addresses legacy, and support grantees to build resilience for the future by funding infrastructure.

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[1] DCMS supports these good practice recommendations and is consulting internally, and with colleagues across Whitehall about future adoption in line with HMG guidance and their grant making functions.

12. Ensure the requirement for evidence and data of need, does not prohibit funding for marginalized groups.

13. Use eligibility criteria that are not prohibitive. Adapt your expectations and criteria to the context of these groups e.g. governance, financial information.

14. Use accurate and non-harmful representations of people and communities in your language, imagery, data, stories, and fundraising campaigns.

[1] This could include ring-fencing, adapted criteria, targeted funding calls, and easing eligibility criteria for small and specialist organisations.

[2] This includes ensuring that forms are compatible with adapted devices and specialist software, making interview questions available in advance for disabled applicants, offering clear guidelines in plain English, different formats e.g. video, braille, different languages, and direct support to applicants where needed.

[3] People with lived experience: Someone with direct personal experience (past or present) of social injustice, inequality, oppression or a social issue.

[4] These organisations are sometimes called organisations 'of' communities of identity or experience. These organisations are led and controlled by a majority of people who have relevant lived experience and so reflect and are 'of' the communities that organisation works with. These organisations have a majority of people with lived experience at all levels of their organisation including trustees, senior management, staff and volunteers. Simply engaging with a beneficiary group doesn't mean an organisation is led by people with lived experience.