

Isle of Wight Council Grant-Making Process: Terms of Reference for Panels (Revised Sept 2010)

1. Purpose

An appraisal panel, assisted where required by one or more advisory panels, will assess applications for funding invited under the Council's grant-making schemes. It will make final recommendations on funding to commissioners.

2. Delegated powers

The panel will make recommendations to the commissioner, who acts under the delegated authority of the relevant Council Director or equivalent. Council commissioners will commend the allocation of available funds to the Council Cabinet member with appropriate delegated authority.

3. The Process of Appraisal

Stage 1. The commissioner will indicate which bids meet the technical criteria for consideration. Bidding organisations must qualify for funding and submit any information requested. The commissioner will also identify duplicate bids, which will subsequently be treated as one application.

The commissioner will also report any actions taken after the closing date including a summary of any advice given to bidders, and of any arrangements made to allow bidders time to submit an amended application. Any bids still not meeting the required technical criteria will be declined at this stage.

Stage 2. The panel will assess qualifying bids, followed by recommendation on how grant funding should be allocated. The appraisal panel will:

- Consider qualifying bids and identify which are eligible for funding.
- Take account of references and other information supplied.
- Consider objectives, priorities and outcomes attached to the grant.
- Consider value for money and the need for best value.
- Record any significant factors, scoring and decisions made.
- Call for specialist advice, adjourn and establish advisory panels as required.
- Consider equality and discrimination issues arising from recommendations.
- Conclude with recommendations that identify the most successful bids.

Panels need not only recommend applications achieving the highest appraisal score. They can apply a range of criteria in accordance with commissioning strategies and the priorities of funding partners. For example, where there is uneven geographic distribution of services, a lesser scoring application located in an area of need may rank above other higher scoring applications.

4. Membership of appraisal panels

Panels will be chaired by a service commissioner with as many members as needed to ensure sound decisions. The quorum is three members, including a commissioner and at least one person independent of the public sector who has insight into providing services or the services being appraised. Panels can also include representatives of service users and communities. The chair can invite other attendees as non-voting advisers or observers.

5. Role and Membership of advisory panels

Advisory panels can be created by the appraisal panel where a particularly inclusive or specialist assessment is needed. Advisory panels will be chaired by a representative of the service commissioner who will report the opinions of the advisory panel to the appraisal panel.

The advisory panel chair will invite a membership that will help the panel make the best possible recommendation to the appraisal panel. Panels must have at least one independent representative from the community or private sector. Membership may be influenced by a need to ensure the inclusion of particular user voices or communities, and/or by a need for specialist or expert advice. Panels can also include representatives of service users and communities and seek out a wide range of views.

Panel recommendations can be the result of consensus or voting. Accountability for actions rest with the chair and any co-chair of the Panel.

6. Confidentiality and the conduct of the panel members

Panel members must not disclose any of the information considered to any other body or person not present at the panel meeting. Members of panels must also declare any interest they may have in any bids. Participants must follow the general principles of conduct in public life as set out in the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001. Other conflict of interest protocols are also in force; for example, Public sector staff are subject to their Employee Code of Conduct. Panel members can ask for information about these principles and codes.

7. Moderation

The appraisal panel may moderate the results of all recommendations to ensure consistency and best value. Moderation will include financial constraints and panels may invite advisors to assist with this process.

8. References

Where references are required, at least one should be available at or before the panel. If any references are negative in tone, or any other relevant information comes to light, appraisal findings will be referred to the chair of the panel for a decision on whether any recommendation already made should stand or be removed from the decision-making process and declined.

9. Communication

The chairs of the appraisal panel will compose a report making the final recommendations to the appropriate final authority. Communication of the final grant-funding decisions to all applicants will take place in time for successful applicants to prepare to deliver their services.

10. Feedback to organisations

Written feedback can be supplied to applicants in summary form. The summary will include information about appeal and complaints procedures. Applicants will also be given verbal feedback on their application if requested.