

**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

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Consultation on the Equality
and Human Rights Commission's

Grants Programme

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

– the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

The Commission was established under the Equality Act 2006 and opened in October 2007. We are a non-departmental public body, which means that we are accountable for our public funds but independent of government. We have taken over the roles and duties of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission and we also have new responsibilities.

The Commission enforces and develops equality legislation on age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender status and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act. We work closely with, and provide advice and guidance to, policymakers, lawyers, government, businesses, the voluntary and public sectors, and individuals.

We have offices in England, Scotland and Wales. For further details please see our website [**www.equalityhumanrights.com**](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

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Consultation on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Grants Programme

A. The anticipated role of grants in delivering our work programme

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is empowered to give financial assistance, by virtue of Section 17 of the Equality Act 2006, to organisations who promote equality and diversity, good relations and human rights.

The Commission committed itself to this consultation process whilst introducing the Interim Grants Programme for 2008–09, which is providing funding amounting to £10.9 million to 285 eligible organisations. This equates to a substantial increase in the combined funding spend of all three former commissions in their final year of operation (the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission).

The Commission's grants function needs to be made fit for purpose to achieve its overall aim of implementing the Commission's strategic priorities. The grants function needs to reflect

the ethos of the Commission and provide vital intelligence on public concern around issues of equality, human rights and social cohesion. The Commission therefore needs to act upon the lessons learned in the former commissions' experience of the grants function.

It is clear from the Interim Grants Programme that the Commission alone will not fully satisfy the demands for funding, expertise and awareness that the sector requires to ensure fairness. We will have to work in partnership with other funding bodies, and encourage others to work in partnership as well. This will necessitate a shift in focus on the areas of operation.

In Scotland, the Scottish Commission for Human Rights must also agree the funding, where grants relate to human rights work. We will therefore be working closely with them to ensure a synergy between our work programmes and the focus of human rights grant funding.

Why we are consulting and what we will do with the responses?

While developing the Interim Grants Programme for 2008–09, the Commission committed to a comprehensive review of the grants function prior to the launch of the 2009–10 programme. Key elements of this review consist of a public consultation on the grants programme, a closer alignment of the grants function to the

Commission's overall strategic plan and the development of a more fit-for-purpose grants funding model, learning from best practice examples.

These three elements are inextricably linked. Therefore, the Commission's strategy is directly informing the Grants Programme Public Consultation, which in turn will provide the framework for the best practice model. The responses from this consultation will directly feed into the development and design of the 2009–10/11–12 Grants Programme. We will publish the results of the consultation and make them available prior to the launch of the programme in 2009.

B. Areas of inquiry for the consultation

Given the complex issues that the Grants Programme will be addressing we are focusing our enquiries for this consultation on the following areas:

1. Focus of the grants programme and funding strategic activity

Current situation: In the current Grants Programme, the Commission has an outcome-based approach to grants, that is, funding a planned programme of activity with measurable outputs. The outcome-based model places more emphasis on the end result and less on the process, using a workplan to monitor overall progress. This framework is considered to offer flexibility and drive effectiveness at all levels – for the donor, the grant recipient and the end user. However, outcome-based funding is also criticised for taking a narrow view of overall organisational requirements, and can result in a very mechanistic approach to funding work, such as in the equalities sphere where benefits are not always easily measurable over the short term.

The current grants programme consists of a mixture of various types of projects; some of them are strategic in their focus, others concentrate solely on responding to a known local situation or need. As funds are limited and demand is high, we

need to maximise value by focusing on delivery of our strategic priorities, in the light of both current and future needs of communities. There are a variety of ways in which we could fund activity (for example funding networks, consortia, providing opportunities for infrastructural development, concentrating support for particular activities on either larger organisations or smaller ones that are closer to local communities, etc).

We will also review the organisation type(s) that are best positioned to enable the Commission to achieve its strategic objectives. Organisation type in this context is referring to both the organisation's legal status, as well as its priorities.

Our proposals: Given the need for the Grants Programme to be a mechanism for the delivery of our strategic objectives, whilst also providing us with a means of connecting directly with those organisations receiving grants, we are proposing that the Grants Programme consists of Strategic and Project grants.

Strategic grants will be for three years for organisations to deliver a programme of work which will directly lead to the achievement of all or some of our overall strategic priorities over a timescale which aligns with our strategic plan.

Projects grants will be for one year and will focus on short-term objectives that support the delivery of our strategic aims.



Question 1:

How desirable is the proposal of a mix of longer-term projects for strategic work, combined with short-term funding for local projects?

What are the implications of this proposed approach?

Is the outcomes approach appropriate for strategic and project grants?

What alternative approaches would work?

Other questions to consider include:

Is the outcome-focused funding regime the best way of delivering the Commission's objectives and meeting community needs? Which type of organisation should the Commission be funding and why? What eligibility criteria should be applied?

Example of a strategic grant:

Assuming that one of the Commission's strategic objectives is: 'Children and Young People – Developing a Generation Without Prejudice' a strategic project may be one that seeks to understand the attitudinal issues that impact or inform young people's prejudices, for example conflict between young people from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, or between British-born youths and Eastern Europeans, and has the aim of doing things that help foster relations through contact that is clear both in purpose and intended outcomes.

Example of a project grant:

A possible project grant would then work to promote specified shared values that reinforce social cohesion. This could be done by working with local schools and the local university to bring young people attending the university from communities that do not traditionally access higher education together, to encourage more students from such communities to apply for university places.

2. Ongoing involvement arrangements

Current situation: Our relationship with bodies funded in the interim period is one of loose partnership, with the main emphasis on ensuring compliance with the grants funding agreement, and achievement of the agreed outcomes.

We recognise that voluntary and community sector organisations require and expect differing levels of support and involvement with the Commission, and the grants programme is an important, but not the only, vehicle for establishing and developing such relationships.

We also recognise that the funding provided by the Commission can serve funded bodies in many other ways beyond the immediate monetary support. Of particular importance seems to be the funding programme's 'turn key'¹ role for the voluntary and community sector, that is, other funders perceive a level of assurance and credibility in organisations who are beneficiaries of our programme.

1 There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that once the Equality and Human Rights Commission funds an organisation, it 'turns the key' for other funding bodies to either match-fund the activity, or be reassured to fund them for other related activities.

Our proposal: That we develop through the grants programme a relationship with funded organisations that works towards achieving the Commission’s mission and strategic objectives, in accordance with the principles of the Compact.²

Question 2:

How can we improve communication and relationships between the Commission and funded bodies at regional level?

Other questions to consider include:

Should funded organisations be subject to a set of quality framework standards and, if so, which elements should apply? Is a local Compact agreement between the Commission and funded partners required – if yes, what should the elements of this be? What partnership support would funded bodies require of the Commission? What areas should dedicated equality standards for organisations funded by the Commission cover? How would we ensure the needs of the

2 The Compact is an agreement that provides an overall framework for promoting effective partnership working between the Westminster Government and the voluntary and community sector in England. It aims to address areas of poor performance and sets out a statement of intent to work in partnership supported by five Codes of Practice. These five Codes cover funding and procurement, community groups, ethnic minority groups, volunteers and consultation.

end user are being met? What are the benefits and elements of a partnership arrangement based on the Commission's funding?

3. Length of funding

Current situation: At the moment, the Commission's interim grants programme is a single-year programme.

Our proposal: It has been demonstrated, in particular by the experiences of the former commissions, that an annual grants funding programme would not be able to achieve any meaningful longer-term change, either for the funder or for the societies the funding is targeted at. The short-term intensity of effort, activity and investment does not allow for sustainable change, nor does it allow for a considered strategic approach. A more attractive proposition is to fund activity over the course of the Commission's strategic plan of three to five years which will then establish the Commission's relevance to actual identified social needs. This is also in line with recent guidance from HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office.³

3 'Three-Year Funding: Guidance for Central Government Departments on implementing the Three-Year funding commitment – first stage of report: October 2008'; published by HM Treasury and Cabinet Office.

Question 3:

Do groups welcome the proposal to introduce longer-term grants?

What are the practical implications of giving longer-term strategic programmes three-year funding and smaller project activities one-year funding?

Other questions to consider include: How long should the funding offered to voluntary and community sector organisations last? What action should the Commission be considering to minimise any adverse impact and maximise the benefits of such changes? Should the funding be phased over the life of our strategic plan?

C. Who is being consulted and how?

Working with our stakeholder engagement, regional and national offices in England, Scotland and Wales, we will be utilising our local networks and connections from across the voluntary and community sectors, the public and corporate sectors, and individual stakeholders, to inform the emerging Equality and Human Rights Commission's Grants Programme.

This will include organisations who have or who previously have had a funding relationship with either the Commission or one of the former commissions and want to ensure that the lessons learnt as a result of that relationship are utilised by the Commission. In addition the Grants Programme should present the Commission with opportunities for engagement with new stakeholders who will be delivery agents of the Commission's strategic priorities. These stakeholders will also include local authorities, private industry, educational bodies, regional development agencies and bodies who have had, or could benefit from having, a direct strategic relationship with the Commission, and have an appreciation of the issues that the Commission faces in our quest to create a more equal society. In Scotland, we will also be holding discussions with the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

This consultation document will be placed on the Commission website for the 12-week consultation period. Working with our national and regional offices, the Commission will conduct a series of consultation events around the country, where members of the voluntary and community sector, including community groups and other invited guests, will participate in an interactive discussion. The feedback from these events will inform the emerging Grants Programme.

D. Equality impact assessment

The consultation process, the final report and the emergent materials and products shall all be subject to a robust equality impact assessment which will be published alongside the other materials later in the year.

E. Next steps

Proposed timetable	
October 2008:	Launch of consultation process Stakeholder consultation events
January 2009:	Close of consultation period
March 2009:	Grants strategy paper for 2009–12 launched
October–December 2009:	New Grants Programme started

To submit your thoughts and opinions on any of the matters arising at one of the events, please respond by post or email to:

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Please submit all responses by
14th January 2009.

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Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website at: www.equalityhumanrights.com or by contacting one of our helplines below.

This publication is also available in Welsh as a bilingual publication.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language please contact the relevant helpline to discuss your needs. All publications are also available to download and order in a variety of formats from our website.

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