

Framework for thinking about involving beneficiaries in funding processes at BIG

This document is taken from *Beneficiary involvement in funding processes at BIG*, which was produced by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research for the BIG Lottery Fund in March 2013.

This is a framework for thinking about and planning for beneficiary involvement in funding processes at BIG. It is based on BIG's accumulated experience of involving beneficiaries and is designed to help BIG embed a flexible approach to beneficiary involvement across the organisation using its existing funding development framework.

A. Considerations for programmes

This section poses questions that BIG might consider when deciding whether and how to involve beneficiaries in specific programmes or other funding processes. Decisions about whether or not to involve beneficiaries will depend on the investment or programme being developed and the kind of beneficiary group being targeted.

Planning – part of the Funding development framework

For each programme there will need to be a discussion about whether beneficiary involvement is appropriate and necessary. This needs to take place at the earliest stage of the planning process and could be integrated into *Stage 1: Strategy, policy, approach and finance* of BIG's *Funding development framework*.

There are three questions to consider at this point:

1. What stages of grant-making will beneficiaries participate in?
2. Are the stages and activities in programme development sufficiently linked with beneficiary involvement activities?
3. How will you ensure the pace of grant-making is appropriate for the beneficiary group involved?

Having made the decision to involve beneficiaries in a programme or investment, there are three further areas to be considered: purpose and focus, intensity and method, support and resources.

Purpose and focus

- What is the overall purpose and focus of the programme? Why will it benefit from involving beneficiaries?
- Does the programme aspire to hand over control of decisions about spending to beneficiaries (e.g. Big Local, Fair Share)?
- Would the programme benefit from having 'legitimacy' with the general public?
- Would the programme benefit from having beneficiaries as its 'public face'?
- Does BIG have sufficient knowledge (internally or through existing networks) and experience of the proposed programme theme or beneficiary group?
- Which point(s) in the funding process would most benefit from beneficiaries' knowledge and experience: needs assessment, programme design, programme award?
- Which point(s) in the funding process might beneficiaries most want to influence: needs assessment, programme design, programme award?

Intensity and method of involvement

- Who will be involved? Do you know what kind of support they are likely to need and what kind of methods might suit them best?
- Will the beneficiary group be involved in all stages of grant-making, or within specific stages (for example within the award decision-making committee)?
- Do we have the necessary resources to involve beneficiaries throughout the funding process?
- Will the funding development process be able to proceed at a pace that is suitable for beneficiary involvement? Will other time constraints make this difficult to maintain?
- What are the relevant experiences and skills required of beneficiaries? How will you convene a beneficiary group with the necessary range of experience regarding an issue or theme?

Support and resources

- Does the beneficiary group include vulnerable people or people with complex and multiple needs? What might this mean for the method and intensity of involvement?
- Does BIG need to work with an intermediary organisation e.g. to advise BIG, to make contact with beneficiaries, to facilitate their participation and support them? This level of support will have resource implications.
- Is there a budget, staffing and other resources to pay for beneficiary involvement? How will BIG manage, support and remunerate staff who work evenings and weekends to make this happen?

B. Considerations for practice

BIG staff have gained knowledge and understanding regarding the implementation of beneficiary involvement including challenges and how to address them. This section builds on that experience and suggests areas for thinking about the implementation of beneficiary involvement in funding processes.

Roles and expectations

- **Recruitment:** Instigating a formal process for recruitment (application forms and informal interviews) can mean beneficiaries feel more valued because they were selected to participate.
 - How much time is required for the recruitment and induction process to ensure an appropriate group membership and dynamic is established?
 - How will you ensure contact is established with harder to reach groups?
 - How can the recruitment process usefully prepare beneficiaries for their specific role within BIG's grant-making process?
- **Terms of reference for beneficiary involvement:**
 - Will the creation of terms of reference usefully support beneficiaries' involvement in funding development?
 - Are the aims and objectives of beneficiary involvement for the particular programme clearly described in the terms of reference?
 - Do the terms of reference clearly explain roles and expectations, set out a timeline for involvement including the intended end point and outline provision of payment and expenses?
 - Do the terms of reference sufficiently clarify what is required of beneficiaries, the activities they will undertake and any particular focus to their role?
- **Payment:**
 - Is payment for beneficiaries important to confirm beneficiaries' commitment and demonstrate their role is valued by BIG?
 - Is the rationale and procedure for paying beneficiaries clear across the organisation?
 - How will beneficiaries be paid (e.g. vouchers or cash)?
 - Have procedures for payment been set up with the finance department and communicated to programme staff?

Planning

- **Preparing beneficiaries:**
 - Are you clear about how beneficiaries' roles fit in the wider context of grant-making at BIG?
 - How will you ensure beneficiaries are clear about their roles and BIG's expectations from their involvement?
 - What background information about BIG will be provided to beneficiaries?

- What is the most effective way to explain BIG's funding development framework to beneficiaries?
- **Preparing BIG staff:**
 - How will you ensure that the staff and committee members who will be part of beneficiary involvement, are clear about their roles?
 - Do committee members need to adapt processes to enhance beneficiary involvement?
 - Do the finance and communications department require information or further support to accommodate beneficiary involvement activities?

Support

- **Support needs:**
 - What practical support do beneficiaries need? E.g. travel, accommodation and other logistical arrangements.
 - What are the beneficiaries' emotional or pastoral support needs? Think about the issues being addressed and the depth of their involvement.
 - Are there sufficient resources to meet these practical and emotional support needs? Think about staff time as well as money.
 - Does BIG have the skills, expertise and/or capacity to meet these practical and emotional needs? Is it advisable to involve an intermediary organisation to ensure beneficiaries' support needs are met?
- **Materials:**
 - How can grant-making processes be presented to ensure they are accessible for the beneficiary group?
 - How should materials be adapted to ensure they are accessible for the particular beneficiary group?
 - Is there a shared location where examples and templates from previous beneficiary involvement activities can be accessed?
- **Momentum:**
 - These questions are especially relevant when a beneficiary group is to be involved throughout several stages of grant-making.
- **Plan sessions around key stages:**
 - Have you scheduled beneficiaries' meetings and activities so they align with key stages in the overall funding development process?
- **Beneficiary group membership:**
 - What mechanisms will you put in place to recruit new members at key times to rejuvenate the group, or when an existing member can no longer continue?