

Q&A from launch webinar 12 March 2024

1. Are partnership proposals accepted?

Yes, we welcome partnership proposals. Please explain how you will work together in your proposal. You will be the lead; therefore, you'll apply on behalf of the partnership.

2. If we applied for this phase and were unsuccessful, would it preclude us from applying for the secondary school phase?

No, we welcome EOIs from organisations for both rounds of funding. However, if you were awarded a grant under the first round you would not be awarded a second grant under the next round.

3. Some of our beneficiaries are based in London and some outside. Are we still eligible?

If your project is supporting beneficiaries that are in London, that work can be supported; if the beneficiaries are outside of London, the funding won't be possible.

4. How many grants are you able to award?

Between 5 to 8 grant awards.

5. We are planning on applying for a project that will be delivered in schools. In Year 1 we'll be working with existing partners, but we'd like to expand it to new partners in Year 2 and beyond. Do we need these partners identified at the point of application or can we identify them once we get grant award confirmation?

You can identify them once the funding is confirmed. During the assessment process and the application, we do ask questions around who you want to work with and why, which provides us with more information and understanding about the project and helps us also understand the relationship with those organisations settings, beneficiaries etc., so the more detail you have in the early stages, the better. If Year 2 and 3 decisions need to be made later on, that's something we can discuss, and it won't penalise your application.

6. Will you consider projects that bridge the transitions from primary to secondary in schools?

Yes, we would consider such projects. However, we are most interested in applications that focus within the age range described in our guidelines for this specific cohort.

7. Are you looking for an extension or scaling of an existing project?

We are open to accepting such projects, however, because we take this Cohort approach, we will be looking at a variety of different types of projects to form that cohort. We might not fund exactly the same project that you've been running for years, as we would want to see there is some step change within that project.

Literacy Special Initiative Phase 2: 2023-2028

8. Would you like to see other funders also investing and would you expect this to be confirmed at the EOI stage?

Yes, however, if the funding from us is just a small percentage of that, we might not be keen in funding such projects. No, we wouldn't expect you to confirm this at the EOI stage.

9. Are you looking to fund projects that deliver in schools only?

No, we are looking for projects that not only are partnered with schools but are also community organisations. We are looking for a wide range of partnerships.

10. What level of teacher CPD do you expect from projects you are funding?

That would depend on your capacity as an organisation. It would boost the application, but it won't be a determining factor in declining it.

11. My organisation trains students to be peer mentors which is part of oracy and developing speaking skills. Do organisations need to directly target literacy or would associated skill development like this be eligible?

It would depend on how those speaking and listening skills feed into developing literacy skills and how your project fulfils the overall aim and objectives. We are open to proposals that take different approaches so please look at the guidelines and see if you think your project fits.

12. We've been invited to put forward an application for the Early Years. Can we also apply for this Special Initiative.

Yes.

13. Can you think of anything else you really want us to cover in the five EOI questions?

Please see the 'top tips' slide. This is a light touch form so we're looking for a flavour of your proposal. It's always good to clearly outline what you're proposing, and, why you're well placed to deliver the work (i.e. you have existing relationships within the communities of beneficiaries you want to support in the proposed area/are experts on supporting those facing particular disadvantage etc.) Also, do let us know if your work will achieve anything beyond what we've outlined in the guidelines, you're the experts in your work so please do tell us what the wider impacts might be.

14. Would work exclusively in SEND schools be eligible?

Yes, please tell us why that's the group you've chosen, and how you plan to work with them. This funding round is focused on key stages 1 and 2 (5 – 11-year-olds).

Literacy Special Initiative Phase 2: 2023-2028

15. Does it matter how many beneficiaries we plan to work with? Would we be penalised for working with a smaller number more intensely?

We understand that some children have more complex needs and therefore would not discount applications on this basis. We would rather fund the right level of support for the children who would benefit most, than support large numbers. We don't ask for numbers in the EOI. However, those invited to submit a full application will be asked how many children they expect to work with alongside other beneficiaries, i.e. parents, carers, volunteers, teachers, etc. We recognise often work happens with wider support systems to ensure it's sustainable for the child longer term.

16. Do you have a preference on size/turnover of organisation, or the mix you'd like in the cohort?

We don't have a preference on size of organisation. The maximum grant size is quite open (between £150,000 and £300,000 over four financial years) to enable different sized organisations to apply. We look for a balance within a cohort and consider things like geographical spread across London, target beneficiaries, types of activities/approach.

17. We have had previous funding from one of the Mercers' programmes, does this prohibit us from applying for this fund? Would you be happy to award a grant to a previous grantee organisation?

Yes, we are happy for past grantees to apply, and to award funding if they are successful. To note, current grantees, funded under Phase 1 of our Literacy Special Initiative are now eligible to apply for this second funding round of Phase 2.

18. Why have you decided to fund in 2 Phases/cohorts?

We have launched Phase 2 of our philanthropy framework which will run for five financial years from 2023/4 to 2027/8. Two cohorts are being funded within Phase 2 of the Literacy Initiative to enable a feasible cohort size (5-8 organisations) and a focus on a similar age group (12-16 years-old in cohort one and 5 – 11 years- old in cohort two). It is intended that Cohort 1 will run from 23/24 to 26/27 and Cohort 2 from 24/25 to 27/28.