

Big Thinking – Big Lottery Fund’s Strategic Framework for 2009 onwards

ROTA is a social policy think-tank focusing on issues that affect Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. ROTA aims to increase the capacity of BAME organisations and strengthen the voice of BAME communities through increased civic engagement and participation in society. ROTA is a membership organisation, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee set up in 1997 to take over from GLARE (Greater London Action on Race Equality) originally set up in 1984.

ROTA is the host and the accountable body for two regional networks:

- MiNet: the London focused BAME network, which joined ROTA in 2002 to strengthen the voice for London's BAME voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the development of regional policy;
- HEAR: London's only pan-equalities and human rights network, which joined ROTA in January 2005. Its focus is on issues affecting London's equality and human rights VCS organisations.

ROTA provides policy infrastructure support, voice and representation to BAME and equality organisations, and influences social policy at regional and national level by:

- Providing voice and representation of issues identified by the BAME and equality VCS through memberships at key policy boards and decision making body, by supporting members of MiNet and HEAR to sit on policy boards, brokering relationships between policy bodies and equality representatives and by speaking at events and the media.
- Carrying out and publishing in-depth research that creates an evidence base for policy.
- Holding regular networking and policy events bringing together the VCS and key regional and national stakeholders to discuss current priorities, disseminate best practice and find solutions.
- Producing free and accessible publications such as Agenda, Supplement and policy e-newsletters
- Working in partnership with BAME and equality VCS organisations, the other London regional networks and with regional networks in the rest of England.
- Providing training on policy areas such as hate crime, equalities and regional governance.

UK 1.1 Do you agree that the theme of transitions provides a useful starting point for our funding?

The theme of transitions is a useful starting point for funding when it is considered appropriately. In the guidance it states that 'transitions' allows one to focus on communities affected by issues such as conflict or natural disasters as well as people at critical points in their lives.

To take the latter first, ROTA welcomes the recognition by BIG that at these critical points in people's lives 'specialist intervention can make a major difference to quality of life and subsequent choices and opportunities.' The Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) third sector currently offers a substantial level of specialist intervention at both service delivery and infrastructure levels, and it is crucial that support for them to do this both continues and increases. It is not possible for mainstream services to meet all needs, especially needs that cross-equality strands and therefore the role that specialist services play in bridging the gap between individuals/communities and services is crucial to create the best outcomes for all. Communities themselves see the role of specialist services as being integral to their ability to partake in society.

The examples used in the guidance of critical points are definitely valid. For BAME communities there are critical points that are specific for them, and where specialist services offer support. For example, permanent and temporary school exclusions are used disproportionately on children from Black Caribbean, Black African, Mixed Black Caribbean and White, Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds, in London alone 80% of excluded pupils are Black Caribbean boys. The role of specialist support services for the parents of these children and the existence of supplementary schools are examples of BAME specialist services acting at critical points in the lives of BAME communities. As mentioned previously, issues are complicated further when individuals are multiply disadvantaged due to cross-equality needs. An example of this is women from BAME communities who are seeking refuge from domestically violent situations. A recent survey of the BAME sector conducted by ROTA identified a significant role for BAME women's organisations which can offer culturally and gender sensitive services to women in extremely vulnerable situations.

With regards to supporting communities in transition examples used in the guidance such as gang violence, areas of low employment and areas in conflict are all examples of issues currently faced by BAME communities. Likewise, they are needs that BAME organisations are currently meeting at both service delivery and policy level. Research conducted by ROTA into hate crime and restorative justice has identified the non-criminal justice role of the BAME sector and other third sector organisations in resolving hate crime issues at the grass roots level. Likewise it is important that BAME infrastructure and policy organisations exist to create an policy environment which supports and compliments the work being conducted on the ground. Both are crucial to securing smooth transitions for BAME communities.

UK 1.2 Do you agree that the theme of isolation provides a useful starting point for our funding?

Isolation also provides a useful starting point for BIG funding. A number of BAME communities/individuals currently live isolated from wider society or their local area. As the guidance suggest this does not need to be physical, it can also be emotional. Research by ROTA has identified social isolation being created as a result of exclusion from services, processes and policy considerations locally, regionally and nationally.

ROTA's research project into BAME homelessness highlighted the impact of social isolation on individuals and communities, and furthermore emphasised the need for specialist service provision to close this gap and allow for inclusion. ROTA works directly with service users when collating evidence in order to actively include them in advocating for policy change to reduce their own isolation. This empowerment of communities to address issues that affect them directly is crucial in identifying the roots of their isolation and holding service providers and policymakers to account to meet their needs.

UK 1.3 Are there other themes that you would suggest?

ROTA would suggest considering the theme of cross-equality needs (e.g. multiple discrimination) and the importance of tackling multiple disadvantage including socio-economic disadvantage.

Much of the work that ROTA has produced, such as the BAME Homelessness study and the Building Bridges project, has focused on social policy concerns whose impact is intensified due to multiple-disadvantage. For example BAME women who also had refugee status had needs that were multiplied due to their cross equality identities. ROTA's recent BLF funded consultation of the BAME third sector in London also identified a concern by organisations that there was a need to work out how to offer services that met cross equalities needs. There is a need to break from individual silo working and develop mechanisms to tackle multiple disadvantage if we can make the most of single equality legislation and the EHRC.

It is concerning that at present the above is not happening and therefore threatening to compound unequal life chances of BAME communities. Race Equality Councils are losing resources and expected to offer cross equalities services and other specialist local groups such as BAME women's services or refugee services are also losing funding and therefore the complex needs of those service users are not being met. As with the issues surrounding the community cohesion agenda, without specialist services in place to bridge the gap between mainstream services and excluded communities, we create a climate where life chances for many BAME communities are even more unequal.

The impact of the recession on equality third sector organisations and solutions that are tailored to them might also be another topic to consider. ROTA is about to publish an OTS and BLF funded evidence based report on the impact of the economic downturn on BAME organisations and groups in London.

UK 2.1 Do you agree we should have a greater focus in our funding to benefit those most in need?

Given the above recommendation, ROTA welcomes the fact that BIG identifies 'multiple needs' as being a priority focus. This priority is crucial to support work of cross-equality partnerships and those specialist services meeting these needs. Alongside this the recognition that there is a need to support 'those who have not been able to get help from the state or elsewhere' is also welcomed. ROTA's 2008/09 consultation of the BAME third sector identified a pressed need to support refugee and asylum seeker communities who could not access state provision, and who very often had multiple needs. Policy expertise and specialist service provision currently exists to support this work, and this third sector capacity should be and encouraged.

ROTA would agree with the initial recommendation but with the proviso that some needs are so acute and isolated that it is hard to evidence them using traditional methods. It is therefore the responsibility of BIG and other funders to meet emerging, and less evidenced, needs as well as those which have a strong evidence base. For example, the research the ROTA is conducting in partnership with Women's Resource Centre to identify the needs of women affected by gang violence is necessary given the current lack of evidence in place that illustrates their needs. This is not to say that their needs are pressing; rather that they are even more acute and the lack of evidence is indicative of the fact that both service and policy expertise in this area is heavily under-resourced and misunderstood. It is the responsibility of funders to consult with grass roots and infrastructure organisations to be made aware of more isolated needs.

UK 2.2 Tell us if you think BIG should have a different focus?

As a continuation of the above point, it is important that BIG is open minded about what pressing needs might exist. The guidance states that targeted funding will be determined where BIG uses 'evidence to be more specific about what needs to be achieved'; and that this will run along open funding that would invite applications focused on wider needs. While it is welcoming that both types of applications will be considered, it is important that BIG are creative about where and how they collect their evidence.

Of needs that are complicated and specialist, especially if they are emerging, it is important to support smaller organisations who isolated communities may access, compared to larger organisations that often have less connection to or awareness of local need. If grants to smaller organisations are displaced with grants to larger organisations then BIG will run the risk of failing to meet the multiple of needs of isolated communities, or those in transition, as it initially aimed to achieve.

UK 3.1 How can BIG best help build lasting partnerships and networks that support communities and people most in need?

It is welcomed that the guidance supports partnership building across sectors. However, in order that these partnerships be successful it is crucial that they are balanced and that any smaller third sector organisations that take part are supported and not dictated to. A report on the equalities third sector produced by HEAR, a network of equality organisations, states that many frontline equalities organisation can provide expertise and have a role to play as 'educators'. It is important that mainstream providers recognise and support this role in order to build meaningful partnerships that understand the needs that they are trying to meet.

The same report also advocated the support 'for, and the development of single-strand and cross-strand networks of equalities organisations to share good practice, provide a voice, and to engage with mainstream third sector and statutory agencies'. Such networks are crucial to identifying, understanding and meeting the multiple needs identified as crucial by BIG.

As well as such networks and partnerships it is also important for networks like HEAR to encourage cross-strand partnerships to combine specialist services/expertise and refine them for specific needs. ROTA's partnership project with the Women's Resource Centre to support the BAME Women's Sector is an example of how organisations can pool expertise to ensure accurate outcomes for multiple needs.

As well as cross-strand partnerships, and partnerships between the statutory and third sectors, it is important that private organisations are encouraged to work with as support third sector organisations. ROTA's Building Bridges project engaged with Choice FM and delivered youth-led focus groups in partnership with them. This partnership provided ROTA with resources such as advertising, a venue and incentive for volunteers, without direct funding from the private sector. More creative ways of working in partnership should be encouraged to support grass roots work.

UK 3.2 How can we get better at engaging with the private sector?

ROTA would recommend engaging with the private sector on grounds of resources as well as funding. From ROTA's experience we have worked with private organisations for support with advertising, venues and other resources that the third sector doesn't have at their disposal. Encouraging private companies to sign up to a scheme where third sector organisations who are funded by BIG, initially and then widen out the remit, to apply for these resources to support projects. Given current financial circumstances it would make sense to look at more creative means of linking up with the private sector rather than purely focus on funding.

The third sector could be a vehicle for cross-sector and multi-agency partnerships. For examples, ROTA's Transformative Justice Project brings together all kinds of agencies from all sectors to combat hate crime and serious crime in London. A model such as this one could be used and learned from for other issues.

UK 3.3 Are there opportunities for joint funding that BIG should take up?

There is potential for match funding projects with other funders. They could work with other funders on proactive programmes in certain key areas to maximise impact.

A number of organisations could work together in order to pool funding, staff time and expertise, and focus on a specific area such as capacity building in a certain region, funding individuals and projects. This proactive approach to funding requires extensive research, assessment and monitoring of the grant. It also allows organisations working in the same areas combine their aims to increase the impact and effectiveness of their money.

UK 4 After 2012, when our 60-70% per cent undertaking ends should we continue to guarantee that a percentage of our funding goes to the voluntary and community sector?

ROTA would argue that at the very *minimum* after 2012 BIG should continue to use 60-70% of its funding to support the third sector; in fact it should increase its support. Within the current financial climate, the demands being created by legislative developments such as the single equality's bill, and the pressing need for local community support the role played by the third sector will become increasingly important.

Funding for the BAME third sector is at present operating in an environment of increased pressure because of the 2008 Cohesion Guidance for Funders as issued by the CLG recommending against single issue group funding and the subsequent court case by Southall Black Sisters against Ealing Council. This has served to have a negative impact on the BAME third sector as a whole, with organisations having to prove that they are providing more mainstream services to the detriment of the communities that they traditionally serve and for which there is an acute need. Funding from Local Authorities is becoming harder and this has a catalyst effect which seeps into other funding streams. Another factor to consider is that many Local Authorities are seeing the drive to greater delivery of public services by the third sector as a reason to move an increasing proportion of grant making to a commissioned basis. This in itself need not to be a problem but commissioning is still not well understood within either the public or third sectors- BAME or otherwise and this approach often leads to organisations being unable to secure sufficient funding to cover the core costs associated with project delivery.

Whilst the BIG guidance makes reference to organisations and projects run by schools, parishes and community councils, ROTA would recommend that even these would be best delivered in partnership with a third sector lead. For example, partnerships that have been set up between peer mentoring charities and schools to support young people facing gang conflict or bullying places funds where the expertise is, but allows it to be used in partnership with organisations where the service users are. The role played by the third sector is crucial as its connection to

the communities that they serve creates a climate that fosters the greatest impact. While other projects may also deliver services connection to community work, and services and infrastructure that focus on need from the grass roots up.

UK 5. Over and above giving out grants, what would make BIG a better funder in the way that we work?

The recommendation that BIG can place a greater 'emphasis on support' of projects to maximise the impact of their funding does have some worth. The suggestion above regarding the working with the private sector is an example of how BIG could provide more generic support for projects that they fund that do not require direct financial support. The suggestion of 'bringing policy-makers together' so that projects can share social issues that have arisen from their work and that BIG can take these concerns to stakeholders is also important. However, it is crucial that BIG allows funded projects to identify what types of support are most beneficial to the work that they are doing, especially if this threatens to affect that amount of money available for funding.

Therefore as an aside to the above, BIG would work better as a funder if they sought guidance on what their funded projects required in terms of support then this would be a way forward. It is clear that there are types of support that can be offered at a less cost to a project than if they sought to commission those services out of their budget. However, to maximise this it would have to be conducted in close contact with funded projects.

BIG can work both at a policy and networking level to encourage partnerships and collaboration between successful third sector projects and funders, stakeholders and policy makers in all sectors.

UK 6 Should we aim to fund fewer projects but fund for a longer period? Or have we got the balance about right?

When deciding on the number of projects to fund and for how long it is important to get balance and be focused on the overall aims. Therefore, it is welcoming to see BIG's acknowledgement that 'many of the social problems we seek to address through our funding will not be solved through a one off cash hit'. Long term funding is crucial to seeing overall change so funding projects for five years is definitely a positive move forward.

However, it is also important to recognise emerging issues and pilot projects that are set up to meet needs created. BIG has a role to play in supporting these projects, especially with its overall aims to meet multiple needs, tackle isolation and support transition. ROTA welcomes the commitment to full cost recovery and sustainable projects. At present we would argue that BIG has currently got the balance right, and rather than fund fewer projects that should aim to use more creative ways to support work, as outlined in answers to other questions in this consultation.

UK 7 Do you think BIG should take more risks with out funding to promote innovative solutions?

Given our expertise and long history of working with small BAME groups and emerging bodies representing newer communities, we believe it is an absolute imperative that BIG becomes an open minded funders who is willing to take risks with the proviso that the right safeguards have been taken. We are aware of many small successful projects that did not favour BIG support simply because of their short life history or small size and BIG should learn to look beyond the usual suspects.

It is important for BIG to be willing to take risks with funding, especially given the aims of BIG laid out in the document. Attempting to meet multiple needs and to respond to emerging issues requires projects to offer innovative and new solutions. Therefore, BIG need to be flexible in developing its evidence base on what issues need to be met, and this creativity would allow them to manage risk of newer project which they decide to fund. Engagement with service users and encouraging participation is another way to ensure projects meet the complex needs of the isolated communities or those in transition. BIG should also allow the initial practice to be means of gaining evidence and supporting further development of successful projects.

UK 8 Are there areas beyond those described in BIG thinking, where you think it is important to operate at a UK level, rather than at a country level?

Although there is value in both ways of operating, the work carried out by organisations such as ROTA works at a localised level in terms of collation of data but the wider policy implications are felt at a UK level and this should be acknowledged when considering similar organisations, in particular when it comes to networks such as HEAR which have representation at a UK level. Each project should be considered should not be critiqued for its localised impact if it is the case that the work permeates further afield.

UK 9 Which ways of increasing public involvement do you think would work best for BIG?

ROTA attempts, where possible, to involve service users in our research and developing our priorities. Public involvement is important in determining what needs are emerging at grass roots level. However, there is a risk that those who are engaged with are already socially included and are not actually experiencing the isolation identified by BIG as a priority. Working with third sector organisations who already have connection with the communities and individuals whom BIG wants to support is one way to facilitate public engagement.

Encouraging projects to engage service users, and for BIG to maintain engagement with those users via networks and the third sector in general is a dual way to develop public engagement. This engagement can also be used to raise

awareness amongst communities what work is being done, and used as a means of empowerment. Projects such as ROTA's Building Bridges project and the BAME Homelessness research, engaged directly with service users and empowered them at the same time to influence the work as it progressed. Furthermore, our engagement with the BAME sector and policy support also empowers them and the communities that they serve.

Therefore ROTA would recommend that engagement via the third sector, and direct empowerment of service users combined is the best way to engage with members of the public whom BIG are attempting to support with their fund.

E1.1 Do you agree that we should develop tighter outcomes for all but smaller grants?

ROTA would hold that it is important for BIG to maintain a balance when it come to outlining outcomes. Firstly, it is important that the sector expected to meets these outcomes deems them to be appropriate. It is important that smaller grants that may go to pilot projects or new work to address emerging issues are given greater flexibility to define outcomes. ROTA welcomes this flexibility outlined by BIG. Granted that the guidance states 'in deciding our priority outcomes, we will reflect upon your responses to this consultation', it is hoped by ROTA that tighter outcomes will only reflect what the third sector has identified as priorities and therefore should develop from a bottom up, rather than a top down, approach.

E1.2 Are the changes listed in the bullet below the right ones?

The changes listed to encompass most of what ROTA deems to be priorities for excluded communities. However, some are in need of clarification. ROTA welcomes a focus on communities who are isolated and/or facing transitions, support for approaches that address complex needs, empower communities and promote sustainable activity.

ROTA is concerned with the desire to promote 'better links with communities to foster cohesion'. A recent consultation that ROTA ran with the BAME third sector identified a serious concern regarding the community cohesion agenda. At present it is being experienced as presenting a threat to the sector, especially specialist services who are meeting complex needs of the most isolated in society. It is far from clear that focusing on community cohesion will support BIG's overall objective of reducing isolation. BAME organisations, especially Refugee and Asylum seeker groups, have expressed concerns that their organisations are under threat and mainstream services are not able to meet need in the same way that they are. The sector is actually crucial in fostering social cohesion- and has been long before it was outlined as a government agenda, however, it is not clear that this being acknowledged.

E1.3 Using evidence from your own experience, are there other changes we should prioritise?

BIG needs to provide greater support to genuine youth-led organisations as opposed to youth organisations. From our experience having carried out the youth led Building Bridges Project, we came to realise that genuine youth empowerment happens by and through the youth led sector which is underfunded and shadowed by the youth sector. The latter is very much valued and needed but there is still a long way to go in terms of providing infrastructure support, voice and representation for the youth led sector. Youth led policy bodies should be encouraged and supported and take risks in investing and working with them. In addition, ROTA would also encourage BIG to see cross silo/equality strand working as a key outcome to meeting multiple need. Such partnerships do not need to be made compulsory but they should definitely be encouraged if BIG are to meet the overall aims that they have set out. Supporting networks that facilitate and create an environment where such partnerships can develop is also crucial.

E 2.1 BIG in England proposes to fund projects in three ways – open funding, community funding and targeted funding, Do you agree with this proposal?

ROTA would support the three proposed ways to distribute funding, all have their own value and by using a combination of the three there will be an opportunity for funding to be both determined by the open bids that BIG receives as well as funding for projects identified after evidence based research highlighting a particular need.

E2.2 Between 2009-2012 BIG will deliver the highest proportion of our funding through an OPEN funding approach. After 2012, we will use a mixture of approaches: open funding, community funding, and targeted funding. Which combination is best?

ROTA would advise BIG to use a combination of both of the above approaches, we welcome the Open funding approach as it is reactive to current needs of the BAME third sector and other cross equality needs. Targeted funding also has much value but is more labour intensive as BIG themselves would have to identify the need, and so ROTA would suggest that BIG utilise the specialist expertise of key partners to carry out research such as that already carried out by MiNet and HEAR to establish what the long term priorities and needs of the sector are. As this approach would take a considerably longer timeframe than open funding, it is important for BIG to also give out reactive funding through its Open approach.

E 3 Which of the following statements do you agree with?

- a) It is better to give early decisions on applications, including rejecting those likely to be unsuccessful based on a few key questions- better for small bids

Or

- b) It is better to gather more information over a longer period of time before deciding which projects to fund? Better for larger bids- but need to ensure that the timetable is very clear so applicants can plan accordingly.

The above question can only be answered in relation to the type of bid that is submitted to BIG. Option A is more appropriate for smaller bids whereas Option B would be a better way to approach larger bids, although it is vital in both cases that timetables are clear and transparent so that third sector organisations can plan accordingly.

targeting social policy

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