



1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. The WLGA is a politically led cross-party organisation, with the leaders from all local authorities determining policy through the Executive Board and the wider WLGA Council. The WLGA appoints senior members as Spokespersons and Deputy Spokespersons to provide a national lead on policy matters on behalf of local government.
3. The WLGA works closely with and is often advised by professional advisors and professional associations from local government, however, the WLGA is the representative body for local government and provides the collective, political voice of local government in Wales.

#### INTRODUCTION

4. The WLGA is committed to working with the Welsh Government and our communities to make Wales an Anti-Racist country. All local authorities are supportive of this aim and recently signed the Zero Racism Pledge. The WLGA Council also recently committed to an ambitious 'Diversity in Democracy' action plan which aims to increase the diversity of candidates and councillors at next May's local elections. Councils have worked towards reducing inequalities and the Welsh Government's ambitious Race Equality Action Plan shows that we need concerted, collective action as racism remains within our society and inequality continues to adversely affect the lives of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales.
5. The WLGA welcomes additional resources which will support public and third sector organisations, including the proposal that the Equality and Inclusion Funding programme be used to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan, to ensure the successful delivery of the strategy and sustainable benefits to citizens and communities who share protected characteristics.

#### Question 1

Do you consider that this document summarises the main issues that should be considered in relation to this funding programme? Please outline any issues which you feel are missing or need further attention?

6. The consultation usefully summarises the political and social movements which have highlighted amongst other things the impact of socio-economic deprivation and intersectionality on communities. We welcome the proposals as they aim to minimise duplication, ensure coherent, open and transparent allocation of funding.
7. It would also be useful to include the following:
  - i. Those who live in rural areas and share protected characteristics, are at greater risk of being isolated. These groups are often not formally represented so greater outreach support in rural communities is required. It is suggested that provision of such additional capacity could be aligned with existing Community Cohesion structures and could include engagement, intersectionality and socio-economic disparities.
  - ii. Local authorities, especially in urban areas, have observed that their services are increasingly being accessed by people who do not speak English or have English as a second language.

## **Question 2**

Do you support the proposal for a longer, 5-year programme? If not, please briefly outline your reasons.

8. In principle, the WLGA welcomes the proposal to extend the funding programme to 5 years to enable the development and implementation of longer-term strategic programmes. There should however remain scope for funding to allow for flexibility to deliver local community led projects and also to respond to the needs identified through for example Wellbeing plans, Population Needs Assessment and Community Safety Partnerships (Strategic Assessments) etc. at a local and regional level.
9. Beneficiaries should work closely with local statutory & third sector organisations and communities to ensure alignment of actions and ambition for the communities.

## **Question 3**

Would you support Welsh Government providing core funding for some strategic equality organisations? If not, please briefly outline your reasons.

10. In principle, the WLGA supports core funding for some strategic equality organisations as it could provide sustainability for strategic equality organisations. It is important that the organisations work in partnership with local authorities, third sectors organisations and multi-agency regional equalities networks in the development of the action plan including support across the geographical area.
11. The core funding should not be to the detriment of other priorities such as outreach in rural localities. Therefore, careful consideration of the impact and outcomes from the funding provided versus infrastructure funding should be undertaken to ensure that the maximum outcomes are delivered by these organisations.
12. Some current programmes provide essential provision, which if they ceased would have a detrimental impact on the respective client group. This strengthens the case for a longer procurement period for those services, particularly with regards to support tailored to specific communities - where establishing trust and reputation is a cornerstone in delivering successful provision.
13. The Welsh Government should work with applicants to encourage good practice around employment contracts across the programme.

## **Question 4**

Do you support the continuation of existing services for particular groups? Are there other services which you think should be provided in future? If not, please briefly outline your reasons.

14. In principle, the WLGA supports the continuation of existing services. Though consideration should also be given to the prioritising services in localities for example the continuation of the specific advocacy and legal services for asylum seekers and refugees is particularly valuable in some areas of Wales and also services supporting those living in socioeconomic disadvantage.
15. Providers need to engage effectively with public and third sector agencies, utilising local intelligence such as the Community Coordinators to maximise best use of resources, avoid duplication and inform on-going improvements. In addition, the complexities of intersectionality and the challenges these issues present to individuals within communities further evidences the need for equality and inclusion organisations to work more effectively together.
16. In addition, providers need to provide open, transparent evidence on impact to those communities they are supporting and be open to scrutiny.

## **Question 5**

What should be the balance between procured services, core funding and grant-funded projects? How would you split the budget (currently £1.6million) between these areas?

17. There is insufficient information on the current or proposed allocation or criteria for funding to comment in detail or which 'key representative equality organisations' might receive core funding.
18. In general, there is recognition that core funding provides for a more sustainable, longer-term strategic approach. Allocations will need to align with Welsh Government priorities as outlined in the

consultation document, but it is important there remains some flexibility to respond to emerging needs or changing priorities as well as support more community-based activity to build capacity and resilience locally. Successful projects should be based on evidence of need and underpinned by effective engagement with communities and wider public and third sector organisations.

19. See responses to Q3 and Q4.

**Question 6**

Do you agree that this funding should align with the objectives set out in the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Action Plan 2020-2024?

20. The WLGA agrees that the funding should align with the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and the Socio-Economic Duty and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (2015) Act

**Question 7**

Do you think that some of the funding should be set aside to support wider equality action and collaborative working between equality organisations?

21. In principle, the WLGA agrees that some of the funding should support wider equality action and collaborative working between equality organisations. This could be useful in addressing intersectional equalities. Further clarity is required about the scope of the "wider equality action" as the impact maybe to reduce resources to the priorities and thereby reduce effectiveness.

**Question 8**

Do you agree that this funding should align with our specific equality plans such as the Gender Equality, Race Equality and LGBT+ Action Plans?

22. The WLGA agrees that funding should align with existing plans and with the Community Cohesion programme.
23. See Q6.

**Question 9**

We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

24. It is important that the funding supports the Welsh Government's policy ambitions and statutory obligations around the Welsh language. The Fund should therefore recognise the Welsh Language Standards as far as reasonably possible, when commissioning equality and inclusion services. Whilst third sector organisations are not subject to the same duties as statutory, the programme could stipulate that all future funding opportunities should consider and promote the use of the Welsh Language and how this is offered to their clients (where there is an identified need or want).
25. Languages other than English and Welsh may be a priority for the delivery of some aspects of the funding programme. Retaining a balance between the allocation of funding via procurement and grants will help to secure a balance between necessary flexibility in language provision and safeguarding of the Welsh language.

**Question 10**

Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

26. As above

**Question 11**

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

27. It is the WLGA's view that the overall aim of improving equalities and community cohesion contributes to developing and supporting safer communities and it is therefore important to ensure linkages with the Safer Communities Network programme.