

Feedback on the process for applying for Enhance funding from Leeds Older People's Forum (LOPF)

June 2022



Introduction:

This short report is based on the experiences of staff in 11 different [Enhance](#) projects shared during a peer learning session. Feedback has only been gathered from successful applicants.

Overview of the application process:

Due to a very tight schedule the application process had to be faster than learning from Time to Shine told us was ideal. An event was held on the 14th January to gather feedback to include in the service specification. The service specification and application process was launched on the 28th January and closing date 18th February.

An application form was developed which included five questions to give assessors an overview of the project described and how the applicants planned to deliver the work.

What worked well for applicants?

It was noted that the application process was timely - due to Covid-19 and the pressure faced by Health and Social Care services - and this motivated partners to apply. The application process was straightforward, logical and "not amazing, nor difficult".

Having an online application process was helpful and the layout was good and easy to follow. Guidance notes were broad and unspecific but they included suggested timescales for support (3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months) so this gave partners a lot of scope to shape their application based on their experiences and local needs. The detailed

explanation of the ‘test and learn’ approach used by LOPF was also helpful. Partners appreciated that the programme managers at LOPF were on hand to answer queries and provide clarification. These conversations were necessary as the guidance notes were broad and applicants were designing their own projects.

Partners found it “refreshing” that there were no targets set in the guidance notes due to the ‘test and learn’ nature of Enhance. This was thought to be unusual.

What would make the application process better?

The timescale between the announcement of the funding and the closing date for applications was too short. Partners had to “clear their diary” in order to make enough time to complete the application. Having more time would have enabled more conversations with a wider range of staff in Neighbourhood Teams and helped partners to co-produce applications. Some partners said that staff in their local Neighbourhood Teams weren’t aware of the Enhance programme. This may have been due to the speed at which the application process was launched then closed. One partner suggested that even if timescales needed to be short it would be helpful to have advance notice of the key dates within the application process so that these could be diarised.

LOPF gives detailed feedback on unsuccessful funding applications but not on successful applications. One partner suggested that they would find it useful to have feedback on their application - particularly sections that were not so strong - to help them with future funding bids.

In previous programmes LOPF included a panel interview as part of the application process, led by an older person. Older people who had contributed to a partner’s application were also invited to take part in the interview. Partners noted that, due to the timescales and the focus on health, interviews weren’t appropriate on this occasion. However, if interviews could be incorporated into future funding rounds it would strengthen the co-production element and help those who prefer verbal over written communication.

