



# Notes

Aug 6, 2025

# Core Grants Info Session (online)

## Summary

Lisa Atamian and Sue Brown provided an overview of the changes to the grants program, emphasizing a shift towards core funding and a partnership approach to support the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCS) sector, driven by lessons from the pandemic, cost of living crisis, and budget reductions. The council's priorities include promoting prosperity and well-being, building strong communities, and eradicating inequality, with a focus on preventative action and supporting residents impacted by intersectional inequalities. Applications for core grants and other funding streams are open, with specific eligibility criteria and a two-stage process.

## Details

- **Meeting Overview and Logistics** Lisa Atamian provided an overview of the meeting agenda, noting that the recording and slides would be available on the website in a few days. They asked attendees to mute their microphones and use the chat for questions, which would be addressed during or at the end of the session ([00:00:00](#)). Lisa Atamian also mentioned being joined by their colleague, Sue Brown, who would be co-presenting ([00:00:57](#)).
- **Context of Changes to the Grants Program** Lisa Atamian explained that significant changes were made to the grants program due to lessons learned from the pandemic and cost of living crisis, the need for more strategic investment in the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCS) sector, and budget reductions requiring significant savings. They emphasized the council's learning journey with partners to adapt to a rapidly changing context ([00:02:11](#)).
- **Council Priorities for Grants Program** Lisa Atamian detailed the council's priorities, which include promoting prosperity and well-being with targeted positive action, building strong cohesive communities, and working to eradicate inequality at every stage of life as outlined in their equality plan.

These priorities focus on preventative action, building opportunity, and celebrating diverse communities ([00:03:08](#)).

- **Approach to Program Redesign** Lisa Atamian described the redesign process over the past year, which involved consultations and workshops with partners since July ([00:03:08](#)). They noted a shift from time-limited, output-based project funding to more core funding and a partnership approach. The new program aims to unlock innovation, resources, and responsiveness through structured learning, supporting residents impacted by intersectional inequalities and racism, and investing in organizations that engage with residents and collaborate with other organizations ([00:04:34](#)).
- **VCS Strategy and Grant Principles** Lisa Atamian highlighted the refreshed 10-year VCS strategy, which builds on previous learning and focuses on five thematic areas: how they work, investment and funding, premises, volunteering and social action, and VCS infrastructure ([00:04:34](#)). They also stated that the grants principles were co-designed with sector partners to guide funding decisions, emphasizing supporting communities to tackle entrenched inequalities, funding in a trusting way, continuous learning, and directing resources to communities failed by the system ([00:05:53](#)).
- **Overview of Grant Programs** Lisa Atamian informed attendees about the four main grants open for funding: core grants, the project innovation fund, VCS infrastructure grants (including a pilot for Black and global majority organizations), and a collaboration and co-production fund ([00:05:53](#)). They clarified that the bulk of investment would go to core grants, with around £100,000 for the project innovation fund this financial year and approximately £5,000 for the collaboration and co-production fund ([00:07:00](#)).
- **Core Grants Focus and Eligibility** Sue Brown provided more detail on core grants, explaining that they aim to fund organizations' overall purpose for up to five years, rather than specific projects. They specified that core grants support residents at increased risk of harm due to entrenched inequalities, emphasizing person-centered, trauma-informed, and anti-racist approaches ([00:08:10](#)). Sue Brown also mentioned a focus on organizations working collaboratively and those that have been underserved by the system, aiming to invest in a range of cultural and geographical organizations ([00:09:17](#)).
- **Application Deadlines and Process** Lisa Atamian outlined the key deadlines: expression of interest forms are open until September 15th, followed by a four-week period for due diligence and shortlisting. Stage two applications will be open from October 16th to November 10th, with final notifications in early December and grant agreements commencing January 1st, 2026. They

noted that additional information or clarification might be requested during these periods ([00:10:43](#)).

- **General Eligibility and Due Diligence** Sue Brown discussed general eligibility criteria, stating that organizations must be registered VCSEs operating locally in Hackney, or formally constituted but unregistered organizations with a bank account and host. They specified that at least 80% of beneficiaries must be Hackney residents, and priority would be given to user-led organizations or those based within Hackney with an annual income under £1 million ([00:11:53](#)). Sue Brown also mentioned that partnership bids are accepted, and due diligence has been simplified, requiring registration numbers for registered entities and governing documents for unregistered groups ([00:13:20](#)).
- **Funding Availability and Costs** Sue Brown clarified that most core grants would range from £15,000 to £30,000 annually for up to five years, depending on the organization's size and work. They confirmed that funding is for core costs, covering staff salaries, overheads, or direct delivery costs, but it is not unrestricted and has limitations outlined in the guidance document. Sue Brown reminded applicants that the grants program budget has been reduced, making funding more competitive ([00:14:36](#)).
- **Application Portal Guidance and Changes** Lisa Atamian provided step-by-step guidance for the application portal, noting an upgrade with improved functionality like translation options, browser compatibility, auto-save, and the ability to add multiple contributors ([00:16:02](#)). They highlighted changes such as a new contact table for primary and secondary contacts and an option to directly upload governing documents and accounts for unregistered organizations. Lisa Atamian also mentioned a system quirk requiring '£1' for zero annual income and a slight wording change to the user-led question ([00:17:14](#)) ([00:19:29](#)).
- **Expression of Interest Form Content** Lisa Atamian elaborated on Section 2 of the form, which focuses on understanding the organization's aims, objectives, and priorities, including the full scope of their work ([00:21:34](#)). They also discussed questions regarding accredited advice, the target population at risk of harm due to entrenched inequalities, and the wards where activities will take place ([00:22:41](#)). Lisa Atamian further explained that applicants need to describe how they support residents in a person-centered, trauma-informed, and anti-racist way, and how they collaborate with other organizations ([00:24:56](#)).

- Equalities Data and Declaration** Lisa Atamian explained that Section 3 of the application asks about protected characteristics as per the Equality Act, requiring applicants to indicate if they are targeting or working with people based on ethnicity, religion, gender, age, caring responsibilities, disability, sexual orientation, or pregnancy ([00:27:13](#)). Section 4 is the declaration, similar to previous applications, which must be completed before submission ([00:28:26](#)).
- Managing Demand and Decision-Making** Sue Brown addressed managing demand, noting that the grants program is heavily oversubscribed and likely to be more competitive due to budget reductions. She emphasized the need for applications to clearly make a case for supporting those in difficult circumstances, at risk of harm, or affected by inequalities ([00:28:26](#)). Sue Brown also detailed the decision-making process, which is guided by grant principles, involves council officers and VCS representatives, and will use expression of interest forms as a first-stage assessment ([00:29:43](#)).
- Monitoring and Evaluation Approach** Sue Brown outlined a commitment to learning and developing the program through monitoring and evaluation beyond just numbers, using methods like ripple mapping, portfolios of evidence, case studies, and reports ([00:30:57](#)). They expressed a desire to learn from the sector and work with grantees to develop and adapt learning systems, aligning monitoring requests with grant principles and flexible funding commitments while accounting for public money ([00:32:17](#)).
- Next Steps and Support for Applicants** Lisa Atamian encouraged interested organizations to visit the website, review the VCS prospectus and specific guidance documents, and attend other information sessions if relevant ([00:32:17](#)). They advised checking FAQs for program changes and contacting the team for advice before applying, as it saves time and resources ([00:33:33](#)). Additional free application support is available through Hackney CVS and East London Business Alliance ([00:34:42](#)).
- Additional Funding Opportunities and Contact Information** Lisa Atamian mentioned other live council funding, such as the community infrastructure levy community fund, and discretionary rates relief ([00:34:42](#)). They provided contact details for the team, advising email for quicker responses due to high call volume. Lisa Atamian thanked attendees for their continued work, support for residents, understanding, and patience during a challenging period of significant changes and team restructuring ([00:35:48](#)).
- Clarifications on Priorities and Funding** Lisa Atamian clarified that priority would be given to local, user-led, smaller groups, and organizations operating

outside Hackney must justify how they serve Hackney residents ([00:36:46](#)). They reiterated that while there isn't a strict income limit, most funded organizations would have less than £1 million in annual income, and larger organizations should contact them for discussion. Lisa Atamian advised against applying for multiple grants, as it is unlikely an organization would receive funding from more than one stream ([00:38:11](#)).

- **Budget and Application Process Specifics** Lisa Atamian confirmed that budget breakdowns and detailed financial information would only be requested at stage two, not in the expression of interest form ([00:39:29](#)). They advised applicants to access application links directly from the website's guidance documents for specific grant programs ([00:40:31](#)). Lisa Atamian explained that performance monitoring would be holistic, focusing on who is supported and how, rather than numerical targets ([00:41:33](#)).
- **Collaboration and Partnership Bids** Lisa Atamian distinguished between partnership bids and general collaboration, stating that while partnership bids are accepted and will be assessed equally, there is no preference given to them. They emphasized the desire for direct relationships with all partners in a collaboration rather than through a lead organization ([00:42:47](#)). Lisa Atamian also expressed a strong desire for organizations to work together across the system,

## Suggested next steps

*No suggested next steps were found for this meeting.*

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# Transcript

Aug 6, 2025

# Core Grants Info Session (online) - Transcript

00:00:00

**Lisa Atamian:** be talking about our core grants program today. This session will be recorded. I'm going to start recording very shortly. Just to let you know we'll be recording it and it will be going on our website over the coming days. You should be able to access the link in a couple of days alongside the slides which will also be on our website. If everyone could make sure you're on mute please for the session so that it doesn't interrupt the presentation that would be really helpful. We are expecting a large number of people on the call today. So, we'll try and have a Q&A at the end if there's time, but do feel free to put any questions that you have in the chat and we'll try and answer them as we go along. Or at least um at the end, we'll try and address all of those questions. As I said, we'll be putting the link to the recording and the slides on the website over the coming days as well.

00:00:57

**Lisa Atamian:** So hopefully, that should be everything that you need. In terms of the agenda for today so we're going to give a little bit of an overview of the context and approach talk about our VCS strategy and council priorities our grants principles and give an overview of this grants program as well as the other grants programs that were launched this week. We'll talk about general eligibility and due diligence and then we will give step-by-step guidance on the application form itself and show you what this looks like. And then hopefully as I said time for questions at the end as well. So that's what we'll be doing today. I'm joined by my colleague Sue who's going to be presenting with me today. Thank you in advance Sue. So we'll get started now with the session. So just in terms of a bit of context any of you who were able to come to our grants launch on uh Monday this information will be familiar with you but just going through it again just in case um so obviously Hackney has an extremely strong voluntary and community sector and it's one of the biggest assets in the borough. We've had a VCS grants program for many years which alongside other initiatives have supported the



00:02:11

**Lisa Atamian:** sector to deliver a huge range of programs for residents. However we've had to make quite significant changes to the VCS grants program this year and going forward. So this is a result of a number of things. Partly we've learned a lot working with the VCS during the pandemic and also the cost of living crisis. We understand that we need to be more strategic in how we invest money in the VCS. We've been learning a lot from the development of the council's equality plan between 2023 and 2026. And there's the need to make significant savings due to budget reductions that the council's having to make over the next three years, which includes quite significant saving from the grants program budget. So obviously we're on a learning journey together with our partners to really understand how the system as a whole is and the rapidly changing context that we're working with. So there's lots going on at the same time. We're on this learning journey together in quite difficult circumstances.

00:03:08

**Lisa Atamian:** So council still has some priorities that the grants program is working towards. So specifically the council's strategic plan. We're still working towards the priorities of promoting prosperity, well-being with targeted positive action where needed and building strong cohesive communities that are part of the solution.

**Lisa Atamian:** we're also working towards priorities outlined in our equality plan which are working with communities to eradicate inequality at every stage of life by taking pro protective preventative positive action building on opportunity and well-being and also celebrating and serving diverse communities and the contribution that they make. so in terms of the approach that we've taken to make these changes so over the past year we have been on this journey with partners to redesign the program. So this started last July there was a togetherness conference and then we've had various kind of consultations and workshops since then with partners. So we had lots of things over the autumn. We had our grants redesign workshops this spring and we've also been working a lot with funders both internally and externally to look at kind of what they're doing doing a bit of mapping and gapping and understanding what funding is coming into the sector.

00:04:34

**Lisa Atamian:** so we've recognized that our new program is shifting focus from quite time limited output-based project funding to more core funding and also working in partnership to try and learn a bit more and prioritize. So we're hoping that our funding will support to unlock innovation, resources, and responsiveness through structured learning to transform the system and support for residents impacted by intersectional inequalities and racism. learning through resources both in council frontline services, but also from um, organizations delivering with lived experience., investing in organizations that listen to and work with residents. um and prioritize developing relationships with other organizations to ensure that residents they're working with get the help and support that they need. Um so as part of this we've also refreshed our VCS strategy which is a new um 10-year strategy building upon the previous strategy and learning um and it still focuses on five main thematic areas. So thinking about the way we work, investment and funding, um premises, accommodation, delivery spaces, volunteering and social action, and infrastructure for the VCS as well.

00:05:53

**Lisa Atamian:** so all of this has gone into creating our grants principles which we co-designed with sector partners in our workshops that took place over the spring. so these principles are basically in place to guide who, how, and what we fund. So our overarching principle is to support and strengthen communities to enable us all to tackle entrenched inequalities as a system. And within that we want to fund in a trusting and enabling way that strengthens organizations. To invest in ways that help us to continually learn and work together as a system and direct resources to focus on organizations and communities that have been failed by the system. So in terms of our grants program that we've launched on Monday um so we've got kind of three sorry four main grants open for funding at the moment. So the core grants which we'll be talking about today the project innovation fund. There's an information session about that happening tomorrow. our VCS infrastructure grants which includes a pilot for black and global majority organizations.

00:07:00

**Lisa Atamian:** The information session for that is happening this afternoon. we also have a collaboration and co-production fund, which isn't like an open grants program

like this one, but, it's funding available for organizations to participate, in our program.

**Lisa Atamian:** and in collaboration with public health, we're delivering another round of healthier hackney funding and the information session for that is happening tomorrow afternoon. just in terms of kind of what the funding looks like. So this is for the rest of the year how our funding proportionally looks like but it will kind of look like this for next year as well. So the bulk of our investment will be going into the core grants program. the project innovation fund we are investing around £100,000 into that for this financial year but from April 2026 it will be significantly less going into that. then we have our VCS infrastructure program. and the collaboration and co-production fund that I spoke about earlier. We have about £5,000 for that this year to support organizations smaller organizations to participate in the program.

**00:08:10**

**Lisa Atamian:** so I'm going to hand over to Sue now to talk about our core grants and have a drink of water and start looking at some of the questions in the chat as well. So over to Sue..

**Sue Brown:** Thanks a lot, Lisa. So, looking in more detail at core grants. what we want to do with core grants is fund organizations purpose rather than their projects. So, this isn't project funding, it is core funding. and it is it is different from what we have been offering before on such a wide basis. So we're going to offer core grants for up to five years to support organizations and we're supporting residents at increased risk of harm due to entrenched inequalities and also supporting residents in a person center trauma-informed and anti-racist way. So, we'll be looking for these elements in the applications that come in. we're looking for groups that are working in collaboration with other organizations and across the system.

**00:09:17**

**Sue Brown:** and focusing on organizations and communities that have been failed by the system. It's our aim to invest in a range of appropriate cultural and geographical organizations. next slide. Thank you. we want to help fund a person centered system. So every successful organization needs to commit to a no wrong door approach to their work in the borough. person- centered means tailoring the support to individual needs and empowering them. And the next slide please. So the focus will be on funding organizations that alleviate inequality and poverty. and the program builds on funding that we have offered in the past. our previous grant

programs include social welfare advice grants. that's organizations providing accredited advice in the borough, lunch club grants, uh organizations providing cook food and social connection and other health benefits to to our residents. and also the community infrastructure grants which was introducing this concept of wraparound support for our residents. So this will be the focus of the core grants funding going forward.

**00:10:43**

**Sue Brown:** And back to you.

**Lisa Atamian:** Thank you very much, Sue. so in terms of the deadlines and time scales, so the expression of interest forms are now open um until um 11:59 p.m. on the 15th of September. there'll be a 4-week period when grants officers are completing all the necessary information and due diligence documents for a short listing panel. we might contact you during this time for additional information or ask you to clarify something in your application. from the 16th of October, we'll aim to have shortlisted applications for stage two and we'll notify all applicants. then stage two application period will be open for approximately four weeks. So from 16th of October to the 10th of November. There will then be a further period when grants officers are compiling all the necessary information and due diligence documents for the final panel. And again, we may contact you during this period for additional information or to ask you to clarify something in your application. we'll aim to notify all applicants of the outcomes of their applications in early December.

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**Lisa Atamian:** and we'll then start issuing grant agreements and payments um for grants to commence on the 1st of January 2026. And back over to Sue.

**Sue Brown:** Thanks Lisa. So looking at general eligibility um organizations must be a registered VCSSE operating locally in Hackney. unregistered but formally constituted organizations are eligible if they have a bank account and a host. Registered charity companies or social enterprises with asset locks are also eligible. But private businesses and individuals are not eligible for grant funding through this program. So at least 80% of the beneficiaries must be Hackney residents. Priority will be given to user le organizations or those involving the beneficiaries and the running of their organizations and priority will be given to organizations that are actually based within Hackney. Most organizations should have an annual income under 1 million pounds. though if you're a larger organization, do contact us to discuss the issue. We

are unlikely to give grants more than one grant in any one funding stream under this program. So again, if that's going to be an issue for you, then you need to get in contact with our grants team and we can talk to you about that.

**00:13:20**

**Sue Brown:** the next slide covers partnership bids. We will accept bids from organizations working in partnership but we do expect all the partners to be equally involved in the collaboration. So applicants should understand the risks and the benefits of partnership bids. Partnership applications should support long-term objectives. again you may wish to contact us if you're interested in putting a partnership bid in. And something which is different from our previous programs is we've tried to simplify due diligence a little bit. I'm sure you'll all be happy about that. as part of this simplified process, we'll be asking organizations registered with Company's House and Charity Commission to ensure they include their registration numbers on their applications so that we can complete due diligence directly. Unregistered groups must submit their governing documents and accounts as has been the case in the past. We may at a later stage ask to see relevant documents, safeguarding and health and safety documents and also your bank statements so that we can pay you which is of course an important element if you do if you are offered at a grant.

**00:14:36**

**Sue Brown:** So looking at the funding that's available as I said earlier the aim is support to support organizations with funding of up to five years. Most grants will be in the region of 15,000 to 30,000 annually but funding amounts will depend on organizations size and work. So as we know the specialist social welfare advice that um happens in the burough they get significantly more funding and so please contact us about your application so that we can talk to you um before your application comes in. The funding is for core costs supporting organizations aims and objectives. So the funding can cover staff salaries, overheads or direct delivery costs. It's not unrestricted. There are limitations and they are all outlined in the guidance document. You'll see there's a lot more information on our website. So do make sure you read through it. organizations who apply at the first stage and get through to the second stage um they will need to provide a budget at that point. So that means a little less work at the expression of interest stage and the grants program budget as my colleague Lisa has mentioned has been reduced which

means there's less funding available.

**00:16:02**

**Sue Brown:** So do bear that in mind when you're making your application. Back to you, Lisa.

**Lisa Atamian:** Thank you, Sue. that's really helpful. so we're in the stage of our presentation where we're going to do a bit of a step-by-step application guidance. So, talk through the specific questions asked in this expression of interest. just to highlight, we have had an upgrade to our application portal. So, it looks a little bit different. We've put some further guidance towards this, but we know there have been some issues. So if you are experiencing any difficulties, please do contact us and we can help um to talk you through it. the form looks slightly different to previous years. but hopefully once you are up and running on the new portal um there is better functionality. So there's kind of translation options. it's compatible with all browsers. The application auto saves and you can also add multiple contributors to the same application. So, there are some really positive things about the new system, but I appreciate it's quite a challenge trying to navigate all of these changes plus a new system at the same time.

**00:17:14**

**Lisa Atamian:** so we do have some kind of further guidance and resources to help you on that. so what I'm going to try and do now is show you what the application form looks like. So, this is probably where we're going to have some technical issues. Hopefully, you can see this. so it the application form still has various tabs like in previous years. So the first tab will be like this. So it will include details about your organization that you've got to fill in. will always have links at the top to the guidance and step-by-step application. So do have a look with that if you're struggling and you can email us as well. I'll go through this in a little bit more detail, but just to note some of the things that have changed on this page are things like it now asks for contacts within a contact table. so it kind of looks like this and you just add a contact. So it we're still asking for a primary and a secondary contact, but the formatting just looks slightly different.

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**Lisa Atamian:** everything else on this page should be quite similar. just some other things to note. If you're uploading a file, it's a lot easier. those of you who have applied previously might remember you had to upload it and then you had to press another button or it lost what you uploaded. So, it's a lot more simple with this new system. so yeah, the first page will be your contact and organizational details. the second tab is your expression of interest. So the key information that we're asking for in this form which we'll go through in more detail shortly then we'll have section asking about equalities data and then the declaration at the end. and you can see um on this there's a little kind of exclamation mark in a red circle on each of these that's telling me that I've got unanswered questions on each page. So, it's not going to let me submit my application without answering the mandatory questions. so yeah, it won't let you submit something that's missing information.

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**Lisa Atamian:** so hopefully that's not too much of a change once you get into the system, but I do appreciate it's quite difficult when you're signing up and creating a new organization and stuff that that is a little bit challenging. So, as I said, we have put together some resources for that, but do contact us if you're having any trouble with that. so I'm going to go back to the presentation now to talk through the actual questions we're asking in the application. so as I mentioned, section one is details about your organizations and contact. So, as I mentioned, there's the new contact table with a primary and secondary contact. there's also a new option to upload governing document and accounts if you're not oh sorry not already registered you're not on charity commission or company's house. So there's an option to show that directly. there's also a change to the annual income question. So if your annual income is zero, please just put one pound because you've got to put something in there.

00:20:37

**Lisa Atamian:** it doesn't let you put zero. that's unfortunately a bit of a quirk with the system which we've fed back to the people who run that. there's also been a slight change to the user-led question which we've been asking for the past few years. but there's a slight change to the wording of that. So please do have a look at that. and just to kind of clarify what do we mean by userled? So by userled we mean that

groups that are rooted in their communities and respond to their community needs. So we want to ensure that we fund groups that have a clear and strong link to the people who access their services. and as a funder will look to enable use groups to fully describe their work and the importance it has within their community. So, in the application form, you'll be asked if 75% of your leadership, and by leadership, we mean trustees, directors, senior staff, or volunteers, come from the communities your organizations serve.

**00:21:34**

**Lisa Atamian:** this is kind of a tickbox question, but there's another question underneath it, which will give you the opportunity to explain your, answer. And you know if your organization is not user-led or not as user-led as you wish for it to be you can write some more detail about it in that question there. so section two is really the bulk of this expression of interest form. So we're asking you a few questions here so that we can kind of understand more about your organization um what you do, who you support, that kind of thing. so question 2.1 um is asking what does your organization do? So in terms of additional guidance this is basically to give us a brief outline of the aims, objectives and priorities of your organization, how you deliver these as an organization. we want you to really describe in full the scope of the work your organization undertakes. not just elements that relate closely to this fund, but we want to understand your organization as a whole.

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**Lisa Atamian:** You can also kind of include links to your website or other documents like that if that supports your answer. and just to say with all of these questions, there is no kind of minimum or maximum word count. So you can use your own words to tell us whatever you need to tell us about your organization, but this is really for us to get a good understanding of what you do. question 2.1A is asking if your organization delivers accredited quality marked and or regulated advice. there's more definitions of this on our guidance document. so do have a look at that and get in touch with us if you're not sure. this is a yes or no question. If the answer is no, you can ignore the question below. If the answer is yes, we'd like you to provide some more information about the accreditation and qualifications here. So um talking about um any kind of quality standards um you have by recognized independent bodies any other accreditations or specific qualifications relevant to the work that you're delivering.



00:23:48

**Lisa Atamian:** so in terms of the next question so question 2.2 um we want you to tell us about the people you're working with. So, as a reminder, through our grants principles, we want to be supporting residents who are at increased risk of harm due to entrenched inequalities. So, we want you to tell us about who you're working with and how they kind of fall into that, that category. want to know about who you're supporting, what their connections are, their equalities, information, where they live, anything that you need to tell us really to give give us a flavor of the people that you're working with. and you will be asked to provide more data on protected characteristics in section 3. So, it's worth making sure that you're kind of being consistent within those those answers. So if you're telling us about very specific community that you're working with here and then putting NA in your answers in the equality section will be a little bit confuser. So just make sure you're being consistent. Um question 2.3 is um a kind of drop-down question.

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**Lisa Atamian:** So it's it's asking us which ward or wards within Hackney your organization's activities will take place. So there's an option to pick multiple wards or one ward. if your project takes place outside of Hackney then um make sure you select the not in Hackney option but do make sure that you explain in your application how this is meeting the needs of Hackney residents if you're not delivering within the borough because we'll really need to to understand how you're kind of locally rooted and supporting people locally if you're not delivering your activities locally. so question 2.4 four is kind of going back to the people you're working with. Tell us how you support them and how you work with them. So again tell us how you're supporting residents in a person- centered, trauma-informed and anti-racist way. tell us how the support you're providing improves the lives of people living in difficult circumstances. Tell us about the kind of work that you do. So you know how many people do you typically support?

00:26:04

**Lisa Atamian:** what does what does your support look like? You can provide some kind of case studies here or give some examples of of the types of things you do to

support people. And you could also maybe describe a typical day in your organization. So kind of who might come to you to support, what support might that offer, what change happens as a result of that. And I suppose it's thinking longer term about this because this funding is up to five years. hopefully that will give organizations a bit more of an opportunity to work with people over a longer period of time. So thinking about that as well. so question 2.5 is asking how you're working in collaboration with other organizations and across the system. So here you could include any information about partnership working your organization engages with why you work collaboratively, how collaboration is part of your organization's longer-term strategies, things like that. we do know that some organizations have struggled to work collaboratively either due to capacity issues or lack of resources or or other issues.

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**Lisa Atamian:** So if your if this applies to your organization then you can kind of use this question to talk about those challenges and what might be helpful or what steps you're taking to try and overcome that to work more collaboratively. So I think this is just kind of going back to to the key points and principles of this fund is we don't want organizations to work in silos. We want organizations to kind of come together across the system to best support residents. So if you feel that your organization hasn't been able to do that until now, it would be a good opportunity to tell us about that here. so section three as I mentioned is about equalities data. so this section basically asks about each of the protected characteristics within the equality act. So, we want you to tell us if you're targeting, or working people particularly with any of these protected characteristics. So, that's ethnicity, religion, gender, age, caring responsibilities, disability, sexual orientation, or pregnancy. so that's kind of drop-down questions as per previous applications.

**00:28:26**

**Lisa Atamian:** So hopefully that should be quite straightforward if you've applied to our grants before. and finally section four is the declaration. so this is um similar to our previous applications as well. so you just need to um declare before you submit your application. so I'm going to pass over to Sue now who's going to talk a little bit more about what happens around your application. Thank you

**Sue Brown:** Thanks Lisa. Thanks for that. so this this slide looks at managing demand. and as we say every year the grants program widely and generally is heavily

over a subscribed with only a 20% success rate. and this year it's likely to be more competitive because there's a reduction in the budget of funds available. So this funding really must support those in difficult circumstances and those at risk of harm and those affected by inequalities and we're encouraging organizations to think very carefully about this and do speak to us if you have questions um about you know the work that you're doing more broadly and I know that some organizations run a whole range of projects and do a whole load of different things.

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**Sue Brown:** So if you're unsure, please do call us and talk to us about your application. just these launch events the we've had two now they've been the number of people signing up has increased by 225%. So there is a lot more interest., and so you really do need to make sure that you make the case about supporting those people in difficult circumstances, those at risk of harm and those affected by inequalities. And the next slide, please. Thank you. And how we make decisions. our grant principles as always will guide the funding decisions, the who, the why, and the how. there will be an increased focus on inequalities and those that are failed by the system which is kind of another way of talking about people in difficult circumstances at risk of harm and impacted by inequality. we involve both council officers um not just from our service but from other relevant services and VCS representatives as well in assessing the applications that come in and they make the panel decisions.

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**Sue Brown:**, and you will have heard from Lisa earlier when she did the overview of the grants that are available is that we now have the opportunity for for people to apply to cover their costs if they're going to come and help us be part of that panel. So do that application as well. the expression of interest form um there's a link in the guidance and that will you know Lisa's just been through step by step so hopefully you've got some good guidance there on what we're looking for and that will be used as a first stage process um to assess the the expressions of interest that are coming in and we do hope to learn and develop further this program as as it progresses over the period. So we're committed to um looking at monitoring and evaluation beyond just numbers, you know, taking a much wider view, not just looking at outputs, though of course they are relevant as well, um but looking at other ways that we can um monitor and work with groups. So for example, things like ripple mapping, portfolio

of evidence, case studies and reports.

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**Sue Brown:** we we really do want to learn from the sector and find the best way of learning and engaging. you know we're really looking forward to working with grantees and developing and adapting those learning systems. we hope to use our learning to shape services and influence other funding as well. not just funding from the council but other funding coming into the borough. Monitoring requests will of course align with the grant principles um and flexible fun commitments. We're mindful still of our duty to robustly account for public money um and so that will form part of the framework but it will be developed by engaging with the grantees and back to you Lisa.

**Lisa Atamian:** Thank you Sue. so in terms of next steps we strongly encourage all organizations who are interested to have a look on our website um to have a look through the VCS prospectus which gives an kind of overview of the whole program and how all the different grants programs fit together as well as the specific guidance documents on each of the funds available.

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**Lisa Atamian:**, obviously sign up to any other information sessions that you're interested in attending this week., you don't have to attend all of them if they're not relevant to what you want to what you want to apply to. So, just attend the ones that you're interested in. And as I said, the videos and slides will be published on the website over the coming days. so if you have missed something, you will be able to access that. we've also put together some um FAQs about changes to the program. So strongly advise having a look at that in case you know in the first instance there's a lot of information there about what the changes to the program mean. If you applied for something previously what you might want to apply for this time etc. but do contact us to speak to a member of the team about your ideas before applying. We know it takes a lot of time and resource to put applications in. So, it's definitely worth just having a chat with us before and we might be able to advise, you know, which fund might be best for you to apply for based on your ideas or what what your organization does.

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**Lisa Atamian:** there's additional application support available free of charge to local VCS organizations through Hackney CVS and also through the East London Business Alliance. So do have a look at their websites to see what support is available. and as Sue mentioned earlier as well, you can sign up to be part of our assessment process. the link to that is here. so obviously you won't be an assessor on the funds that your organization is applying for, but there are lots of opportunities to get involved and help shape the council's investment. And as we talked about there is some funding available for smaller organizations to participate in that process. just to mention a couple of other bits of funding. So there is other council funding that's currently live at the moment. So for example the um community infrastructure levy community fund which is run by the planning team that is um separate to this funding. so do contact them directly if you've got any questions about that.

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**Lisa Atamian:** and also any organizations who apply for discretionary rates relief, the new application is now up on the website for that as well. so here are our contact details. if you'd like to get in touch with us about anything um do give us a ring or we are quite busy at the moment so it might be easier to pop us an email and we can arrange a time that's convenient to call you back. we know that you will have lots of questions about the new program especially because there are so many changes. So do have a look at that FAQ document and obviously if there's any other questions you've got then do um feel free to to drop us a line. we do appreciate it's a really challenging time across the sector. So we do thank you for your continued work and support that you're giving to Hackney residents. but also for your understanding and patience when dealing with these significant changes that we've had to make.

00:36:46

**Lisa Atamian:** like many teams within the council, our team is also undergoing a restructure at the moment. So there's a lot of change and uncertainty in that. So we do thank you for your patience and bearing with us while there's lots of changes. so that's kind of an end to the formal presentation. What I'm going to do before I stop recording, I'll just go back because I saw there are lots of questions in the chat that I think I might be able to answer, kind of quite quickly. So, I'll answer those, and then I'll stop the recording and if we've got time, we can take any other questions. So, I'm just

going to scroll back up. I know some of them have been, answered, but it would be helpful to just go through them. so in terms of what we've missed so yeah priority for local groups so yeah as part of our assessment criteria we will be trying to prioritize local user-led smaller groups that's why we've kind of put some parameters around this what that looks like yet we're still working on so that will be part of our assessment criteria is looking at which groups are locally rooted um that's where we've kind of talked about, you know, in your application, if you're not delivering within the borough or you're not based within the borough, you're going to have to kind of really justify how you're locally rooted and how you are working with residents locally if

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**Lisa Atamian:** if you're seemingly not based within the borough or or things like that. So, we will definitely be un prioritizing that. in terms so yeah the slides will be on the website so that will be there for everyone to access over the coming days. in terms of the income limit so again hopefully we've gone through that there isn't a strict income limit criteria but we do anticipate the majority of organizations we'll be funding will have an annual income of less than 1 million pounds. If your organization's income is over that, it would be good to have a chat with you to understand kind of what what this program looks like and how your organization fits in within that. so the question about if we apply for core cost funding, can we still apply for other programs? you strictly you can apply for other programs, but we we probably it's unlikely you would be funded across more than one grant. So I would advise you to have a look through the guidance documents and have a chat with us before applying for funding because obviously it's very time intensive to apply for multiple applications and it's unlikely that you'd be funded for more than one grant.

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**Lisa Atamian:** So it would be better to have a chat with us about it. obviously if something that you wanted to apply for an additional project is part of your kind of core business and fits into what we're looking to fund with this, you could be including that within your core costs. so just have a think about that and and have a chat with us if you're still not sure. in terms of funding limits for larger organizations, again, if you are a larger organization, contact us. have a chat through this. there are some there is some guidance in the guidance document. There's a section on kind of finance and how much to apply for. so have a look at that. There is some guidance in

that, but have a have a chat with us after if that's still unclear. I think I also saw some questions about budget. So we will not be asking for any budget breakdown or information until stage two. So there's nothing in the expression of interest form about um budget breakdown or anything like that.

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**Lisa Atamian:** So if you are shortlisted for stage two, we'll be asking for more information then and we'll obviously give more guidance around that closer to the time as well. so in terms of the application link, what it's probably best to do is to go on our website and all of the links are on there. So you'll see each different grants program has a unique link to the application form that you're applying for. So it could be if some of you have looked at different application forms, it you might have kind of got lost because it's taken you down a rabbit hole for one or the other. So if you've signed up but haven't started an application yet, go back on the program that you'd like to apply for. Go in the guidance document, follow that link. If you're still having problems accessing the specific application forms, just come to us and we can help you access those., so I won't put anything in the chat for this. It it makes more sense for you to go directly into the guidance documents for the specific links.

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**Lisa Atamian:** in terms of information on performance or managing targets. so again that will be something that comes in to play a little bit more in stage two when organizations are shortlisted but just to kind of build on what Sue was saying about a learning journey. We don't expect this to be kind of very out output target focused funding. It's more kind of holistic. So it's not like we your organization will be um prioritized if your fund if you think you can support a hundred people but another organization can only support 20. We're not kind of comparing those metrics. We're looking at things more holistically of who you're funding, how who you're supporting, how you're supporting them, that kind of thing. but obviously monitoring and evaluation will form part of the grant but not in kind of a numbers a numbers way it will be a little bit more than that. so in terms of collaboration it would be great to have clarification on the collaborations and partnership will preference be given to collaboration and how we ensure collaboration between organizations is fair um so I guess there's two parts to this question.

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**Lisa Atamian:** so one is that we've said we will accept partnership bids. So if a group of organizations want to come together and apply as a group so that's separate to the question around collaboration. So if organizations want to want to apply as a group it's not that preference will be given to that collaboration. It will be looked at in the same way. However, we want to be clear that we don't just want to have if there's five organizations within that collaboration, we want to have a direct relationship with all five of those. We don't want there to be a lead organization who filters down to the other four. because there's all kinds of power dynamics and other things there and we really want to have those relationships directly with groups and make sure that all organizations are kind of equal partners within a partnership. So that's kind of one question. in terms of kind of generally collaboration, as I mentioned, there is a question about how your organization collaborates in the application.

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**Lisa Atamian:** And that's kind of feeds into one of the other questions about if we're going to have a network or something for grantees. Yes, we really want organizations to be working together across the whole system. So we will be trying to bring people together. we will be trying to create opportunities for people to collaborate where perhaps they haven't before. so if your organization hasn't been able to collaborate before for various reasons, we we want to give you the opportunity to tell us you know why, what challenges you've encountered and how you want to be able to collaborate in the future. So we really want to work with organizations who are are ready and willing and want to work with each other, not just kind of work within their own silo. so hopefully that's kind of answered that question. thank you to people who have been talking about links. That's really helpful. right, a question that came up from some of the organizations that host lunch clubs but also apply to the council for funding of other activities, eg cultural activities or advice, was in relation to only being allowed one grant.

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**Lisa Atamian:** Does this mean they should include these different aspects in one expression of interest? Yeah, that's exactly right. So it doesn't make sense for one organization who's delivering lots of different things to receive different pots of money from us with different monitoring requirements, different time scales,



different budgets, it makes much more sense to have one core fund. So if your organization is providing a lunch club but also gives social welfare advice and runs um activities to support people make healthy choices or or any other thing. It makes sense to put this all together in one core funding application so that we can fund your organization for your purpose to deliver all of those activities. We don't want to just fund little peace meal bit bits of activity here and there. We want to fund an organization who does that kind of thing in its entirety. So I hope that makes sense. project and core. Yeah, this is definitely core funding. Any reference to projects may have just been made in error copied over from other presentations.

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**Lisa Atamian:** So apologies if that's caused confusion, but this is this funding is for core funding. I'm just scrolling through. Thank you for answering some of the questions Claire. How does infrastructure get funded i.e. work with organizations building capacity rather than direct delivery. Thanks for the question. So that is through our VCS infrastructure program. so we have been funding infrastructure organizations um such as Hackney CVS um Interlink Foundation and also Volunteer Center Hackney for quite a number of years. what we're doing this year is continue to fund them until the end of this financial year so March 2026 whilst we're doing further engagement work to understand what the changing needs of the sector are. alongside that we have on Monday launched a VCS infrastructure pilot for black and global majority groups. So we recognize that black and global majority groups have not necessarily received the infrastructure support that is helpful for those groups to kind of develop and thrive. So we've put together a separate program for them.

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**Lisa Atamian:** the information session for that is this afternoon if anyone's interested. and we basically the aim is to kind of trial some infrastructure support for black and global majority organizations that can firstly be integrated into the whole program. So from next financial year we'll have a new VCS infrastructure program that will encompass all of this learning but also will enable us to test and learn for other groups as well. So we focused on black and global majority this year, but it could be that in the future we know that we have to do something focused for deaf and disabled groups for example. So that's something that we hope to learn from this pilot and be able to integrate into the program from next year onwards. in terms of attending the sessions, no, just attend the sessions for the grants that you're

interested in. if you wanted to access any information about the other grants the recordings will be up on the website as mentioned that's fine. for equalities data does it include work with indirect beneficiaries i.e. children in a family that have been supported or is it only for direct work?

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**Lisa Atamian:** good question. We've not got any specific guidance around this but what I would say is talk about your direct beneficiaries. There's obviously space within the application that talks we ask you to talk about who you're working with. So if you want to talk about any indirect beneficiaries in there, I think that would probably be the place to talk about it. But in terms of the equality data, it probably makes sense to concentrate on your direct beneficiaries. question about where do we write about match funding? so that will be in stage two. when we ask about kind of budget and funding information, we'll ask about questions like match funding or additional sources of funding. yeah, same for the next question. There's no budget in the expression of interest. so if there is something that says section 4 budget somewhere, that must have been left in there by mistake. So we'll have a look through that. Thanks for pointing that out. question about network of organizations to share learning and build relationships.

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**Lisa Atamian:** Yes, definitely. So that's really something that we want to build into this program to support collaboration across the system. So there will definitely be opportunities for funded organizations to support each other and work together. And we're also aside from all of these grant programs really trying to understand what other ways can we support groups not financially. So is it bringing networks together? Is it supporting organizations in other ways in kind. So aside from all of these programs, that's work that we're kind of looking into in the background and we'll definitely be reaching out to groups over the next few months to understand what other avenues of support would be helpful. some other organizations cultural Hackney both couldn't support us or do anything because they didn't have sign language interpreters with no paid staff being run entirely by volunteers including all to cost which is not insignificant.

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**Lisa Atamian:** that's really helpful to know again it would be good if you want to get in touch with us for us to have a chat with you to kind of talk through the concerns you've raised today would be helpful. Can we apply for more than one grant?, I think we've kind of covered this., we'd strongly encourage you not to apply for more than one grant. So, do have a look at at the different grant strands and get in touch with us if you're not sure which one to apply for. is there a word doc of the application for application preparation? so there isn't a word doc. What you can do is you can download a version of the application from the application portal. otherwise on the step-by-step application guidance, we've put each question in there. So you might want to kind of download a version of that and and edit it for your own purposes.

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**Lisa Atamian:** there isn't a word version of the application itself. do you have different tiers of funding? eg smaller organizations with no paid staff and far less income shouldn't be competing with larger incomes. So it's the same application form for everyone. However, we're always aiming to be proportionate with what we expect from organizations. So you know if an organization is very small and applying for £5,000 worth of funding, we would not expect them to be providing the same level of detail as an organization applying for £50,000 who's a very large one. So that that's kind of something we look at in our assessment to be proportionate for sure. is there a funding parameter for smaller organizations eg providing up to 50% of your current annual income? Yes, there is page. So have a look at the guidance document. As I said there's a finance section that kind of outlines all of this um and what we kind of would and wouldn't expect to be funding. so do have a look at that.

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**Lisa Atamian:** Are the guidance and other documents available in British Sign Language? No, they're currently not., again, if there are other access needs that would be helpful for us to discuss, let's have a conversation around that and we can look to see what we can address. if we apply for the upper amount, but there's likely a lot of applications, would you consider granting funding to an organization for a lesser amount than originally requested? yes, definitely. So, as part of this application process, hopefully we've kind of given a sense that it's not just we're going to go with what's in your application and you know, if you've spelled something wrong, we're not

going to look at it. You know, it's a much more collaborative process. So, we're going to be asking you lots of questions once you've submitted your expression of interest and then your application. We're going to ask you to clarify things. We're going to ask for more information if we want to fund your organization, but we can't afford to fund you for the full amount.

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**Lisa Atamian:** We'll go back to you to talk about what might be possible within the funding available. So, as I said, don't worry too much about the finance stage at this point in time. We're not asking for anything like that in the expression of interest. partly because we don't know how many organizations we're going to have applying. We don't know what stage two is going to look like in terms of numbers. So there's no point really in us asking for that detail now because it might be kind of quite arbitrary based on what comes back from the expression of interest and how many groups are shortlisted. and as I said earlier, there might be kind of significant gaps in terms of equalities areas or geography that, you know, if we're not getting applications and expression of interest that aren't covering certain parts of the community, then we might want to put some funding aside to do something separate for them. So, don't worry too much about actual numbers and money until stage two.

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**Lisa Atamian:** will you hold an actual meeting for the grants? I'm not sure exactly what you mean by that question. I don't know if you mean will we do something in person or if it's just this virtual event. So we've done this virtual launch event so that we could kind of reach as many people as possible and put it up on the website. but there will be opportunities to kind of speak to grants officers either over the phone or we hope to do some face-to-face dropins over the coming months as well. So, there will be opportunities to kind of talk to grants officers one-on-one, but we won't be doing any in-person presentations just in terms of time and capacity. still having some difficulty in fully understanding the concept risk of harm. This seems very specific. so there's further kind of definitions on what we're talking about within the guidance document, but again, if you're kind of having trouble understanding or accessing that, then just send us an email.

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**Lisa Atamian:** We can have a chat about it. And if we're finding that lots of groups are coming up with the same questions, we will obviously adapt our FAQs to include other things that are coming up as well. so that's really helpful. sorry, just going through. looks like a glossary of terms is needed. Yeah, we can definitely look into seeing if there's things that are unclear having some more definitions. There are some things that we have defined in the guidance documents and FAQs, but if there's other bits that people aren't sure about, we can definitely put um FAQs in there. and last question, is it right to assume that the system that often fails people includes the council, eg housing services? Yeah, definitely that the council is part of that system. that sometimes works well, sometimes doesn't work well. So that's definitely something that should be included in there. right, sorry that was a lot a lot of questions we we got through. and we have actually reached time at 1:00, so I won't keep anyone any longer. Obviously, if you do have other questions, please do get in touch with us because I know we've sent a lot of information to you in a very short period of time. So, there's a lot to kind of process and digest. So, please do have a look through all the guidance documents, have a look through the FAQs, and do get in touch with us. We're here to to support you and and yeah, make sure you're using your time as wisely as possible because we know how busy everyone is. So, thank you all. so much. the recording and slides will be up on the website within the next few days. thank you to Sue as well for supporting with the presentation today and thanks also to Claire for helping with the questions. But, thank you so much everyone for your time today and best of luck if you do um decide to make an application. Thank

**Transcription ended after 00:58:06**

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