



Response to Consultation by The BIG Lottery on its Basis Round 2 Draft Priorities for the West Midlands

1. Name of Organisation Responding:

The Digbeth Trust.

2. About The Digbeth Trust:

The Digbeth Trust is a development support organisation offering services to voluntary and community groups and public and charitable funders across the West Midlands. The Digbeth Trust exists to enable the development of an influential, effective, independent and sustainable voluntary and community sector across the West Midlands through the influencing of policy and the provision of expertise.

We are a not-for-profit charitable company and a membership organisation. We currently have a membership of 132 organisations and individuals – the majority of which are small voluntary and community based organisations. We are an active member of Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium and the steering groups of the Birmingham ChangeUp Consortium and the West Midlands Charitable Trusts Group. The Chief Executive of the Trust chairs the West Midlands Regional ChangeUp Consortium (Destination West Midlands).

The Trust currently provides two main services:

- **development support to VCOs** – through our development staff and access to consultancy support for technical assistance (such as feasibility studies for buildings use and business planning) from our register of quality assured consultants;
- **administering a range of grant schemes** for other funders. We only administer grant schemes where we can provide capacity building support to applicants, grant recipients and, frequently, the funder.

3. How this Response Was Formulated:

In drawing up this response the Trust:

- reviewed the data we have collected on infrastructure needs from the enquiries we receive from groups for both our development support services and our grant programmes;
- reviewed other relevant research (eg from BSSEC, WMSSEN and the Birmingham ChangeUp Consortium);
- referred to the existing Regional Infrastructure Strategy (published in 2006);

- considered discussions held with the West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Consortium (Destination West Midlands) in relation to regional infrastructure needs.

We then consulted our membership (through our newsletter and website) on a draft response before developing this final response.

4. Comments on the Consultation Process:

The Trust is currently involved in the development of the Third Sector Infrastructure Strategy for Birmingham and the Regional Infrastructure Strategy – both covering the period 2008-14. These strategies are currently in development, with the final draft of the Birmingham Strategy due to be submitted to Capacitybuilders by 31/12/07 and the final draft of the Regional Strategy due to be submitted in March 2008.

As such, priorities for infrastructure development in Birmingham and other local consortia areas, and at a Regional level, will not be finalised until after the end of the BASIS consultation period.

- **Would we strongly suggest that BLF does not fix the final priorities for BASIS 2 until it has reviewed the final infrastructure plans for both local consortia and the regional infrastructure consortium.**

Although we welcome the length and types of consultation being undertaken, we are concerned at the timelag between the end of the consultation process (16/11/07) and the point at which funding decisions will be made (ie early 2009) – ie a minimum timelag of 14 months. Given the problems faced by applicants over the delay in decision-making in Round 1, and the need to ensure that investment decisions are being taken that are likely still to relate to the needs identified in November 2007, we would suggest that:

- **BLF considers opening the call for bids earlier than “early spring” and/or committing to making final decisions by the end of 2008.**

5. Points of Principle:

The Trust takes the view that:

- **BASIS funding should not subsidise poor commissioning or funding of infrastructure services at a local level. Targeting of resources at specific localities should only be undertaken on the basis that it will improve the quality of local statutory investment in infrastructure (eg through leverage) or complement planned growth in local investment. The principle of additionality – as opposed to substitution – applies.**
- **Projects and activities funded in BASIS Round 1 should not be funded in Round 2.**
- **In areas where there is known to be a range of infrastructure providers, BLF should not fund organisations in Round 2 that received funding in Round 1, unless the Round 2 bid is endorsed by the local infrastructure consortium.**
- **Assessment of all BASIS Round 2 applications should be weighted in favour of applications that can demonstrate they relate to priorities within the relevant local ChangeUp/Infrastructure strategy.**

6. Our Response:

The Trust cannot comment on the proposed priorities focused on Shropshire and Stoke-on-Trent as we have not been working significantly in those areas in the last 12 months.

6.1 BASIS Priorities:

We have ranked the remaining relevant proposed priorities as follows:

Level	Priority Area	Rationale
Quite Important	Regional Voice and Coordination for the BME Sector	<p>Following discussions in the West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Partnership (DWM) we support this as a priority. However, we are concerned that the development of a response to this priority risks being funding rather than needs-led.</p> <p>We are also concerned that the response to such a priority will focus on Black and Asian communities rather than other minority ethnic communities which are often under-represented in BME consultation.</p> <p>We are concerned that the BASIS programme is focusing on one community of interest (BME) when recent DWM/SIP research shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ there are other communities of interest/equalities groups which are currently under-represented at regional level and ▪ many of the current specialist infrastructure networks, consortia and partnerships have short-term funding which has already ended or is due to finish by March 2008.
Less Important	Improved Networking and Coordination of Infrastructure in Birmingham	<p>We have ranked this as Less Important for support by this funding stream as we believe resourcing this activity is the responsibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local statutory funders (principally through the local strategic partnership) as it is their responsibility to create a sustainable network of infrastructure services at a local level; ▪ Capacitybuilders through the Consortium Development Fund and, potentially, their proposed innovation funding; ▪ Local infrastructure providers, who should be building in the cost of this activity into their core activities and pricing. <p>However, we acknowledge it is as yet unclear what funding will be available from Capacitybuilders for the local Consortia from 2008/09 onwards – so we would recommend continued dialogue between BLF and Capacitybuilders on this issue.</p>
Quite	Sub-Regional	We feel this is an area where BASIS can add significant

Level	Priority Area	Rationale
Important	projects to support collaboration and mergers	value to the shape and sustainability of infrastructure services at sub-regional level and across the Region.
Quite Important	Sub-Regional projects to explore non-grant income for infrastructure organisations	We feel this is an area where BASIS can add significant value to the shape and sustainability of infrastructure services at sub-regional level and across the Region.
Very Important	Capacity building of small groups in Sandwell	The Trust has delivered a range of capacity building work in Sandwell and continues to receive requests for development support from organisations in that area.
Very Important	Capacity building of small groups in Birmingham	We disagree that there is an absence of organisations to support and represent small groups in Birmingham. We agree that there is a need for greater investment in infrastructure services for these small groups in Birmingham, but the Birmingham ChangeUp Consortium is proposing to address this through the involvement of statutory organisations in the development of the Infrastructure Investment Strategy. As such, we would reaffirm our request that the final detail of the BASIS 2 priorities should only be fixed once the local infrastructure strategy has been finalised.

6.2 The Digbeth Trust's Suggested Priorities:

We propose the following additional priorities:

Level	Priority Area	Rationale
Very Important	Professional and Technical Aid across the Region	<p>Providing access to a fund to enable third sector organisations to purchase one-off specialist support when needed. Small groups are not able to access technical support without separate funding as they are not able to secure Full Cost Recovery, have little or no reserves, and there are very few funders who will pay for this.</p> <p>Economies of scale suggest that this specialism is best provided on a regional, rather than local level.</p> <p><u>Evidence to Support this Priority:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Birmingham Infrastructure Consortium Research: Sector Intelligence 1 (2006) and Sector Intelligence 2 (2007) ▪ The Digbeth Trust Professional and Technical Aid Business Plan (2007) – available on request
Very Important	Local voice and representation for voluntary and community sector	Lack of investment in representative structures to ensure diverse third sector voices are heard within local and sub-regional decision making structures. Whilst it may be the case that this is not a priority in some localities, our

Level	Priority Area	Rationale
	organisations	<p>experience is that it is a gap at regional level and in some local areas across the region including Birmingham and Staffordshire.</p> <p>Although we feel this should be a statutory responsibility to resource this type of structure, it is likely to be an area where BLF can significant value by helping to ensure the independence of these structures.</p> <p><u>Evidence to Support this Priority:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Birmingham Infrastructure Consortium Research: Sector Intelligence 1 (2006) and Sector Intelligence 2 (2007) ▪ Discussions with SCIO and within Destination West Midlands

The Trust would not support additional investment by BASIS in social enterprise support in Birmingham. This is an area that has seen a growth in infrastructure investment in the past 12 months (eg BASIS Round 1, the REALISE micro-cluster initiative, ChangeUp Support2Contract Project, the launch of the Business Link brokerage service, etc) and discussions are currently being held between the Birmingham ChangeUp Consortium and the Birmingham Strategic Partnership on further investment in this area by statutory partners.

There are other more pressing needs for infrastructure support in Birmingham – particularly amongst small groups (as acknowledged in BLF’s suggested priorities) for which social enterprise is not a significant option.

We would rank BLF’s priorities and our proposed additional priorities as follows:

Level	Priority Area
Very Important	Capacity building of small groups in Sandwell
Very Important	Capacity building of small groups in Birmingham
Very Important	Professional and Technical Aid across the Region
Very Important	Local voice and representation for voluntary and community sector organisations
Quite Important	Regional Voice and Coordination for the BME Sector
Quite Important	Sub-Regional projects to support collaboration and mergers
Quite Important	Sub-Regional projects to explore non-grant income for infrastructure organisations
Less Important	Improved Networking and Coordination of Infrastructure in Birmingham

7. Contact:

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1. How important is each of our proposals for the West Midland?

Very important	Quite important	Less important	Don't know	Specific proposals
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional voice and co-ordination for the BME sector
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure in Stoke on Trent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improved networking and co-ordination of infrastructure in Birmingham
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Improved networking and co—ordination of infrastructure in Shropshire
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sub-regional projects to support collaboration and mergers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sub-regional projects to explore non-grant income for infrastructure organisations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity building of small groups in Sandwell
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity building of small groups in Birmingham



connecting the
voluntary sector with
consultants' expertise

PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL AID SERVICE (PTAS)

Our Professional and Technical Aid Service (PTAS) offers:

- to voluntary and community groups: access to quality-assured consultants who can help you to improve your services and organisation;
- to consultants: access to a wide range of opportunities to make a difference to voluntary and community groups;
- to other partner organisations (including funders and statutory authorities): access to our database of quality-assured consultants to help with needs assessments, service evaluations, etc.

PTAS is a **free** service for voluntary and community organisations in the West Midlands. Currently we can only fund a small number of consultancy each year. However, for every group that contacts us we will:

- Assess your needs;
- Help you write a consultancy brief;
- Help you find a quality assured consultant;
- Give you advice about how to manage the consultancy.

If we cannot fund the consultancy ourselves we will signpost to other sources of possible funding or organisations that might be able to help free of charge.



OUR APPROACH:

We aim to deliver real outcomes for the groups and partners we work with. Our approach is to:

- tailor our support to the specific needs of individual groups;
- work with groups to transfer skills to build their capacity;
- focus on sustainable development – so that groups and projects develop realistically;
- facilitate links between groups and the wider policy and funding environment in which they are working.

OUR IMPACT:

Recent evaluations show that the Trust is:

- Effective at reaching marginalised communities and groups;
- An effective administrator of grant funds – delivering positive outcomes for groups, individuals, communities and funders;
- Effective at helping groups to build their own capacity – thereby having a lasting impact on the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the groups we work with;
- Effective at helping to lever-in additional financial and non-financial resources to the sector.

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