

For support with your application please refer to the Application Guidance and/or sign up to a Q&A session. If you are experiencing technical issues, please contact fundinginfo@comirelief.com

Comic Relief: Ministry of Justice Specialist Fund

Key questions and FAQs from applicants

Updated 08/07/21

Please also see the [Ministry of Justice Specialist Fund webpage](#) and the [Application Guidance](#).

1. Eligibility

a) Who is eligible to apply?

Please see Comic Relief's core eligibility criteria at:

<https://www.comirelief.com/funding/eligibility-criteria/>

In addition, please find the detailed eligibility criteria document at the end of the [Application Guidance](#) document. This includes fund-specific criteria and information from our main eligibility criteria.

b) How do you define a by / for / with organisation?

Our detailed definition can be seen on both the [Ministry of Justice Specialist Fund webpage](#) and within the [Application Guidance](#). Please read our definition to see whether your organisation meets the criteria.

c) Does my organisation have to align with all four of the 'with/by and for' elements outlined on the initiative page?

Yes. In your application, you should tell us how your organisation aligns with all of these elements.

The purpose, mission, values and approach of eligible organisations will intentionally reflect the work of this fund. For example:

- Does your organisation **intentionally** promote the rights of survivors who have experienced additional injustice (due to being from communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and / or LGBTQ+) as your **primary mission**?
- Are you able to demonstrate a track record of **intentionally** delivering the **majority** of your support to people from these backgrounds (communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and / or LGBTQ+)?
- Can you demonstrate the **majority** of your senior leadership team and Board **intentionally** reflect the communities you are working with (communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and / or LGBTQ+)?

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- d) We work on domestic abuse and / or sexual violence but are not led by, with and for communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and/or LGBTQ+ communities. Are we eligible to apply.**

No. This fund is ringfenced for smaller, specialist organisations led by, with and for communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and / or LGBTQ+ communities. We recognise that organisations with a broader focus of beneficiaries support many people from within these communities, but this small specialist fund is not designed to provide support to these more generalist organisations.

- e) Can you apply if you are based outside the UK?**

These funds are available to organisations working in England and Wales only.

- f) Do you have any criteria for a minimum or maximum organisational turnover?**

For this fund, the minimum annual turnover is £75,000 and the maximum annual turnover is £10million.

- g) Can we apply as a partnership?**

You are welcome to submit an application as a partnership. However, we recommend you carefully consider the funding amount available (maximum of £70,000) and timelines of this funding opportunity to ensure it is achievable (all projects must be completed and reported on by March 2022).

- h) We're applying as a partnership, does the minimum organisational turnover apply to all organisations within our partnership?**

In the case of partnerships, the minimum threshold only applies to the lead applicant. Additional delivery partners can have an annual income lower than the minimum threshold.

- i) Does this fund support work with children and / or older people?**

We know certain age groups from within communities facing racial inequality, disabled people and / or LGBTQ+ communities are disproportionately impacted by crime, and so encourage applications from organisations supporting these groups.

- j) Our work supports the charity sector to better use technology, but doesn't deliver front line services, is this eligible?**

We will prioritise services and products or any digital development which provide or could lead to better services for beneficiaries. This is not primarily intended for those infrastructure and consultancy organisations supporting charities to improve their capacity to use technology.

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k) Does the funding have to be for a new project?

No. You are welcome (and encouraged!) to use the funding to enhance your current work.

l) Does the funding have to be for one project?

No. You are welcome to spend the funding across multiple and/or overlapping areas of your work. However, we recommend you carefully consider the timelines of this funding opportunity to ensure it is achievable (all projects must be completed and reported on by March 2022).

2. Digital queries

a) Do the digital costs need to be user facing or can it be digital infrastructure behind the scenes that support delivery?

We welcome applications which seek to build organisational digital infrastructure that lead to improved service provision for your users. We have kept eligible costs intentionally broad and they could cover a wide range of potential costs. For example, this could relate to CRM systems, or dashboards which may support you with casework, as well as analyse monitoring data that helps you understand demand and how users are accessing your service. The below is a guide to the types of costs we expect to cover but this is not an exhaustive list.

Proposals that improve digital and remote capacity, and help provide continuity of support, could include:

- Core costs connected to digital capability (e.g. internal training and upskilling, CRM system strengthening)
- Internal hardware purchases (including laptops) and software upgrades
- Related to the above, development of digital capacity to enable organisations to offer real-time services, improved support and reach more potential service users
- Website updates to facilitate beneficiary access & strengthening referral pathways if appropriate e.g. live chat
- Technical coaching and implementation support around the re-use or adaptation of existing technology/ software into their service or organisation where this is suitable
- Specific technical assistance where time allows in the fund e.g. digital designers and consultants, developers
- Activities such as focus groups, etc, which help you scope the needs of your programme

b) Are the costs associated with purchasing laptops eligible?

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Yes, hardware costs are eligible. However, we would expect hardware purchases within this fund to clearly strengthen / enhance your work. Your application form will focus on telling us about the problems your organisation is experiencing. We would expect strong applications to focus on the problems, before relating the hardware to the problem you are looking to solve.

c) Are the costs associated with upgrading a CRM system eligible?

Yes, software costs are eligible. The same approach applies as with hardware costs (see above).

d) What type of support could we access? Could this cover developer costs?

Your funding should cover any developer or external support time you need, supplied by a digital or commissioning partner. Aside from this, we will be working with a support partner to provide a package of support for the cohort of funded partners.

If you're unsure whether you might need this, the first two months of the fund are dedicated for you to scope, validate and explore what digital approaches and upgrades are most appropriate for your organisation, staff and service users. Please see below on how to build your budget around this.

e) Can I apply for funding to support multiple aspects of service delivery across my organisation? (e.g. under this fund I want to purchase the essential hardware we need, but would also want to scope how our website could be a better referral pathway)

If the work you are proposing fits within the budget available, then yes. This fund aims to improve digital and remote capacity for organisations, and we know this could cover a range of different costs and activities.

f) How will the programme work?

Each organisation selected will have a grant of up to £70,000 available to cover their costs. This covers costs incurred over the programme as they purchase and upgrade their digital infrastructure, make changes to how they work, and cover the costs of time spent working with the digital support partner. The Specialist Fund will have a dedicated team, working across all the funded organisations, offering coaching and expertise over the course of the programme., particularly in the first two months of funding as organisations work out how to most effectively spend their funding.

Projects will last for 5 months and will cover a scoping phase likely from Oct 21 – Nov 21. At this stage, you will be onboarded onto the programme, and supported to explore and validate what you need. There will then be a three to four-month implementation phase likely from Dec 22 – Feb 22 (at this stage, you may action what you have learned) This structure is adaptable/ flexible depending on where you are with your digital journey in your organisation.

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3. Budget queries

a) How do we build our budget if we're not sure what we might need?

We recognise it is difficult to submit a budget when the solution is not finalised. We understand that for those with a limited idea of what they need, the budget will need to be developed in further detail on the basis of work done in the 'discovery' phase of the programme. Successful applicants will receive support to refine their budgets. The budget you submit at application stage can reflect this and be a top line indicative budget i.e., less well defined and detailed, with costs estimated.

The fund is adaptable/ flexible depending on where you are with your digital journey. We expect that some may enter the programme having a validated idea of what they want and need to acquire for their service, while some may need to spend more time on scoping and finding out what they need/ want. We would encourage you to apply in either case.

b) Can some of the funding be for the salary or core costs?

Yes, but only if they are related to the tech/digital work this funding will go towards. We would expect you to be able to reasonably demonstrate the core costs and/or staff costs are related to this project.

Please note it is important to budget adequately against staff time: for example, the project lead will be expected to engage with the digital support on offer and share learnings at regular check in points.

4. Other sources of income

a) Are there any restrictions on attracting other funding?

No there are not, but we will expect our funds to be used for a distinct piece of work.

b) Can we still apply if we have previously received a Comic Relief grant?

We will accept applications from previous Comic Relief funded partners

c) We are a current Comic Relief funded partner under another initiative - can we still apply?

Absolutely! We welcome applications from current funded partners as well as those who have previously or never received Comic Relief funding.

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d) If we receive Specialist Fund funding, would this prevent us from applying for other Comic Relief funding?

No. However, we would need to assess your organisation's capacity to manage more than one grant as part of our assessment processes.

5. Time limits for delivery

a) Can I apply for funding that is longer than five months?

Six months is the maximum length of time for investments within this fund. We are expecting payments to be made to successful applicants at the end of September 2021, and for projects to finish end of February 2022.

b) Our project will take longer to complete than the funding available, would this be eligible?

Embedding digital effectively into your organisation's service delivery is an ongoing process/ journey and we would not expect the work to end after the funding or necessarily be completed, but we are looking to fund organisations to make a good step forward within the period of the funding.

For those who are successful, the goals for the funded period of development will be set by yourselves (with expert mentors) as part of the start-up workshop. We will also be providing additional support on this as part of the kick-off, get together days and dedicated mentoring provided as part of the funding.

6. Fund practicalities

a) What are the chances of success and how many applications do you expect?

We expect to receive up to 100 applications and to make approximately 25 grants.

b) Can I speak to you about my proposal?

The [Application Guidance](#) is there to support you with any fund-specific questions you may have. We will also hold Q&A Zoom sessions (please see the Key Dates section of the [Ministry of Justice Specialist Fund webpage](#) for details) to provide support during the application window. If you need technical support in completing the form, please get in touch with fundinginfo@comicroelief.com.

Note the deadline is 12:00 / noon (BST), Tuesday 20th July 2021. We will not accept late proposals and strongly urge that any questions are addressed early on, to make sure that proposals are completed and submitted in time.

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If technical issues are preventing you from submitting your application before the deadline, please get in touch with fundinginfo@comicrelief.com as soon as possible.

You will receive your proposal ID in the acknowledgement email you receive upon submission. If you do not get an acknowledgement email when submitting your application, please get in touch with fundinginfo@comicrelief.com.

c) Can I provide feedback to Comic Relief on this process?

Of course, we invite all applicants to share feedback on our application process for this fund. You can do this by completing an Applicant Survey [HERE](#). Our applicant survey will be open throughout the application window, and for a limited time after the deadline.