



Project Management

Project Assessment Form and Guidance Notes

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Purpose of this document

This document:

1. outlines Improvement East's approach to funding and commissioning projects;
2. provides guidance on how to develop a proposal and complete a Project Assessment Form; and
3. details the financial and monitoring procedures which must be followed once funding is agreed.

Introduction to Improvement East

Improvement East is one of nine Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) operating across England. It has a clear vision to support and help authorities to deliver improvement and efficiency through every local and fire authority within the region.

A three-year Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (RIES) has been developed to identify key regional improvement and efficiency priorities. The Strategy is available at <http://www.improvementeast.gov.uk> . It outlines Improvement East's vision which is to:

“Coordinate, challenge, support and accelerate the drive for improvement and efficiency in localities to a higher level than would be otherwise possible”

Improvement East will do this through four interrelated high-level outcomes, which are:

1. Authorities will significantly *improve* their own organisational *performance* and delivery, both corporately and at individual service level.
2. Excellent, innovative *Local Strategic Partnerships* (LSPs) and *Local Area Agreements* (LAAs) delivering improved community engagement and empowerment.
3. Authorities will collectively achieve at least the nationally targeted *efficiency* savings and the RIEP will support authorities to achieve significant efficiency gains.
4. Authorities will be equipped with the *capacity and skills* they need to lead their areas to improve services, to empower communities and, in particular, to successfully embrace major changes.

Improvement East has funding of £12.9 million available in 2009/10 with further funding expected to be made available in 2010/11. Any project funded or commissioned by Improvement East will have to clearly demonstrate that it supports the achievement of one or more of these outcomes.

Approach to funding

The four outcomes listed above, and detailed in the RIES, provide the framework within which projects are commissioned and developed. There is no general 'bidding process' for this funding.

Improvement East is working with existing partnerships to develop a set of regionally commissioned programmes to address the outcomes. These partnerships will then implement the programmes for their service or area. This ensures that the best people in the public sector are developing programmes of work and make the maximum impact in their field.

If any authority has ideas for possible projects, the most appropriate approach is to contact Improvement East and/or the relevant partnership.

In the case of supporting individual authorities that are performing poorly, proposals for Improvement East support will also come through the high level relationship management process that Improvement East is establishing with authorities and partnerships. In discussion with an authority's senior team, Improvement East will consider how it can best deploy and tailor resources to support clearly defined corporate needs and the outcomes identified in the RIES.

Please note, a separate assessment form is available for those authorities who have been assessed as poor, weak, 0* or 1* under CPA and those authorities with particular performance issues..

While Improvement East will always consider good ideas, it will not support ad hoc bids for resources. The right approach is always to make early contact with Improvement East and discuss ideas and proposals at an early stage.

Developing proposals for Improvement East support

If a project does not fit with Improvement East's outcomes it will be made clear at an early stage to avoid abortive time. If it does, the next stage will be to provide more information about a proposal. This will involve the completion of the Project Assessment Form attached at Appendix A¹. The form should be completed in conjunction with the relevant partnership (if one exists) so that appropriate professionals from the region can be involved in its development. This form should be completed regardless of whether an approach is being made for funding, or where the project has been commissioned by Improvement East. The Project Assessment Form is designed to provide a standard format for collecting information about proposals. In the event that the project is funded or commissioned, much of the information provided on this form will be used to monitor the progress of the project on a quarterly basis.

¹ A separate assessment form is available for those authorities who have been assessed as poor, weak, 0* or 1* under CPA and those authorities with particular performance issues. .

For projects seeking funding through Improvement East's Efficiency Cluster, an additional step is required. With the demand for accurate reporting against NI 179 increasing, Improvement East requires authorities submitting requests for funding from the Efficiency Cluster categories listed below to include a **mietool** submission.

mietool is CLG's preferred tool for the measurement of efficiency gains and is fully endorsed by Improvement East who have been hosting training sessions for our authorities. It is available to authorities free of charge and can be obtained by contacting Cindy Burgess, our Business Manager, at cindy.burgess@improvementeast.gov.uk.

Efficiency Cluster categories:

Procurement:	Regional procurement portal/hub Care fund calculator Spend Analysis/risk Audit
Resource Mapping:	Local mapping projects
Joint Commissioning:	Regional JC Pilots Revenue Shared Services
Transformation	BPI (Business Improvement) Invest to Save DECATS Shared Service Pathfinder/Pilots
Others:	Peer Efficiency Network Fire & Rescue

Improvement East is aware that in the early stages of project development it may not be possible to provide answers to some of the more detailed questions contained on the Project Assessment Form. However, detailed information does assist the decision making process. Additionally, Improvement East is aware that developing detailed project plans takes time and will therefore consider projects when some of the detailed arrangements have yet to be finalised. In the event that a project is approved for funding, it is expected that all sections of the Project Assessment Form should be completed and accompanied by the output from **mietool**.

It is advisable to make early contact with Improvement East who will assist with the completion of the Project Assessment Form.

Considering potential projects – key stages

Following discussions with Improvement East staff, and the development of a Project Assessment Form and **mietool** submission, all proposals will be assessed in a rigorous way. The decision making process may vary but will normally involve:

1. Initial project development – to complete the Project Assessment Form. This needs to be done in close collaboration with Improvement East staff who will give careful consideration to any proposed project in the light of the RIES.
2. Consideration of a proposal by the relevant Cluster group, or by an equivalent appropriate group.
3. Consideration by Improvement East’s Executive Advisory Group to ensure that proposal are in line with the RIES outcomes; that appropriate linkages have been made with other relevant projects; and that projects are sufficiently well developed to proceed.
4. Final decision by the Member Panel.

Decision making criteria

The key criteria against which any project will be judged are around the contribution it will make to the delivery of the RIES. The extent of the commitment and ownership of the project and confidence in its deliverability will also be important factors. The project assessment criteria which supports the decision making process is attached at Appendix B. There is not right of appeal against the decision of Improvement East..




Following approval

Once a scheme has been approved in principle, there will then be a requirement to complete a Project Monitoring Form which sets out the milestones of the project. This information will be used to report quarterly to Improvement East. All projects will be expected to follow effective project management principles. The exact detail may vary dependent upon the delivery milestones, type and complexity of the project. Ideally the delivery milestones should be outcome and output related with clear direct measurable benefits, although it is recognised that in some areas benefits may be less tangible. The challenge for project leaders, particularly in the bigger spend projects, will be to examine the opportunities to translate what could be otherwise easily measured as inputs, e.g. attendance on courses, seminars and events into “harder” measurements e.g. how many have put the learning into practice and the subsequent benefits.

Monitoring and review

Improvement East is accountable to government and must demonstrate effective use of the grant funding and achievement of the Strategy. To contribute to this all individual projects will be required to submit performance information, setting out progress, key achievements and a simple traffic light summary: This information will be reported to the relevant cluster group, to the Executive Advisory Group and the Member Panel. The Project Monitoring Form will be used as the basis for judging progress against the milestones (also see 'funding arrangements' section below).

Progress will be reported using a 'traffic light' system as follows:

Status	Project Progress
	Has slipped significantly and is in danger of either failing or being well behind schedule to the extent that it may not be completed until at least three months after the original completion date.
	has either slipped marginally or encountered issues that require resolving to put it back on track
	Progressing according to or exceeding the agreed plan, deliverables etc.

Throughout the implementation stage Improvement East staff will provide proactive support to ensure all projects, whilst sector led, are delivered within a framework that supports delivery of the Strategy.

Funding arrangements

In the event that funding is approved, the lead authority for the project will be required to invoice Improvement East based on the work done and the agreed milestones having been reached. These milestones will be agreed between Improvement East and the project lead and set out in the Project Monitoring Form. Invoices should be raised to "East of England Regional Assembly" and marked for the attention of the Improvement east Programme manager you are liaising with. Please also include the project reference number supplied by Improvement East.

Crediting Improvement East

As a funder, or part funder, of projects and initiatives, it is hoped that beneficiaries of Improvement East funding would wish to see the partnership credited appropriately.

In order to raise the profile of this partnership with members and staff and help them to access further support, Improvement East should be credited when reporting on the project or initiative on internal and external communications:

- reports to members;
- staff newsletters;
- press articles and releases;
- website articles;
- products or materials; and
- presentations at events

Appropriate forms of wording are:

“We received funding of £x from Improvement East to support/ help with this project/initiative”.

“This project was developed by ...with funding or support from Improvement East. It may be used to share learning throughout the public sector but not for commercial gain.”

Partners may refer to Improvement East but need to ensure that:

- Improvement East does not appear to be endorsing a particular product or service provider unless previously agreed;
- the Improvement East logo is shown in accordance with its branding guidelines; and
- Improvement East approve any material referring to it other than that adhering to the guidelines above.

If you would like a quote from Improvement East about your particular project or initiative, please contact a member of staff who will refer your request to the appropriate Member of the Improvement and Efficiency Panel or Executive Advisory Group representative.

Dissemination of learning

Improvement East wants to engender a mutually supportive culture amongst authorities in the region. This will involve, amongst other things, the sharing of good practice. It is hoped that beneficiaries of Improvement East funding will share their experiences and learning.

Contact:

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Improvement East
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