

Strengthening Civil Society Programme

Supporting effective use of the law and human rights-based approaches

Supporting legal action related to Covid-19

Updated September 2020

Purpose of the Strengthening Civil Society programme

We see the law and human rights based approaches as one way in which civil society organisations in the UK can tackle discrimination and disadvantage experienced by marginalised people. Covid-19 will have an impact on all parts of society, including civil society. We believe the role of the law and human rights based approaches are more important than ever before in ensuring a robust and independent third sector.

There are lots of great examples of organisations who have used these tools effectively. However, use of the law and human rights based approaches is far from consistent across civil society and many organisations see no link between these tools and their purpose, strategy and activities, or are wary of using them. This programme aims to boost engagement and support organisations within the sector to make better use of the law and human rights in their work.

Our primary focus is on social change activities that tackle discrimination and disadvantage. By social change we mean:

- changes in policy, regulation and law;
- changes in behaviour, attitudes and norms; and
- new ways of designing and delivering services or support for individuals.

Definitions of the law and human rights based approaches vary, but we use these terms in a broad and practical way. A framework for different uses of the law by civil society is available [here](#).

This programme is a collaboration with the Legal Education Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. You can learn more about the programme [here](#).

Purpose of this call

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come, with a lot of uncertainty about what this will mean for UK society in the weeks, months and years ahead. We already

know that the pandemic and the response of public authorities has had a [disproportionate impact](#) on people who already experience discrimination and disadvantage. It is an important and legitimate role of civil society to scrutinise, engage with and challenge public decision making and its impacts during these unprecedented times.

This funding will support [legal action in all its forms – empowering, persuading, challenging](#) – that seeks to protect vulnerable individuals and communities from the impact of Covid-19 and the response to the pandemic from public authorities, businesses, and communities. We believe that legal action could play a critical role in reducing the impact on these communities and drive long-term social change. We will support organisations who already use legal action in their work.

We highly encourage collaborative working when using the law to achieve long-term social change and [we have found](#) this to be a key factor for success. If you plan to collaborate or work in partnership with other groups, we expect you to clearly outline the approach you will be taking and the roles you envisage these organisations to take in the work.

We will award grants of up to £40,000 for one year. We know the approach you set out to take may need to change and we will be as flexible as we can be to support you in your activities to achieve the purpose of your work. Successful applicants will be required to submit a report at the end of the grant period sharing their activities, learnings and expenditure.

Eligibility

In this funding, applications will be considered from civil society organisations in the UK who:

- Have relevant and demonstrable legal expertise in their area of focus;
- Are registered as a charity in the UK;
- Will deliver activities under the grant which delivers benefit in the UK (applications for international work will not be considered); and
- Have an annual income of under £5m.

Organisations which currently hold a grant from the Foundation are eligible to apply. However, please contact us before submitting an application to discuss your proposal.

This fund is intended to support legal action which seeks to bring about broader social change, for example, a legal challenge which seeks to reverse a policy which is exacerbating discrimination in the lives of tens of thousands of people. Unfortunately, this means we are unable to support applications from organisations seeking funding to support their work to provide advice to individuals – for example, recruiting or retaining welfare benefits advisers or solicitors. We

encourage you to explore support available from the [Community Justice Fund](#), which has been specifically set-up to support the social welfare advice sector during the pandemic.

Application process

We have tried to keep the application process as simple as possible, with a single written application assessment. In order to consider your request, we need you to:

1. Complete a grant application form, which can be found [here](#).
2. Write an expression of interest, of no more than 2000 words, outlining the detail of the legal action you are taking or planning to take to address the impacts of Covid-19.

Your expression of interest should be factual; written in plain English, avoiding jargon and rhetoric; and should be presented under the following headings:

- **Summary** – summarise, in no more than 300 words, your project's objectives and approach.
- **Impact on your organisation** – tell us about the impact Covid-19 has had on your organisation, how you have responded and how it has shaped your work, if at all.
- **Planned legal activities** – explain how you plan on using legal action to tackle discrimination and disadvantage caused or exacerbated by Covid-19 or the response of public authorities, businesses or communities. This should include:
 - whether you will collaborate with others and the approach you will take to ensure effective working;
 - evidence of the specific area of discrimination or disadvantage you hope to address; and
 - the key outcomes you hope to achieve towards creating long-term social change.

This section should be the bulk of your expression of interest.

- **Organisation** – explain your organisation's purpose, your current priorities and why you are the best placed to work on this project including your specific legal expertise.
- **People-centred** – tell us how you plan to work with and for the people experiencing the discrimination and disadvantage you are seeking to tackle.

- **Learning** – tell us how you plan to learn from your activities and how this learning could support your work going forward; and
 - **What else** – if there is anything else you would like us to know, include it in this section.
3. **Budget** – include your organisational budget – if possible, this should reflect the likely impact of Covid-19 on your broader operations. This should be a document separate to your expression of interest and is not included in the word count.
 4. Include your organisation's safeguarding policy. If you do not have a safeguarding policy, please upload an explanation entitled "No safeguarding policy".

Your expression of interest, budget and safeguarding policy should all be separate documents. You will be directed to upload these documents in the grant application form. If you encounter any issues using our online form, please call us on 0207 767 1348 and leave a message detailing the problem – a member of the team will get back to you as soon as possible.

We may follow up applications with a phone call if we require further information or clarification.

We expect successful applicants to submit a monitoring report at the end of the grant period sharing their activities, learning, and expenditure. Together with our learning partners, we will seek to learn from this work and develop a better understanding of the role of legal action in circumstances such as this pandemic; we will discuss this with successful applicants when we award a grant. Full details of the conditions of any grant will be provided following its award.

Timetable

We currently have three deadlines for organisations to apply to this fund.

Deadline	Decision
Midday on Thursday 28 May 2020	Decision by Friday 26 June 2020
Midday on Tuesday 11 August 2020	Decision by Friday 18 September 2020
Midday on Thursday 22 October 2020	Decision by Friday 18 December 2020

In exceptional circumstances we may be able to make decisions on applications in between these deadlines. Please get in touch with us to discuss this.

Resources

Ahead of starting your application, you may wish to read the following supporting research:

- a paper on the [successful use of strategic litigation by the voluntary sector](#);
- an exploration of [civil society organisations deploying a range of legal tools and tactics](#) to achieve social change;
- a [framework for better use of the law](#) by civil society organisations; and
- a paper on the [value of using legal based approaches](#) (which informed the focus of our Strengthening Civil Society programme).

If you would like to speak to a member of staff before starting your application, please email us at baring.foundation@ing.com to arrange a time to talk. Our team is here to support you.