

Productivity Experts Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

Application stage

What are the purposes of the programme?

The LGA's Productivity Experts Programme supports councils to make efficiency savings against a backdrop of decreasing funding and increasing demand for services. It offers direct bespoke advice and support to councils to help them deliver efficiency savings and or income generation.

Who can apply for the Productivity Expert Programme?

Councils, Fire and Rescue Services and National Parks can all apply for the programme grant funding and support.

How much grant does the organisation receive?

The organisation receives a £7,000 grant.

What service areas can the application focus on?

The Productivity Expert Programme is highly flexible to the demands of authorities. This means that as long as the purpose is for the project to save and or generate an income, we can work with any service.

How many grants can the LGA give out per financial year?

The LGA can give out 25 grants to different authorities in a financial year.

Can authorities apply for the programme with partners?

You can apply with councils and public sector organisations, however, you must allocate a lead authority who will receive the grant.

Further to this, we certainly encourage applications which involve partnerships.

Can authorities apply twice for the grant in one financial year?

You cannot be the lead authority in two applications, however, you can be part of a partnership on another bid (see above).

Can I submit a draft application form before submitting the final version?

Yes, LGA Advisors are happy to provide feedback on a draft application before submitting the final version.

How wide should the scope of the project be?

It is helpful to bear in mind that the expert will provide 12 days of support so it will be beneficial to keep the scope fairly tight and achievable within the 12 days. Think about making outcomes SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely). One piece of advice says: Do not try to “boil the ocean” in one bid.

How much money should the project be aiming to save and or generate?

The project should be looking to save and or generate £1,000,000 over the next four years. We however understand that £1,000,000 is a very large proportion of a smaller organisation’s budget and therefore this will not be realistic for you. We are very happy to have a discussion and compromise on what will be realistic for your authority to achieve. Please do not be put off by the above figure – we would still very much encourage an application from you.

After you have submitted your project brief, how long will it take for you to be responded to?

We aim to respond within 10 working days, annual leave permitting.

Is there a deadline for applications?

There is a rolling deadline throughout the financial year, however, once the grants have been given out, we cannot provide any more. We would therefore encourage you to submit applications as soon as you can within the financial year.

Experts

How will the LGA match you with an expert?

Once the grant agreement has been signed, the LGA will email you up to three CVs of experts. The authority will then go through their own procurement process to work with somebody.

The authority can commission someone that the LGA does not specifically recommend. The LGA asks that the authority sends the CV of any new experts to them. They are also

required to provide 12 days of support for £7,000 (as all of the LGA recommended experts have signed up to).

Where are the experts from?

Experts are from a range of organisations and are also independent. All of the experts have worked with and/or for local authorities in their careers.

All the experts have provided their full and up to date CV, alongside two references from local authority and or public sector partners.

During the project

How many days of an expert's time is provided with the programme?

The expert provides 12 days of support.

How long will a Productivity Expert project typically last for?

Typically between two and six months. The project can last longer than this but we find that six months is usually enough.

What is required of the authority when the project starts?

You will be asked to submit a monthly update via an online form by the 5th of the month. The LGA will review this and provide support where appropriate.

The authority should also dedicate a person or team of people to work with the expert whilst they are with the organisation. This enables a transfer of learning to the council and this is then sustainable after the expert leaves.

After the project

What will be required at the end of the programme?

Case study:

The authority will be asked to produce a case study, examples of which can be found [here](#).

You can also create a vox pop, video or blog from a senior officer and or Member. This will be distributed to all authorities nationally for other organisations to learn from and use. This does make best use of the £7,000.

Financial information:

It is a requirement of the grant funding that you provide the net estimated savings and or income generation achieved from the project now, and on an annual basis. This is in order to understand whether the project has worked long term, to learn further lessons and to scale the approach to other councils in the country.

What will you be required to report on an annual basis?

Please find the 'Yearly savings and income monitoring form':



Yearly savings and
income monitoring

What does each finance term mean?

Both the application form and the financial monitoring form ask about three types of financial impact. The definitions for these are below.

- **Cost savings:** Action that lowers spending or budget, and brings a concrete financial benefit for the council. This may include the revenue savings from reducing council liabilities such as debt levels. For example, a contract that was meant to cost £100,000 next year is now going to cost £80,000 due to renegotiation.
- **Cost avoidance:** Action taken to reduce or eliminate potential future costs. For example, demand management which means that you don't need to hire an additional person in two years' time when demand was predicted to increase. Cost avoidance actions are generally not reflected in the financial statements or the budget.
- **Income:** Money that comes in to the council, generally via fees, charges or taxation. For example, a review of fees and charges leading to a decision to increase these to be in line with similar councils. This may also include capital receipts.

Please provide **net** rather than gross figures (i.e. take any costs in to account). A simplified example is if staff have been made redundant as a result of a service redesign, the net saving in the first year is the salary minus the redundancy pay-out.

An example for income is if an extra person is hired to run a service that brings in income, the net income is the value of income generated minus the cost of that person's salary and any other costs of the income generating service.