



Department
for Education

Practice and Improvement Fund: Round 2

**Improving outcomes in a regionalised
adoption system**

December 2016

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Introduction

[Please note: this is the official guidance document for the second round of the Practice and Improvement Fund. An earlier version of this document was briefly published on GOV.UK on 5th December 2016. Please discard any previous copies of this document and refer to this version only when developing proposals]

This document has been developed for organisations in the adoption sector who are interested in bidding to the Practice and Improvement Fund. This document sets out the objectives, evaluation criteria and assessment process for round 2 of this grant programme.

What is the Practice and Improvement Fund?

The Practice and Improvement Fund (PIF) aims to inspire the transformation of the adoption system and improve those services that adopted children and families rely on at a regional and national level. This programme is about working with the adoption sector to develop and disseminate excellent practice, develop innovative services which are responsive to the needs of the system and ensure that children who need adoption, and those who adopt them, have access to the best services - wherever they live.

Through the PIF we are seeking to support the sector to deliver solutions to complex problems, design new approaches to adoption services and deliver reforms that help inform the development of national policy.

The first round of the PIF opened in April 2016 and we have already invested in 25 projects focused on addressing four broad practice areas;

- driving improvement in matching and recruitment
- speeding up stable placements via early permanence schemes
- expanding support provision for adoptive families
- cross cutting issues at a national level

We are now launching another round of funding for projects to develop and disseminate excellent practice across a dynamic, regionalised, adoption system.

Round 2 funding is targeted at projects that will be operational between April 2017 and end March 2019.

What is the scope of round 2?

Progress toward the regionalisation of the adoption system is now well underway. The first wave of Regional Adoption Agencies will go 'live' by mid-2017 and we are in discussion with 19 projects covering 132 local authorities and 23 Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs). Over the last 12 months, and right across the country, we have seen local authorities and VAAs collaborating to develop new systems and structures which seek to tackle inefficiencies and improve outcomes for both children and adopters.

Round 2 of the PIF has been designed to complement the transition to a new, regionalised adoption system. We want to build on this spirit of collaboration and support the sector to work together to capture the very best of current practice expertise and spark new innovations that could benefit the whole system.

Through round 2 of PIF we want to support organisations to develop and deliver scalable, sustainable projects which will improve services on a regional and/ or national level. We want to see organisations joining up and using shared expertise to tackle system issues by spreading excellent practice and trialling exciting new approaches which will ensure that the future system works better for children and families who need it.

As with round 1, our overarching objective for round 2 is to provide funding which will deliver better outcomes for children, by improving the timeliness and quality of matches, and improve access to adoption support services. All proposals to the PIF should clearly address one, or all, of these aims.

For round 2 we have identified four specific areas of focus for funding. These are: delivering innovations in matching practice; improving permanence planning and increasing use of early permanence; spreading awareness of, and access to, VAA and Adoption Support Agency (ASA) services; and developing regional approaches to adoption support.

We have been clear that we want VAAs to lead the way in ensuring excellent practice expertise is at the heart of the new system and we expect the majority of bids in round 2 will be led by VAAs and ASAs. We are strongly encouraging bids led by VAAs/ASAs with RAA partner/s (or local authority partners where they are not yet part of a RAA). In round 2 we are also encouraging VAAs to bid in partnership with other VAAs and/or ASAs.

Due to the nature of proposals under the 'developing regional approaches to adoption support' theme we have suggested that certain projects should be RAA-led. In all proposals we will expect to see clear evidence of how partners will collaborate, long term, to improve outcomes. Further information regarding the eligibility criteria for round 2 is provided later in this guidance

We welcome 'Expressions of Interest' from interested organisations covering one or more of the themes identified above. For proposals under all themes bidders should complete and submit the form provided alongside this guidance by **noon on 16 January 2017**.

Bidders who are successful at 'Expressions of Interest' stage will be invited to submit a full bid for funding. Further detail about the application and assessment process is provided later in this guidance.

What are the focus areas for round 2?

Focus 1: Delivering innovations and improvement in matching practice at a regional or national level

Issue

Many children, often those with the most complex needs, are still waiting too long for placement. The system as it stands is not always geared toward finding adopters for these children as quickly as possible. Searches are sometimes kept too local, for too long, which reduces the chances of finding a stable match and creates damaging delay for the child.

We know that there is excellent practice already in the sector, particularly in VAAs, around finding homes for older children, black minority ethnic (BME) children, sibling groups and those with disabilities and mental health issues. We want to ensure that the whole system can draw on this expertise and that structures and new processes are designed around what we know works for these children. We are particularly interested in seeing VAAs delivering innovative matching practice within RAAs.

What are we looking for?

We welcome proposals with potential to improve timeliness and reduce delay on a regional and/or national scale so that suitable adopters can be identified and introduced to a child as quickly as possible. We are particularly interested in proposals that will reduce delay for groups of children who wait the longest. We want to invest in better national co-ordination and provision of matching for 'harder to place' children and we want to support the development of new approaches that will increase children's opportunities to achieve a timely match within an RAA.

What types of projects are we interested in?

1. We would like to see VAAs joining up to pool and spread expertise, and provide improved national reach, in finding adopters for 'harder to place' children. In the longer term we'd like to see VAAs coming together to create national 'centres of excellence' of recruitment and matching for certain groups of children who we know often wait longer than others to be matched (e.g. BME children and disabled children). In this round of funding we would like to see partnerships of VAAs coming together to explore how this might work in practice and lay the ground for approaches such as this.

2. We are also interested in supporting the development of entirely new innovations in practice that will help match children with potential adopters as quickly as possible (for example through the development of new approaches to adopter-led matching). We encourage organisations to submit ambitious proposals for funding to develop and pilot new ideas. We will need to see evidence of demand for any proposed innovations and will be particularly interested in proposals that can demonstrate RAA interest in making a new approach part of their model.

Focus 2: Improving permanence planning and increasing use of early permanence

Issue

Effective permanence planning minimises unnecessary delay and provides children with the stability that they need from the earliest possible point. For some children, fostering for adoption and concurrent planning can lead to better outcomes and we want to see more of these practices becoming routine across the system so they are available for those who would benefit.

What are we looking for?

We would like to see bids which will contribute to improved permanence planning in RAAs so that high quality decisions are made at the earliest possible point and opportunities for delay and case drift are minimised. We also welcome bids which would spread the use of early permanence practices, where appropriate, across the country.

What types of projects are we interested in?

- Through PIF round 2 we would like to encourage bids that will support RAAs to deliver high quality permanence planning. We welcome proposals that will explore VAAs adding capacity to an RAA in this area, either by supporting an RAA to re-design processes or by delivering an early permanence service on their behalf, in part or in full.
- We also welcome proposals that seek to develop and expand the use of fostering for adoption and concurrent planning services.

Focus 3: Improving access to VAA and ASA expertise and services

Issue

We know that RAAs and VAAs are not always clear about the wide range of services that VAAs/ASAs can offer to RAAs. Yet we also know that there is knowledge and excellent practice across VAAs that could be of significant benefit to RAAs and the whole system.

What are we looking for?

There is a wealth of specialist knowledge and expertise in the voluntary sector that RAAs could, and should, tap in to. We want to encourage a better understanding of where regional gaps exist in the provision of services and how VAAs/ASAs could help to fill these. We also understand that RAAs would like greater transparency on the range of services available regionally so that they are more able to choose those that might address their particular challenges.

What types of projects are we interested in?

- We would like to see proposals which seek to improve awareness of, and access to, services provided by VAAs and ASAs. We want to support VAAs to come together to offer a menu of services to RAAs that can be delivered on a regional scale. Proposals under this theme, for example, could explore the co-ordination of VAA/ASA services to provide a more comprehensive and joined up service offer to an RAA or beyond. In all proposals under this theme we will expect to see evidence of RAA demand for, and interest in, the projects proposed.
- We would also be interested in seeing VAAs offer their knowledge and expertise to support RAAs with wider redesign of services and processes.

Focus 4: Developing regional approaches to adoption support provision

Issue

The adoption support offer has improved significantly over recent years but there remains a need to fill regional gaps so that children and adopters can access the same level of quality support wherever they live. It is also often the case that children have several complex needs which need to be addressed simultaneously and we need to ensure the system is able to respond effectively.

What are we looking for?

We are interested in proposals which will bring together partners to provide a co-ordinated assessment and support offer and/or explore the regional delivery of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). We are particularly interested in projects under these themes that will demonstrate a continued commitment to engaging users in the development and testing of support services.

What types of projects are we interested in?

- Through PIF round 2 we would like to support the development of adoption support 'Centres of Excellence' which bring together relevant partners (including social care, health and/or education partners) to provide a co-ordinated assessment, treatment and therapeutic support offer to adopted children and children in care. We would like to see proposals for 'Centres of Excellence' which will operate across local authority boundaries, with a view to scaling operations across a whole region longer term.
- We would also like to use PIF round 2 to invite existing RAAs to set out proposals for piloting regionalisation of the ASF. We are interested in supporting RAAs to scope how this will work in practice but, at a high level, we are interested in devolving ASF budget and allowing an RAA to manage the fund at a local level - within a national framework. We think this should permit more strategic commissioning of adoption support services. We plan to identify up to three pilot sites for this work allocating up to £50k for projects to fund project management time.

Please note: We would like to ensure that projects relating to regionalisation of the ASF are operational from 1 April 2017. To secure sufficient time for successful RAAs to plan we will select pilot sites based on information provided in the Expression of Interest form uploaded alongside this guidance. Therefore, RAAs will not need to develop a full bid for this element. Securing cross-sector partnership at Expression of Interest stage is therefore more critical for support projects under this theme.

Eligibility criteria for this round of funding

1. Proposals under the ‘innovations in matching practice’ ‘increasing early permanence’ and ‘spreading awareness of VAA services’ themes must be led by VAAs, ASAs or relevant voluntary sector bodies.

- We strongly encourage bids that are led by VAAs with an RAA partner(s) (or local authority partners where local authorities are not yet part of an RAA);
- We also strongly encourage VAAs to bid in partnerships with other VAAs or Adoption Support Agencies (ASA).

2. Proposals under the ‘developing regional approaches to support provision’ theme should be led by an RAA.

- We strongly encourage proposals to demonstrate effective partnership working with VAAs and other relevant service providers.

The application process

We have introduced a two-stage assessment process for round 2 of the PIF. In the first instance we are inviting interested organisations to submit an ‘Expression of Interest’ providing high level information on proposals, partnerships, proposed outcomes and budget.

As highlighted in the previous section, proposals to regionalise the ASF will be assessed upon information provided on the Expression of Interest form alone. Organisations may be contacted by a member of the adoption policy team to discuss their proposals in more detail but RAAs submitting proposals under this theme will not be required to submit a full bid.

For all other bids, once the Expression of Interest window has closed we will assess submissions and invite those that we feel have the most potential, and most closely meet round 2 objectives, to develop a full bid.

Feedback will be available for unsuccessful organisations on request.

Please note: The Department for Education (DfE) is working with a delivery partner (Deloitte) to run this process. Representatives from Deloitte will support DfE officials to respond to bidder queries and assess proposals at Expression of Interest and full bid stage. Organisations who are invited to progress to full bid stage will also be offered support from Deloitte to work up their proposals.

Assessment criteria

The criteria identified below are the overarching criteria for PIF round 2 which will be applied at both Expression of Interest and full bid stage. Please refer to Annex A for further detail on how these criteria will be applied. At Expression of Interest stage, we will complete light-touch assessments against these criteria. The highest scoring proposals will be invited to progress to the next stage.

During evaluation we will also consider how the different proposals fit together as a whole, including with projects funded under round 1, to take account of the overall impact that projects will have. Information about projects funded under round 1 will be available after the supplier event on the 16 December.

Overarching evaluation criteria for round 2 of the PIF

Successful proposals in round 2 of the PIF will need to meet the following expectations:

- 1. The proposal will improve outcomes for children and/or adoptive families by improving the system** - the proposal is evidence based, clear and will be guided by the voice of users.
- 2. The proposal has a clear financial basis** - the cost basis of the proposal is clear and represents best use of public funding. Organisations are encouraged to identify additional sources of funding to support projects.
- 3. The proposal has potential to be sustainable beyond the funding period**
 - *For RAAs submitting an Expression of Interest under the 'regionalising ASF theme'* – the proposal provides evidence of partnership working across a wide range of partners and there is a clear benefits case beyond the end of funding.
 - *For all other bids* – the proposal will meet future system/RAA needs beyond the funding period and there is a commitment to income generation and sustainability.
- 4. The proposal is of sufficient scale** - the proposal will benefit at least one RAA and, where applicable, will benefit the system at a regional and/or national level.
- 5. The proposal can be delivered** - the proposal is supported by a strong team with the relevant skills, capacity, knowledge and authority to deliver within identified timescales. Risks and potential mitigations have been considered and the bidder has sufficient financial viability to deliver the work.

Additional theme-specific criteria

Proposals will also be assessed on one (or more) of the criteria below relevant to the focus areas of the proposal. (If more than one criteria apply the average score will be used in the overall assessment score)

- **Developing innovations to improve matching at a regional and national level** – the proposal will improve timeliness and reduce delay on a regional and/or national scale so that suitable adopters can be identified and introduced to a child as quickly as possible.
- **Improving permanence planning and increasing the use of early permanence** – the proposal will improve permanence decision making, so that child permanence decisions are made at the earliest possible point, and improve access to early permanence services.
- **Improving awareness of, and access to, VAA/ASA expertise and services to meet regional/national need** – the proposal will improve the awareness of and access to services provided by VAAs and ASAs. Proposals will explore the pooling of VAA/ASAs services to provide a co-ordinated service offer to RAAs and meet regional and/or national need.
- **Adoption Support – ASF Pilots** -the proposal will improve adoption support across an RAA through regional commissioning of the ASF. The proposal demonstrates a continued commitment to engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services.
- **Adoption Support – Centres of Excellence** - the proposal will contribute to improvements in the speed and quality of adoption support assessments and help to develop the support market across an RAA. Proposals will also demonstrate a continued commitment to engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services.

The following matrix will be used to assess bids to round 2 of the Practice and Improvement Fund

Criteria	Score (0-3)	Weighting
The proposal will improve outcomes for children and/or adoptive families by improving the system		4
The bid has a clear financial basis		3
The proposal has potential to be sustainable beyond the funding period		3
The proposal is of sufficient scale		3

Criteria	Score (0-3)	Weighting
The proposal can be delivered		4

Additional theme-specific criteria	Score (0-3)	Weighting
Matching		2
Early permanence		2
Spreading awareness of VAA/ASA services		2
Adoption Support		2

Score	Descriptor
0	Unacceptable. Fails to meet criteria outlined in guidance documentation.
1	Satisfactory. Meets some of the criteria and requirements outlined
2	Good. Meets most of the criteria and requirements outlined
3	Excellent. Fully meet requirements and is supported by robust evidence

How to apply

Expressions of Interest stage

An Expression of Interest form is available on GOV.UK alongside this guidance. Interested and eligible organisations should provide details of their proposal by completing this form. All information requested on the Expression of Interest form must be provided in order for your submission to be fully considered.

Please submit completed Expression of Interest forms to adoption.PIF@education.gov.uk by **noon on 16 January 2016**. You will receive an automatic response to let you know that we have received your bid.

If you have any questions about this fund, please email adoption.PIF@education.gov.uk by **20 December 2016**. We will publish a Q&A document after this date, providing answers to any questions received. This should be read alongside this guidance.

Full bid stage

Organisations who are successful at Expression of Interest stage will be sent a full application form and provided with information about how to submit their final bid.

Notes for interested organisations:

- Please clearly title your application with a distinctive name that DfE will be able to use to communicate with you about your submission.
- Organisations submitting more than one Expression of Interest must submit their proposals in separate emails. Only one Expression of Interest will be considered per email.
- Late proposals will not be considered. In the interest of transparency and ensuring a fair and open process, late bids will not be accepted, nor can alternations be made to bids once they have been submitted.
- Please note that your Expression of Interest does not form an agreement or contract and meeting the evaluation criteria will not guarantee progress to full bid stage. Expressions of Interest will be assessed and prioritised according to the extent to which they meet the stated evaluation criteria. Only high quality submissions are likely to be considered for funding.
- We are following the DfE procurement processes for the competition of these grants.

Timetable

We aim to inform bidders of the outcomes of Expressions of Interest in mid-February 2017. **The department reserves the right to depart from the guide timings provided below if necessary.**

Activity	Dates
Invite 'Expressions of Interest' for PIF round 2	Mid-December 2016
Deadline for enquiries	20 December 2016
Event for bidders at DfE Sanctuary Buildings, London	12-2pm 16 December 2016
Deadline for Expressions of Interest	Noon on 16 January 2017
Organisations informed of outcomes. Organisations with successful Expressions of Interest invited to develop a full bid	Mid-February 2017
Final deadline for full bids	Mid-March 2017
Grant negotiations with successful bidders	May 2017

Grant awards

Funding is available for up to two years (until 31 March 2019). Applicants may apply for a shorter period of funding if they wish.

The exact number and size of individual grants awarded will depend on the range and quantity of bids received. There is not a specific minimum or maximum amount of grant award but, as a guide, we would not expect to fund a single bid over £500,000. We recognise that some bids under the 'support' theme may exceed this figure.

We would be willing to consider bids over this amount where proposals demonstrate clear innovation, value for money and have very significant potential for impact e.g. around creating centres of excellence for adoption support.

We may fund bids at a lower level than requested depending on the quality and range of bids.

Grants will be awarded for all eligible direct project costs (revenue funding). Capital expenditure (building work) will not automatically be eligible but may be considered where a strong case is provided.

Funds should be used to provide something additional to what already exists and should not be used to subsidise core costs. Agencies can use funds to pay for new staff costs if staff are reallocated to work on the project.

Payment arrangements

Our policy is to make grant payments in arrears after costs have been incurred by the grant recipient. We will expect successful bidders to claim funding, in arrears, on a quarterly basis.

We recognise that this arrangement may not be suitable for some small organisations. Where there is clear need we may be able to provide a proportion of the agreed quarterly allocation in advance of expenditure. Bidders will need to discuss this with the department and the department will claw back any money for which grant holders do not provide adequate evidence of spending as agreed.

Marketing and advertising activity

Please note that restrictions apply on the use of government funds for communications, marketing, consultancy and some digital activities. Further information is provided in the 'general guidance note' section. Organisations should consider these restrictions when developing their proposals.

Organisations who are invited to submit a full bid will be asked to provide a breakdown of proposed spend in these areas.

General guidance notes

Inducements

Offering an inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining this or any other grant with the department will disqualify your application from being considered and may constitute a criminal offence.

Costs and expenses

You will not be entitled to claim from the department any costs or expenses which you may incur in preparing your proposal whether or not your proposal is successful.

Feedback

Following the award of grants, feedback will be available to unsuccessful bidders on request.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

The governments usual position regarding ownership of IPR is that copyright in any material produced using public money is vested to the Crown with the material being made available to anyone under the open Government License.

Freedom of information

The department is committed to open government and to meeting its responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Accordingly, all information submitted to the department may need to be disclosed in response to a request under the Act. If you consider that any of the information included in your proposal is commercially sensitive, please identify it and explain (in broad terms) what harm may result from disclosure if a request is received, and the time period applicable to that sensitivity. You should be aware that, even where you have indicated that information is commercially sensitive, we may still be required to disclose it under the Act if a request is received. Please also note that the receipt of any material marked 'confidential' or equivalent by the department should not be taken to mean that we accept any duty of confidence by virtue of that marking. If a request is received, we may also be required to disclose details of unsuccessful proposals.

Management information

The successful grant recipients will be asked to provide management information to meet the needs of the department. These will be subject to further negotiation but the department's minimum information needs are:

- Quarterly written reports on achievement of key outputs and milestones as set out in the Delivery Plan; and
- Two meetings per grant-funded year with DfE policy leads to review overall performance, including progress the grant-funded organisation is making towards securing financial sustainability for the project once DfE funding ends.

The department may request more regular management information or reviews dependent upon financial stability of grant holders and to ensure ongoing stability for organisations throughout the grant period.

The department will specify the format for providing management information as part of the process of issuing the grant agreements. The department will also expect applicants to set out in their proposal how intended outcomes will be measured. Organisations which are subsequently awarded a grant will be required to agree on the approach to measuring and evaluating the project and the expected impact of planned outcomes. The department may wish to evaluate formally some projects and, if requested to do so, you will be expected to participate and cooperate in the process, including in the implementation of the methodology.

Grant funding agreement

We will provide all organisations which are successful with a DfE grant funding agreement. This agreement will set out our expectations of all successful applicants and all bidders will be required to accept the final version in full. A grant funding agreement with each successful organisation will be finalised in 2017.

State Aid

State Aid rules must be adhered to. State Aid is a European law term which refers to forms of financial support from a public body or publicly-funded body, given to organisations engaged in economic activity on a selective basis, which has the potential to distort competition and affect trade between member states of the European Union. Unauthorised State aid is unlawful aid and if public authorities award State Aid in breach of the rules, the European Commission has the power to require repayment with interest from the aid beneficiary. State Aid may be permitted if it falls under a certain threshold.

This is known as de minimis aid. Currently the total de minimis aid granted to any one organisation must not exceed €200,000 over any period of three financial years.

We consider it unlikely that the funding to be provided under this scheme would be considered State Aid. However, applicants should form their own view, taking advice if necessary, as to whether the funding they receive is unlawful State Aid. Furthermore, if you have received State Aid from any public body in the previous three financial years you must let us know on the application form. If your organisation has received State Aid in the previous three financial years below the de minimis threshold, this could possibly limit the amount for which you are eligible.

Government efficiency controls: marketing, advertising and consultancy, IT and digital activity

As part of the Government's commitment to deliver value for money in public spending, bidders should be aware that there are restrictions on what grant funding can be used for in relation to all paid-for communications, marketing and consultancy activities. The controls apply to most communications activity including printing and publications, events, PR and digital communications activity, and engagement of consultants. Exemptions may be granted for essential activities where cost-effectiveness can be evidenced and where other no cost or low cost options have been exhausted.

Marketing and advertising

Exemptions for expenditure under £100k can be approved within DfE where proposed communications related activity is judged to be critical to delivery of the project and meeting agreed national priorities for the Government.

Any intended marketing/comms spend should be clearly detailed in your bidding documentation.

Exemptions for expenditure over £100k require clearance within DfE and also the Cabinet Office in line with the Government's Marketing and Advertising Efficiency Controls. Therefore, organisations whose proposals fall into this category may need to provide further information which might result in a delay in clearing funding.

Consultancy

Consultancy exemptions under £20k can be approved within DfE. Consultancy over £20k may require DfE and Cabinet Office clearance.

Cabinet Office guidance on the controls can be accessed at: [Cabinet Office guidance](#)

Annex A – Assessment criteria

All proposals will be assessed against criteria 1 to 5

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
1. Will improve outcomes for children and/or adoptive families by improving the system	Description of expected outcomes for children and / or adoptive families is lacking, unclear and / or unrealistic. Insufficient or no logic linking the problem, solution and intended outcomes, with little or no information to suggest that the proposed activity will lead to the expected outcomes.	Description of outcomes for children and / or adoptive families is relevant but lacking some clarity and/or the full breadth or depth of expected impact is unrealistic. Limited logic linking the problem, solution and intended outcomes, with some information provided to suggest that the proposed activity will lead to the expected outcomes but not completely relevant or convincing.	Reasonably clear description of fairly specific, tangible outcomes for children and / or adoptive families, which seems fairly realistic. Good logic linking the problem, solution and intended outcomes. The applicant demonstrates a good awareness of 'adopter voice' i.e. how they will listen and respond to what support children and adoptive families need. Relevant, convincing information is provided to suggest that the proposed	Entirely clear description of the type and extent of change that will happen for adopted children and / or adoptive families, and this seems realistic. The applicant demonstrates clearly that they understand the 'adopter voice' and the proposal demonstrates how they will listen and respond to what children and / or adoptive families need. Where the proposal has previously been tested there is	4

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			activity will lead to the expected outcomes. Where the proposal has been previously tested there is strong evidence that it works, though more detail is needed on why it will have an impact in the context of the new plans.	strong evidence that it works and a compelling case as to why it will have an impact in the context of the new plans. Where the proposal hasn't been tested there is a compelling rationale that draws on relevant evidence.	
2.Has a clear financial basis	Costs seem disproportionate to the activity proposed. Insufficient or no detail on costs of the proposal. No information is provided about any other sources of funding.	Costs do not seem proportionate to the activity proposed. Little detail of the cost basis of the proposal is provided. The cost basis is not backed up by convincing data. Little consideration has been made of other funding sources.	Costs do not seem unreasonable in relation to the proposal and demonstrate good use of public funding. The cost basis of the proposal is described although there are limited supporting figures. Other sources of funding have been	Convincing cost levels are included which demonstrate best use of public funding. The cost basis of the proposal is clearly described and sets out the funding required from DfE, backed up by supporting figures. Other sources of funding	3

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			identified but no specific partners are listed.	have been identified and there is strong evidence of commitment of partner funding.	
3.Has the potential to be sustainable beyond the funding period	<p>For VAAs/ASAs: Insufficient or no evidence that the proposal would be attractive to commissioners / RAAs. Limited supporting figures are provided meaning that it is doubtful that the proposal could be sustained beyond the PIF funding period.</p> <p>For RAAs bidding for adoption support funding: The proposal does not demonstrate</p>	<p>For VAAs/ASAs: Limited evidence that the proposal would be attractive to commissioners / RAAs. Little indication of how to generate income and move to sustainability beyond the PIF funding period. Supporting figures do not provide compelling evidence.</p> <p>RAA bidding for adoption support funding: The proposal does not demonstrate awareness of the need for partnership</p>	<p>For VAAs/ASAs: Clear evidence that the proposal could meet future needs of commissioners / RAAs beyond the PIF funding period. The proposal demonstrates some awareness of the steps needed to generate income and move to sustainability. However, this is not supported by compelling figures.</p> <p>RAAs bidding for adoption support funding:</p>	<p>For VAAs/ASAs: There is a compelling case that the proposal will meet future needs of commissioners / RAAs beyond the PIF funding period. The proposal demonstrates clear ideas of how to generate income and move to sustainability. Convincing figures have been used to illustrate their case.</p> <p>RAAs bidding for adoption support funding:</p>	3

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	<p>awareness of the need for partnership working across a wide range of partners (RAAs, VAAs, health). There is no indication of identification of potential partners. There is no evidence of sustainability beyond the funding period.</p>	<p>working across a wide range of partners (RAAs, VAAs, health). There is no indication of identification of potential partners. There is little detail of potential benefits case beyond the funding period so sustainability is uncertain.</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates awareness of the need for partnership working across a wide range of partners (RAAs, VAAs, health) and potential partners have been identified. There is an outline of the potential benefits case beyond the funding period to indicate sustainability.</p>	<p>The proposal demonstrates evidence of agreement for partnership working across a wide range of partners (RAAs, VAAs, health). There is compelling evidence of the benefits case beyond the funding period to demonstrate sustainability.</p>	
4. Will be of sufficient scale	<p>Insufficient or no evidence that the proposal could meet the demands of at least 1 RAA. There is no evidence of informal or formal partnership with an</p>	<p>Limited evidence that the proposal could meet the demands of at least 1 RAA. Where partnership would be needed, there is no reference to potential partners. The proposal may refer in</p>	<p>Clear evidence that the proposal could meet the demands of at least 1 RAA. Where partnership is proposed, potential partners have been identified but there is no</p>	<p>Compelling case that the proposal will be able to meet the demands of at least 1 RAA. Where partnership is proposed, partners have been identified and there is</p>	3

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	RAA.	general to how it will support RAAs but no formal/informal arrangements with RAAs have been identified.	commitment. There is some evidence that the proposal will support, or involve formal partnership with, a specified RAA.	evidence of partner commitment. There is strong evidence that the proposal will support, or involve formal partnership with, a specified RAA.	
5. Will be able to be delivered	<p>The proposed team does not seem appropriate for the activity being proposed.</p> <p>It is unclear what the applicant wants to do.</p> <p>There is little consideration of the joint partnerships needed or of senior sponsorship. Little or no awareness is shown of potential risks.</p> <p>The applicant is not clear what additional delivery</p>	<p>There are significant gaps in the team but there is some awareness regarding the skills required.</p> <p>There is a lack of clarity in what the applicant wants to do and they show little awareness of what would be important for making it happen.</p> <p>Some awareness is shown of the partnerships needed and the importance of senior sponsorship, but there are few plans to secure this.</p>	<p>The team identified is strong, or where it has not yet been identified there is good awareness of the skills required.</p> <p>It is fairly clear what the applicant wants to do (even if they don't explain how they'll do it) and they show some awareness of the key activities / milestones that will need to be in place to ensure success.</p> <p>Insufficient evidence is provided to verify</p>	<p>The team identified is strong and likely to have the right authority and skills to deliver the activity.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a good awareness of, and approach to, delivery. It is clear what the applicant wants to do and they are explicit on the key activities / milestones that will need to be in place to ensure success.</p> <p>There is evidence</p>	4

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	<p>support they need. The applicant has not confirmed that they are financially stable.</p>	<p>Some understanding of potential risks is demonstrated but important risks have been missed and / or there is little or no consideration of how to manage them. The applicant is not clear what additional delivery support they need. The applicant has not confirmed that they are financially stable.</p>	<p>that delivery will be to required timescales. There is a good chance of the team getting the partnerships, senior sponsorship and/or other endorsements in place. A good understanding of the main risks and at least some sensible suggestions of ways to manage them has been shown. The applicant has identified what additional delivery support they need but haven't yet sourced this. The applicant has confirmed that they are financially</p>	<p>that delivery and mobilisation will be fast enough to meet required timescales (e.g. for regionalising ASF, the applicant clearly demonstrates that they have the necessary capacity and capability to start operating from 1st April 2017). Partnerships, senior sponsorship and/or other endorsements are in place or close to being in place. A good understanding of the main risks and ways to manage them has been shown. The applicant has additional delivery support on-board or clearly articulates</p>	

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			stable.	what support they need. The applicant has confirmed that they are financially stable.	
Proposals will also be assessed on one (or more) of the 4 criteria below, relevant to the focus area of the proposal. (If more than one criteria apply, the average score will be used in the overall assessment score)					
Improving permanence planning and increasing use of early permanence	The proposal does not identify how activity would result in earlier, improved, decision-making around child permanence. The proposal would be unlikely to increase or spread the use of early permanence approaches and/or there is no evidence that the proposal would support RAAs to improve permanence planning. There is no	The proposal would increase or spread early permanence practice at a local level and/or support RAAs with permanence planning but it is not clear to what extent this would influence RAA decision making. There is little consideration of statutory considerations.	The proposal would result in an increase/spread of early permanence practices/services in the system and/ or support RAAs to deliver high quality permanence planning. There is some description of how this will contribute to improved decision making in one or more RAA. There is some evidence of partnership working to apply	The proposal clearly articulates how it will lead to improved decision-making around early permanence decisions. The proposal will increase the use of early permanence services and practices across the system and or/ support RAAs to deliver high quality permanence planning There is persuasive evidence that the	2

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	<p>consideration of statutory implications.</p>		<p>learning/test new approaches within an RAA. There is some consideration of statutory implications.</p>	<p>proposal will increase, or spread the use of, early permanence approaches and/or result in more proactive and responsive permanence planning from the earliest point in an RAA (or across several RAAs). There is strong evidence of partnership working to apply learning /test new approaches within an RAA. Statutory implications have been considered. Bidders may have identified unhelpful bureaucratic processes that could be removed.</p>	

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
Developing innovations to improve matching	<p>It is not clear how the proposed solution will improve timeliness or reduce delay in the system. Little evidence of track record or expertise in matching.</p> <p>The proposal is locally focussed with no/little consideration of how the proposal could be scaled to improve matching at a regional or national level.</p>	<p>There is limited evidence of how the proposal could contribute to improvements to timeliness and/or reduce delay in the system.</p> <p>The proposal outlines how the solution could potentially be scaled to improve matching at a local, regional or national level but lacks detail about any scaling.</p> <p>There is some evidence of previous experience and expertise in matching.</p>	<p>The proposal clearly sets out at a high level how the proposal will improve timeliness for the child and reduce delay in matching.</p> <p>There is evidence of a track record of delivery and expertise in matching.</p> <p>There is some evidence of partnership working to apply learning/test new approaches within an RAA.</p> <p>The proposal is clear about how it will improve matching at a local or regional level but lacks detail about national scalability.</p>	<p>There is compelling evidence of how the proposal will improve timeliness and reduce delay for the child so that suitable adopters are identified as soon as possible – particularly for hard to place children (e.g. by removing sequential decision making). There is strong evidence of partnership working to apply learning /test new approaches within an RAA.</p> <p>There is evidence of a track record of delivery and expertise in matching and it is clear how this practice knowledge</p>	2

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			There is some evidence of innovation or a new way of working but the proposal is largely an extension of existing practice.	will be used to deliver system improvements. The proposal clearly articulates how the project will contribute to improvements in matching at a regional or national scale and is clear on the future relationships with RAA. The proposal demonstrates clear innovation or a novel approach to matching.	
Adoption support – piloting the ASF within RAAs	It is not clear how the proposed solution would enable the regionalisation of the ASF. There is little or no evidence of a track	There is some evidence that the proposal could test elements of ASF regionalisation. There is some evidence of partnership working	The proposal sets out at a high level how ASF could be managed within a RAA, how regionalisation will improve outcomes for children and	The proposal offers a compelling view of how adoption support will be improved across the RAA through the regionalisation of the ASF.	2

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	<p>record of partnership working across the RAA or of the inclusion of user voice.</p>	<p>across sectors and of the inclusion of user voice. There is some evidence of effective use of the ASF since May 2015.</p>	<p>families including improving speed and quality of assessments and the development of the market to better meet demand. There is a clear track record of operating the ASF at local authority level, a clear commitment to, and capacity for, piloting the regionalisation of the ASF. There is some evidence that user voice has shaped service provision locally and interest in embedding user voice within the regionalised delivery model.</p>	<p>The proposal clearly articulates how the project will contribute to improvements in speed and quality of adoption support assessments and the development of the adoption support market across the RAA. There is clear evidence of how user voice has been used to shape provision and a continued commitment to engagement of users in the development and testing of regionalised ASF. There is a clear plan for managing ASF in a regionalised</p>	

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
				structure including how human and financial resources will be regionalised.	
Adoption support – Centres of Excellence	It is not clear how the proposed solution would improve the provision of adoption support across the RAA. There is little or no evidence of a track record of partnership working across sectors or of the inclusion of user voice.	There is some evidence that the proposal could contribute to improvements in adoption support. There is some evidence of partnership working across sectors and of the inclusion of user voice but it is patchy. There is some evidence of delivery and expertise in adoption support.	The proposal sets out at a high level how a regionalised adoption support service will improve outcomes for children and families including improving assessments and the development of the market to better meet demand. There is a clear track record of delivery and expertise in adoption support. There is some evidence of how user voice has shaped service provision. There is some	The proposal offers a compelling view of how adoption support will be improved across the RAA. The proposal clearly articulates how the project will contribute to improvements in adoption assessments and the development of the adoption support market across the RAA. There is clear evidence of how user voice has been used to shape provision and a clear commitment to	2

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			interest in the development of a holistic approach to adoption support from a range of health, social care, education and voluntary sector partners but no/few firm commitments.	engagement of users. The proposal includes firm commitments to a holistic approach to adoption support from a range of health, social care, education and voluntary sector partners.	
Improving awareness and access to VAA/ASA expertise and services	There is no evidence of understanding of services delivered by VAA/ASA and of their contribution. There is insufficient detail on how services can be better promoted to RAAs. There is a lack of understanding of regional gaps in provision of	There is little evidence of understanding of VAA/ASA services and how they contribute to the current system. The proposal lacks detail of how it will be delivered within and / or promoted to RAAs. There is some understanding of the needs / gaps in local provision that could be boosted by better	The proposal shows a high level understanding of the range of services provided by VAA/ASA and how they add value to the adoption system. The bidder demonstrates reasonable understanding of the gaps in service provisions and	The proposal shows an in-depth understanding of the range of services provided by VAA/ASA and how they add value to the adoption system regionally and nationally. It shows a system wide understanding of the gaps in service provision and puts forward	2

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
	<p>services.</p> <p>The proposal provides no evidence that there is demand from RAA/s for the proposed activity.</p>	<p>co-ordination of services.</p> <p>The proposal provides little evidence that there is demand from RAA/s for the proposed activity.</p>	<p>provides high level solutions to fill gaps. It shows evidence of understanding of the challenges of regionalisation, those faced by individual RAA, and by the overall system.</p> <p>It includes scope for services to be joined up and scaled up, with reasonable understanding of how needs may vary between different RAA and between different areas.</p> <p>There is some evidence that there is demand from RAAs for the proposal and that the proposal will enable an RAA to draw on VAA/ASA</p>	<p>strategies for how VAA and ASA services could be promoted more widely to fill gaps. The proposal sets out in detail how services provided by VAA/ASA could be pooled to target specific challenges for RAAs or to increase the reach and scale of existing services. The proposal demonstrates a good understanding of the needs of different areas and different RAA. It sets out in detail how services could be promoted to RAA.</p> <p>There is strong evidence that there</p>	

Criteria	0 marks	1 mark	2 marks	3 marks	Weighting
			expertise to improve outcomes.	is demand from RAAs for the proposal and that the proposal will enable a specified RAA to draw on VAA/ASA expertise to improve outcomes.	



Department
for Education

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