

BPF – Questions and Answers for Bidders

Q: What can the funding be used for?

A: The Bus Partnership Fund is a capital fund, to develop and implement bus priority infrastructure. Initial awards are likely to be for capacity; supporting partnerships by funding the expert resources required to conduct appraisals and business cases. They may also be used to implement quick wins, where the partnership has already appraised bus priority ideas and requires funding to deliver them.

Q: How much will be allocated for appraisal and business case development?

A: Transport Scotland wishes to actively support the development of robust business cases, to justify infrastructure funding. Part 1 and Part 2 Appraisals developed under the STAG guidance form a significant part of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for bus priority infrastructure developments. There is no fixed amount of capacity funding, as this will vary, according to the nature and stage of the development. Partnerships are asked to provide realistic costings, based on their previous experience of appraisals and by consulting with experts on their procurement frameworks.

Q: How much match funding will partnerships be required to offer?

A: There is no match funding requirement. However, partnerships will need to demonstrate that they already have or have requested funding for sufficient capacity to develop and deliver proposals and they will want to think about complementary measures as part of the wider partnership offer.

Q: Given this is a capital fund, can staff costs be included in the bid?

A: Staff costs can be capitalised, where they are directly related to the proposed infrastructure developments. This includes, for example, staffing to develop STAG appraisals and business cases, project management and monitoring and evaluation.

Q: Given that the STAG appraisal process is objective-led and the preferred solutions take some time to emerge, how are bidders to the fund expected to estimate construction costs?

A: We understand the process needs to be objective-led so are looking for a broad range of costs, based on the potential solutions. For example, if a corridor requires some priority measures, the eventual solution could be traffic light prioritisation or a bus lane; both very different in terms of cost. However, some estimation should be possible, based on the size and complexity of the intervention area and the finite choice of bus priority infrastructure options.

What we need you to be specific on is the amount required to achieve the first major milestone, which is likely to be an appraisal or business case stage, as any initial offer will only be for that first stage. Subsequent offers will be made after assurance of progress and obviously final business case will specify the costs of construction.

Q: Will Transport Scotland personnel be available to help with appraisal and business case development?

A: Because this is a competitive fund, Transport Scotland has to remain objective about funding decisions. However, aside from providing capacity funding, Transport Scotland will provide critical friend support at key gateways during appraisal and business case development, as well as down the line, as part of the monitoring and evaluation of funded infrastructure projects. In addition, there may be access to expert support in two key areas: data analytics and public consultation and cultural change. The detail of this potential support has still to be finalised.

Q: Does the production of an appraisal or OBC guarantee access to infrastructure funding?

A: Not necessarily. Each case will be evaluated by a panel of experts, which will make recommendations to the relevant decision-maker in Transport Scotland, who will decide on whether further tranches of funding will be allocated; either for further appraisal work or for infrastructure delivery.

Q: Will allocation of the infrastructure funding take into account anything other than the appraisal or business case?

A: No. In line with other challenge funds and to comply with competition rules, the STAG appraisal and/or OBC will be the sole evidence base which Transport Scotland will use to decide future funding allocations.

Q: How many appraisals and business cases will be required?

A: The process to access infrastructure funding will be based on Transport Scotland's STAG Guidance. The STAG Report – comprised of the Pre-appraisal, Part 1 and Part 2 Appraisals and Post-appraisal – forms the basis of much of the OBC. This may be followed by a Full Business Case (FBC).

As per the principle of proportionality, the number of appraisals and business cases required will depend on the nature of the proposals and stage of development. At each stage, the BPF team will advise bidding partnerships of the business case requirements.

Q: What happens if the BPF is over-subscribed?

A: Because of the specific intent of the fund and amount of new money allocated, we do not anticipate that this will happen. However, we do ask applicants to consider how proposals can be flexed up and down in terms of scale and/or cost. Where competition is high or low, Transport Scotland then has options to award within the available budget.

Q: If the business case is approved, is the funding guaranteed in future years?

A: Once Transport Scotland has approved the final business case and awarded funding for infrastructure development, those funds are considered 'contractually committed', so local authorities can enter into development contracts spanning more than one financial year, within the terms of the grant award letter.

Q: Can the BPF be used to fund the development of park and ride facilities?

A: The Fund may be used for park and ride facilities, but only where these are clearly linked to bus priority measures and evidence suggests that the facilities will contribute to the reduction in congestion, by encouraging modal shift. We wish to see

ambitious proposals, including park and ride, and proposals will be considered in light of the evidence provided and how far the developments will achieve the outcomes of the Fund.

Q: Are Equality Impact Assessments required?

A: There is a duty on public bodies to assess the impact of new policies or practices against the needs of the general equality duty, via Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA). It is likely that new bus infrastructure developments and consequent service changes will require impact assessments. Partnerships are advised to involve local equality interest groups at an early stage, either in consultation or as part of the governance of the partnership, to help ensure that projects funded by the BPF have due regard to the equality duty.

Q: Can a Regional Transport Authority (RTP) be the lead for the BPF?

A: For the purposes of the Fund and to comply with Scottish Government financial governance, a local authority has to be nominated as the lead and Accountable Officer for the funding. However, this does not stop an RTP or other partner from leading the BSIP. We also welcome the RTP being a signatory to the application, to evidence a region-wide strategic approach.

Q: Can projects funded through the Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund (BPRDF) be made permanent, using BPF funds?

A: In principle, yes. The evaluation from BPRDF will be important in determining whether or not the temporary measures should become permanent; with consultation, where appropriate.

Q: Will successful bids to the BPRDF increase the chances of winning BPF funding?

A: No, each bid will be evaluated on its own merits. However, the monitoring and evaluation from BPRDF projects could be useful in supporting BPF bids.

Q: Can publicly-owned bus operators be part of partnerships bidding to the fund?

A: The Bus Partnership Fund requires bidders to be working towards a Bus Service Improvement Partnership, as defined in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. There is no restriction on the ownership model of the operators involved in the partnership.