

# BPF – Questions and Answers for Bidders

## Scope and Design of the Fund

### ***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 are expected to commit to complementary measures ('match in kind') 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: 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 want proposals, including those for park and ride, to be ambitious, and proposals will be considered in light of the evidence provided and how far the developments will achieve the outcomes of the Fund.

### ***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.

## **Costing the Application**

**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: 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: Given the time it may take to procure professional support and to develop a business case, does the spend all have to be within this financial year?**

**A:** We realise that partnerships will go at different paces so the final offer letters will reflect that and we do not expect all of the spend to be in any given financial year. What we would like in the bid is the estimate of costs to develop the OBC and an outline timeline. The offer letter will include the OBC as a key deliverable, with that estimated date, to help us with financial planning. One of the reasons for the monthly reporting will be to highlight if that date varies either way, so we can be flexible with the capital budget.

## **Future Tranches of Funding**

**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: 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 option 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.

## **Developing and Submitting the Application**

**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 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.

**Q: Does the application form have to be physically signed by senior colleagues, given the current physical restrictions?**

**A:** No, you can type the names in and please add their email addresses. We will send offer letters to the lead contact but copy in the authorising officers so it being returned to the same copy list will be sufficient evidence of authorisation.

**Q: Does the application have to be signed by the CEO and Leader of the Council?**

**A:** The CEO should sign, as the size of any bid and therefore officer spend will fall to her/him under the scheme of delegations. We are looking for senior political buy-in, which will usually be the Council Leader but may also be another relevant senior elected member - e.g. a convenor of a transport committee - depending on your structure.

**Q: If a full STAG pre-appraisal up to Part 2 is done, could the Strategic Business Case be skipped and partnerships progress straight to the Outline Business Case (OBC)?**

**A:** We are looking for this to be proportionate so it will depend to some extent on what the scale of the ambition is. However, assuming it will be ambitious, the application will form a large part of the pre-appraisal stage, together with the STPR2 report, as part of the evidence base. Although separated in the guidance, the appraisal stages are meant to run as one iterative process and the time taken will depend upon the range of options available. The STAG Report emerging from the full appraisal in itself should constitute both the strategic case for the OBC and a large part of the financial and economic cases.

**Q: How should we account for quick wins in the application?**

**A:** Through our evaluation processes of the applications, we will be looking at what major deliverables are required and basing any offer on that, so the option still remains for quick wins, which do not have to go through full appraisal processes, as long as they are part of the wider ambition and have evidence to support them. If you have any such options (e.g. traffic light prioritisation), you should highlight these in the first section of the application form, with projected timescales. In the cost section, you can then put three numbers: the broad estimate of the overall scheme, the cost to get to OBC and the cost of quick wins; the latter two numbers being reasonably accurate.

**Q: Will the STAG be expected to be multi-modal as per a standard objective-led STAG appraisal or is it taken that as this is a bus-specific fund for tackling problems experienced by bus services and bus users, the scope could be limited to bus, without consideration of alternative modes?**

**A:** One of the key criteria for the fund is that bus priority measures integrate with other sustainable travel modes. So your appraisal should highlight how that integration happens but does not extend to appraising e.g. potential active travel options. For example, you should refer to any active travel infrastructure - either existing or in development - which complements the bus services. Or you could demonstrate that a bus priority corridor enables a link-up with rail services.

**Q: How should large files in support of the application be transferred securely to Transport Scotland?**

**A:** To avoid problems with email limits of document sizes, Transport Scotland will set up a folder in Objective Connect, which we use for secure file transfer. Please contact [buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot](mailto:buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot) with the email addresses of people you wish to have access to the folder and they will receive invitations to set up passwords and gain access. No software download is required to access Objective Connect.