

Dr Theo Gavrielides
Chief Executive
Race On The Agenda
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06 January 2009

Dear Theo,

Re: EHRC Future Funding Programme

Thank you for your letter of 3rd December 2008. I apologise for the delay in responding to you - as you may know, I was out of the office a lot in December attending the final events of our national public consultation on EHRC's future funding strategy.

I attach a summary of the Equality Impact Assessment. The main findings of the EIA are as follows:

- that it is acknowledged that deferring the launch of the new grants programme by 6 months will temporarily reduce the Commission's capacity to advance its goals to reduce inequality, but that the deferment is deemed necessary to ensure that in the medium- to longer-term, the Commission has in place a grants infrastructure that is strategically coherent and will therefore ensure that our capacity to fulfil our duties as outlined will be enhanced, effective and impactful for the communities we serve;
- that different groups will have varying levels of support for and difficulty with the decision to defer the launch. The decision will

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place financial strain on some organisations that are currently funded, and be disappointing for other organisations that are not currently funded but had intentions on the new funding programme;

- that there will be potential short-term adverse impact on some currently funded organisations, service-users and end beneficiaries of the currently funded activities;
- that the Commission can mitigate the adverse impact on communities by ensuring the continuation of ongoing support provided for victims of discrimination seeking legal redress i.e. casework organisations in the interim period;
- that the deferment period is necessary to strengthen the identified weaknesses of the current interim grants programme;
- that the net long-term outcome of the process will be a grants programme that is able to demonstrate:
 - Higher levels of accountability;
 - Higher levels of project success;
 - Higher levels of impact;
 - Direct relevance to the Commission's strategic objectives.

On balance, we firmly believe that the proposals we have put forward for the new grants programme (which is currently out on consultation) will result in a stronger grants programme which will better enable funded bodies to support their communities and causes.

I appreciate that you rightly took a long-term view in developing ROTA's current year's programme of activities and intend to embed that within a more strategic context. You will however also recall that all funded activity in the 2008-09 Interim funding period was structured for delivery by 31st

March 2009 pending the development of EHRC's longer term strategy, and we were hence unable to give any guarantees on ongoing support for multi-year projects. We are now concluding the 3 year strategy for EHRC, and the planned funding programme will be an important delivery mechanism of this. I am sure that there will be some scope in the new priorities for activity building on current and indeed previously implemented work. Once this is in place, it will be easier for EHRC to provide projects such as ROTA's with the longer-term support that it requires.

While I understand your disappointment that in the short-term you will not be opported to apply to the new funding programme with effect from 1st April 2009, we also hope that you can see that by introducing initiatives such as longer term funding, better working relationships between us and the funded bodies, and encouraging more collaborative ways of working between various bodies in the voluntary sectors, we are intending to make this a more accessible, more effective and less bureaucratic grants programme.

It is important that we maintain focus on the ultimate end of this process, which is to introduce a funding regime which would in fact ensure the longer-term stability of the sector which the Compact and indeed the associated Funding and BME Codes of Good Practice encourages. We have done our best to be as fully compliant with the letter and spirit of the Compact in this decision, hence our giving at least six months notice of the decision to all funded bodies, offering support for organisations in seeking alternative sources of funding and being clear in our plans for the future programme and consulting widely on this. Paragraph 6.5 of the Code which you also quoted in your letter does not apply in this case, as we are not withdrawing strategic grants from any BME organisation as a result of this decision.

I hope this response provides assurance that the Commission has acted fairly in deferring the launch of its new funding programme, and reassures

you that the reform of our grants programme will support and improve the services delivered by local organisations in your region. EHRC indeed requires the support of all constituent parts of the Third Sector in delivering its strategic objectives and we hope that rather than "*destroy relationships and confirm your original fears*", that this decision can ultimately serve as a platform for a stronger, more sustainable and strategically embedded BME Third Sector.

If you have any other questions on this matter, please free to contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Olu Alake
Head of Grants.

cc: Nicola Brewer
Georgina English