USER GUIDE

Using the Data Intelligence Hub to write stronger grant funding bids

A practical guide to finding, interpreting and applying local evidence

The funding story

There is a need. We can prove it. We have a credible response. We know what success looks like. We can measure the difference.

London Borough of Havering
Data Intelligence Hub
www.haveringdata.net

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AT A GLANCE

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Who this guide is for

Community groups, voluntary organisations, council services and partners using Havering evidence to support funding applications. No advanced data analysis skills are required.

How to use this guide

- Start with the funder’s questions and eligibility criteria.
- Use the guide to build an evidence plan, then search the Hub for the most relevant information.
- Use local data alongside research, lived experience, organisational information and professional knowledge.
- Check every figure’s definition, geography, timeframe and source before quoting it.

1 WHY EVIDENCE MATTERS

How the Hub strengthens a funding bid

A strong application does more than describe a worthwhile idea. It gives the assessor confidence that the applicant understands the need, has chosen a credible response and can demonstrate what the investment will achieve.

Funder question	How the Hub can help
What is the problem?	Provide indicators, needs assessments and contextual reports.
Who is affected?	Describe population groups, communities and locations.
How significant is the issue?	Add counts, rates, trends and comparisons.
Why this area?	Show neighbourhood variation using ward or LSOA data where available.
What difference will funding make?	Identify baselines and potential outcome measures.
How will success be measured?	Provide indicators and wider evidence for an evaluation plan.

Use an evidence pathway

NEED	EVIDENCE	INTERVENTION	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
What needs to change?	How do we know?	What will we do?	What will be delivered?	What changes for people or places?	What longer-term difference follows?

Key principle

Lead with evidence, not aspiration. Use evidence to explain both why the project is needed and why the proposed approach is proportionate and likely to work.

2 DISCOVER

Plan your evidence before searching

Before opening the Hub, clarify the decision the funder is being asked to make. This avoids collecting interesting statistics that do not strengthen the application.

Use five discovery questions

Question	Prompt
1. What is the funding ask?	Amount, duration, eligible costs and delivery period.
2. What problem will the project address?	Be specific about the issue, population and place.
3. What does the funder prioritise?	Match the language of the programme criteria without forcing alignment.
4. What evidence is already available?	List local data, feedback, service information and previous evaluation.
5. What is missing?	Identify gaps that genuinely matter to the funding decision.

Build a balanced evidence picture

Havering's Evidence Toolkit encourages users to combine complementary evidence types rather than relying on a single statistic. The right balance will depend on the bid.

Evidence type	What it contributes
Population data	The size, distribution and characteristics of need.
Lived experience	Residents' and service users' perspectives.
Organisational data	Demand, reach, resources, performance and delivery insight.
Professional knowledge	Practical understanding from staff, partners and specialists.
Research	What is known about the issue and effective approaches.
Evaluation	What worked, for whom, in what circumstances and why.

3 FIND

Find evidence in the Hub

Start at www.haveringdata.net. Choose the route that best matches the information you need.

Hub route	Best used for	How to search
Theme pages	A broad introduction to a topic, including key statistics, maps and related reports.	Start with the theme closest to the project and note associated terminology.
Data Explorer	Finding individual indicators in the catalogue.	Use two or three precise keywords, then refine.
Area profiles	Building a local overview for a postcode or ward.	Enter the project location and compare indicators.
JSNA and needs assessments	Deeper evidence about health, wellbeing, inequalities and population need.	Search by issue or population group, then review context and recommendations.

Search using concepts, not full questions

Project idea	Useful starting keywords
Reducing loneliness among older residents	older people; loneliness; social isolation; wellbeing; carers
Improving youth employment	young people; employment; unemployment; skills; NEET
Supporting household resilience	deprivation; income; benefits; fuel poverty; housing
Increasing physical activity	physical activity; inactivity; obesity; parks; wellbeing
Improving community safety	crime; anti-social behaviour; domestic abuse; neighbourhood

If you cannot find the exact indicator

Use a related measure only when the link is logical and clearly explained. Do not present a proxy measure as though it measures the issue directly.

4 TARGET

Choose the right geography and comparison

The geography should match the intended reach of the project. Smaller areas can reveal variation hidden by a borough average, but data availability and reliability vary by indicator.

Geography	Use it to	Watch out for
England or London	Benchmark Havering and show whether local experience differs.	A comparison may not explain neighbourhood differences.
Havering borough	Show the overall scale of need and strategic context.	A borough average can hide local inequality.
Ward	Target activity and compare neighbourhoods.	Ward boundaries and data periods may change.
LSOA	Explore small-area variation where the indicator is available.	Small numbers may fluctuate or be suppressed.

Use counts and rates together

- A count shows the number of people or events and helps estimate project scale.
- A rate or percentage supports fair comparison between differently sized populations.
- A trend shows whether the issue is improving, worsening or remaining stable.
- A benchmark helps the assessor understand whether the local situation differs from Havering, London or England.

Avoid false precision

Use the most detailed geography supported by the source, not automatically the smallest one. State uncertainty, data limitations and small-number cautions where relevant.

5 APPLY

Turn data into a compelling case for need

A statistic becomes persuasive when it is accurate, relevant and connected to the proposed response. Use a short evidence chain rather than a long list of figures.

A four-part evidence paragraph

Part	Purpose	Writing prompt
1. Claim	State the specific issue.	The application seeks to address...
2. Evidence	Provide the strongest local figure or finding.	Hub data shows that...
3. Interpretation	Explain why the evidence matters.	This indicates... / Compared with...
4. Response	Connect the need to the funded activity.	The project will therefore...

Example structure

From data to decision

“The project will address [specific issue] among [population] in [place]. [Indicator and timeframe] shows [finding], compared with [benchmark or trend]. This suggests [interpretation and limitation]. We will therefore provide [intervention], targeted at [group or area], with success measured through [outcomes].”

Triangulate the case

Combine complementary evidence so the application explains both scale and experience. For example:

- Population data establishes how many people may be affected.
- Local feedback explains how residents experience the issue.
- Organisational data shows current demand, gaps or barriers.
- Research supports the choice of intervention.
- Previous evaluation demonstrates capability and lessons learned.

5 APPLY

Write clearly and responsibly

Good practice

- Use the funder’s wording and answer the question asked.
- Use a small number of strong, relevant statistics.
- Explain technical terms and do not assume the reader knows Havering.
- Quote the latest appropriate period, not simply the newest number.
- Keep correlation separate from causation.
- Describe limitations when evidence is incomplete or a proxy is used.
- Do not use identifiable personal data in a funding application.

Common weaknesses and fixes

Weak approach	Stronger approach
“There is a lot of deprivation.”	Name the measure, location, period and comparison, then explain what it means for the project.
A paragraph containing many unrelated statistics.	Select the two or three facts that directly support the funding decision.
National evidence used to describe a local issue.	Use national research for context and local evidence to establish Havering need.
Activities presented as outcomes.	Separate what will be delivered from the change expected.
A dramatic claim unsupported by the source.	Use neutral wording proportionate to the data.

A useful editing test

After each figure, ask: “So what does this mean for the people, place, project or funding decision?” If the answer is unclear, remove the figure or strengthen the explanation.

6 EVALUATE

Design outcomes and evaluation

Funders need to understand what the grant will buy and what will change. Separate activities, outputs, outcomes and longer-term impact.

Level	Example: employment support
Activity	Deliver one-to-one advice and skills workshops.
Output	100 residents engage; 80 complete an action plan.
Short-term outcome	Participants report improved confidence and job-search readiness.
Medium-term outcome	Participants enter training, volunteering or employment.
Impact	Improved financial resilience and reduced employment inequality.

Build a proportionate measurement plan

Element	Question to answer
Baseline	What is the starting position before delivery?
Indicator	What will show whether change occurred?
Target	What level of change is realistic within the funding period?
Method	Will evidence come from monitoring, surveys, interviews or published data?
Frequency	When will information be collected and reviewed?
Responsibility	Who will collect, analyse and report it?
Learning	How will findings improve delivery or future decisions?

Important distinction

Hub indicators are often most useful for establishing context and baselines. A short project may not be able to demonstrate change in a population-level indicator, so combine Hub data with project-level measures.

6 EVALUATE

Choose measures that match the project

Desired outcome	Possible project measure	Possible wider context
Improved wellbeing	Validated wellbeing score before and after support	Local wellbeing or health indicators
Reduced isolation	Frequency of social contact; self-reported connection	Older population and loneliness-related evidence
Improved employability	Skills assessment; action-plan progress; training entry	Employment, claimant and qualification indicators
Greater physical activity	Attendance; activity minutes; self-reported behaviour	Physical inactivity and health indicators
Stronger community participation	Volunteer hours; repeat participation; local networks	Population, community and place characteristics

Set credible targets

- Start from a recorded baseline.
- Use previous delivery or relevant research to inform the expected level of change.
- Distinguish reach targets from outcome targets.
- Allow for attrition and explain assumptions.
- Avoid promising population-level change that cannot reasonably be attributed to a small project.

Think about contribution, not just attribution

Community outcomes are shaped by many factors. Explain how the project is expected to contribute to change and what evidence will be used to test that reasoning.

7 WORKED EXAMPLE

From Hub search to funding narrative

Scenario: A community organisation is seeking funding to improve mental wellbeing and social connection among older residents in two Havering neighbourhoods.

Step 1: clarify the proposition

- Population: older residents at risk of isolation.
- Place: two named neighbourhoods served by the organisation.
- Intervention: outreach, group activities and supported referrals.
- Funding decision: whether the proposed model addresses evidenced local need.

Step 2: plan the evidence mix

Evidence	What to look for
Population data	Number and proportion of older residents; relevant health, deprivation and place indicators.
Lived experience	Consultation or service-user feedback about isolation and barriers to participation.
Organisational data	Referrals, waiting lists, attendance, unmet demand and reach.
Research/evaluation	Evidence about approaches that improve connection or wellbeing.
Professional knowledge	Insights from local partners, practitioners and community organisations.

Step 3: search the Hub

- Search theme pages for population, health and community context.
- Use Data Explorer keywords such as “older people”, “wellbeing”, “deprivation” and “loneliness”.
- Use area profiles or ward data to test whether the target locations differ from the borough average.
- Review the JSNA or needs assessments for interpretation and inequalities.

7 WORKED EXAMPLE

Draft the bid and measurement plan

Illustrative narrative template

Case for need

“The proposed project will support older residents in [target locations]. Data from [indicator title] shows [local finding, timeframe and comparison]. This is reinforced by [local feedback or service data], which identifies [barrier or unmet need]. The project will therefore provide [activities], with targeted outreach to [priority groups].”

Illustrative logic model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Grant funding, staff, venues and partners	Outreach, facilitated groups and supported referrals	Residents contacted, sessions delivered, referrals completed	Improved connection, wellbeing and access to support	Stronger community resilience and reduced inequality

Evaluation framework

Measure	Method	Timing
Reach among priority residents	Registration and equality monitoring	Monthly
Participation and retention	Attendance records	Each session
Change in wellbeing or connection	Short baseline and follow-up questionnaire	Entry and exit
Participant experience and barriers	Interviews or focus groups	Midpoint and end
Referral outcomes	Follow-up with consent	Quarterly

Note: Replace every bracketed item with verified local evidence. Do not copy the illustrative wording without checking the source, date, definition and geography.

8 CITE

Cite data consistently

Record the citation when you find the information. This is quicker and safer than reconstructing the source immediately before submission.

Six citation elements

Element	Record
Title	The indicator, report or dataset name exactly as published.
Geography	The area to which the quoted value applies.
Timeframe	Year, quarter or reporting period.
Original source	The organisation that produced the data.
Access date	The date on which the information was viewed or downloaded.
URL	A direct Hub link where possible.

Suggested citation format

Template

[Indicator/report title], [geography], [timeframe]. Original source: [publisher]. Accessed [date] via Havering Data Intelligence Hub: [URL].

Data quality checks

- Does the title measure what the application claims?
- Are the numerator, denominator and unit clear?
- Is the period current enough for the funding decision?
- Are geographical boundaries comparable?
- Has the figure been revised, suppressed or rounded?
- Can the source be traced by an assessor?

9 SUBMIT

Final checks

	Before submission
☐	Eligibility and funder priorities have been checked.
☐	The need is specific to a population and place.
☐	Local evidence is combined with wider evidence where appropriate.
☐	Every claim is supported and every figure has a traceable source.
☐	Counts are explained with rates, trends or comparators where useful.
☐	Data definitions, dates and geographies have been checked.
☐	The proposal links need, intervention, outputs, outcomes and impact.
☐	The budget matches the activities and timetable.
☐	The evaluation plan includes baselines, targets, methods and responsibilities.
☐	The application explains limitations honestly and avoids overclaiming.
☐	A colleague unfamiliar with the project has reviewed the application.
☐	The final version meets the format, word limit and deadline.

Final reading test

Can an assessor quickly understand who needs support, how you know, what the grant will fund, what will change and how you will know?

9 RESOURCES

Trusted guidance and useful links

Resource	Why it is useful
Havering Data Intelligence Hub	Local data, profiles, reports and JSNA evidence.
Data Explorer	Search the Hub indicator catalogue.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	Deeper analysis of health, wellbeing and need.
NCVO: Writing your application	Practical UK guidance on tailoring applications and avoiding common mistakes.
The National Lottery Community Fund: Getting ready to apply	Official UK funder guidance on preparing for an application.
The National Lottery Community Fund: Preparing your application	Requirements, eligible costs, safeguarding and full cost recovery.
Arts Council England: Grants system guidance	Official application system and programme guidance.
Charity Excellence Framework: Grant application example	UK-focused case-for-support template and practical guidance.
Plinth: Grant applications that get funded	UK-focused guidance on evidence of need and outcome data.
NIH: General grant writing tips	Useful cross-sector advice on realistic goals, organisation and reviewer-focused writing.

Applicants should always check the individual funder's current criteria, guidance and application requirements before applying. External resources accessed September 2026.

Data Intelligence Hub
www.haveringdata.net
For support, use the Contact Us link on the Hub.