

Innovation and Good  
Practice grant programme  
Prospectus 2007-09

AFFORDABLE HOMES STRONG COMMUNITIES



October 2006

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# Foreword

The Housing Corporation is committed to developing an outstanding research, innovation and good practice programme to inform and support its activities and contribute to delivering affordable homes within strong communities. To this end we have created a centre of excellence in housing research. The Centre for Research and Market Intelligence, based in Cambridge, brings together our business information data and analysis and our good practice programmes into one team to maximise our research and analysis potential, transforming how we use and manage knowledge. Our focus is clear: to produce and promote the highest quality research, analysis, innovation and good practice that will improve the lives of millions of people.

Since 1995 the Housing Corporation has invested over £75 million through its Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) programme. In that time the IGP programme has funded a wide range of pioneering projects, developed innovative solutions and highlighted good practice.

This prospectus opens our IGP 2007-09 bid round and builds on our commitment to supporting new and innovative schemes. I look forward to receiving your proposals.



**Jon Rouse**  
Chief Executive

October 2006

# Introduction

The Innovation and Good Practice programme is a revenue grant programme administered by the Housing Corporation's new Centre for Research and Market Intelligence (CRMI). Its purpose is to encourage the development and testing of new ideas and proposals and to generate and promote good practice in the delivery of housing services within housing association sector. Our research and good practice budget amounts to £5 million, of which up to £1.5 million will be allocated to projects submitted in response to this prospectus over the next two years.

Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) grants have also funded a significant number of research projects, from small localised studies to national evaluations, including studies that consider the needs and views of service users and specific client groups; gathering information to inform decision making; and measuring progress in meeting Housing Corporation priorities. We will continue to fund research of this sort, to ensure that delivery of affordable housing is informed by strong evidence.

The Corporation's powers to give Innovation and Good Practice grants are derived from Section 87 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, as amended by the Housing Act 1996. This provides that "the Corporation may give financial assistance to any person to facilitate the proper performance of the functions of Registered Social Landlords". Projects funded under the Innovation and Good Practice programme must therefore aim to produce outcomes to benefit housing associations and/or their tenants.

Throughout this prospectus we refer to various websites and documents. A full list is available in the bibliography.

# Our corporate priorities

In October 2006 we published our Corporate Plan 2006-09 which sets out how we will continue our proud record of achievement in meeting housing and community needs and aspirations, and lead and stimulate innovation, so that we and our partners – in public and private sectors – can do more in the future.

## More quality homes

We are expanding our investment programme to fund more new, high quality homes, making more efficient use of public funds and ensuring that the programme is responsive to Government policy objectives.

## Improving landlord performance

We will foster and challenge housing associations, and unregistered bodies in receipt of grant, to provide excellent services, be efficient and devise innovative housing and community solutions.

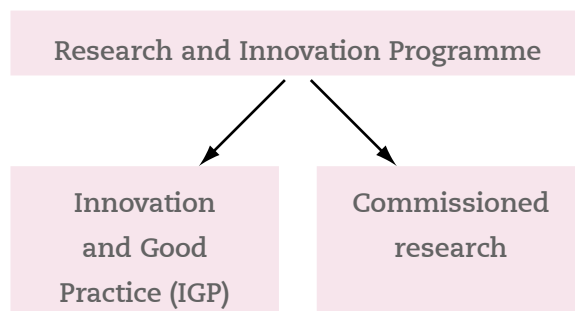
## Providing expertise

We are seeking to improve radically the dissemination of our research and information projects and focus on improving our understanding and that of the sector of critical aspects of housing policy.

## Building a can-do culture

We will become more proactive in identifying needs and problems and proposing solutions. We aim to become more flexible in linking programmes and people and will look at how joint working can be used to provide effective solutions.

We published our Research and Innovation Strategy 2005-08 in August 2005 which set out the full list of priorities we will be pursuing over the next three years. In 2005-06 we brought together our investment in research and innovation, including the Innovation and Good Practice programme into a single Research and Innovation Programme. We have a £5 million research budget of which up to £1.5 million will be allocated to projects submitted in response to this prospectus over the next two years.



# Themes for 2007-09

## Theme 1

### Land availability

We recognise that there is no greater barrier to the delivery of more, quality affordable homes than shortages of suitable available land. Improved land availability is vital to the success of our plans to increase the supply of affordable homes.

Local authorities are to have new responsibilities for assessing housing land availability and their partner affordable housing suppliers have, in turn, new opportunities to influence the planning of land supply for housing development.

We want to fund innovative projects that will demonstrate practical ways of overcoming the barriers to improving land availability in both urban and rural locations. Such projects might focus on:

- business models for land banking that better manage risks and difficulties, by both Registered Social Landlords and developers seeking grant;
- future supply of land, including the balance between brownfield and greenfield sites and rural and urban locations, and how land is released for development;

- the positive roles that local authorities and other local development agencies can play in planning residential land supply; and
- the potential of public sector land holdings.

In making proposals, bidders should not only take account of planning changes in the pipeline, but also relate their proposals to other work on land availability now being carried out, for example, by English Partnerships and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the development and piloting of community land trusts.

## Theme 2

### Barriers to low cost home ownership

We want to support innovative approaches to respond to unmet demand for home ownership among priority groups, such as people renting social housing and key workers. We are particularly interested in projects that will identify and break down the barriers between renting and owning – including moving towards or out of home ownership in the same settled home – and that are practicable and able to be replicated.

In their proposals, bidders should take account of emerging thinking on, for example, equity stakes, equity shares and community land trusts, as well as the work of the Shared Equity Task Force.

### **Theme 3** **Responding to an ageing population**

The population is ageing. How can we provide today the housing that tomorrow's older people will want to live in? We would like to fund new approaches that are designed to respond flexibly to the demands and aspirations of older people. Some preferred arrangements will be very challenging for the housing funders and managers of the future and might include, for example, providing households with spare capacity to accommodate carers.

In their proposals, bidders should avoid replicating work that has already reached the public domain, such as that produced by the Housing and Older People Development Group, unless it is to put recent recommendations into new practice. In principle we seek to bring new practical thinking and examples of use to providers of accommodation to older people.

### **Theme 4** **Housing management services in the 21st century**

We recognise that housing management services cover a very wide range of activities. This bid round offers an opportunity to develop new ideas showing how front-line housing management service delivery, including the allocations/lettings function, can evolve to take account of a complex and demanding operational context for social landlords in the 21st century. Social landlords now provide housing in a wide range of markets and for an increasingly diverse range of residents. How are they responding to this challenge and adapting the way that they operate to improve the quality of life for their residents?

In their proposals bidders should recognise the unclear boundaries between housing management and neighbourhood management, and not replicate the recent good practice recommendations from our own publications and other Government departments. We are, however, interested in supporting the implementation of new dimensions on practice that has recently been explored – for example in relation to managing areas of mixed tenure – provided it does not replicate that being followed up elsewhere.

## Theme 5 Tackling Respect

Social housing landlords are increasingly focused on supporting neighbourhoods, to make them places where people want to live both now and in the future. We are seeking practical proposals that show how landlords are responding to the Respect agenda with particular emphasis on the following:

- prevention of anti-social behaviour, including ‘diversionary’ schemes – using some of the principles outlined in the recently published Social Exclusion Action Plan. We would be particularly keen to see innovative support for and intervention with people who might be at greater risk of becoming known to the criminal justice system, for example individuals who have received early warning of their unacceptable behaviour;
- innovative examples of working with communities in shaping services to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour that can be replicated in different neighbourhoods; and
- new dimensions of tackling anti-social behaviour in rural areas.

In their submissions, bidders should be aware of the separate ‘mini’ bid round we have already launched to identify and fund family intervention projects, as well as our plans for a study of how housing associations are using their powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

# Criteria for proposals

## General criteria

We are seeking to fund the development of innovative and practical proposals that reflect existing policy and practitioner concerns or push thinking and practice into new but empirical dimensions. In addition to projects that address specific or identifiable issues, we encourage softer, people-focused explorations of quality-of-life outcomes. Our Research and Innovation Strategy 2005-08 explains how we want to link our IGP funding priorities with our corporate priorities.

## Regional and local dimensions

We are very interested in receiving bids that have a strong regional focus, addressing issues and problems that arise particularly in specific geographical areas. We want to support and drive forward regional and sub-regional agendas, as well as tackle localised concerns about community cohesion and those of black and minority ethnic communities.

## Immediate and future relevance to policy delivery

As the name of our Innovation and Good Practice grant programme suggests, we place great emphasis on both innovation and practicality. In today's housing world, policy and practice is dynamic

and continuously developing in response to emerging concerns. We are looking for clear indications in bids as to how proposals not only reflect the latest policy and best practice, but also how they anticipate emerging policy thinking. We expect bidders to be aware of a range of forthcoming relevant reports and likely recommendations, even if in draft.

## Dissemination

Our IGP grant fund is aimed at improving housing association operational practice. To this end all successful programmes must lend themselves easily to replication by other organisations, and be widely disseminated. We have provided some guidance on how to approach developing a dissemination programme on our website which can be found at: [www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral)

Your bid will be judged on how effective your proposed dissemination programme will be, and how likely your plans are to achieve maximum impact.

## Value of bids

We also want to ensure that we achieve the best value for money we can. Rather than dissipate our funds across multiple small

projects, in general we prefer to encourage and drive forward real change by identifying and funding fewer but larger, focused projects reflecting our themes. We therefore expect to receive bids for funds in the order of £50,000-£100,000 per project. We believe that this approach, especially if coupled with funding from other sources, has the potential to encourage a step change in operational practice.

We will, however, be prepared to consider a limited number of smaller projects of lower value (£20,000-£40,000), provided they can demonstrate that they will have a significant impact and measurably improve good practice.

## Delivery timescales

We also want to ensure that our IGP funds are directed towards very current or new thinking and to produce timely results. We particularly encourage bids for projects that can be up and running quickly, producing recommendations and results by the end of March 2008.

## Equality and diversity

For equality and diversity criteria please see:

[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral)

## Resident involvement

For resident involvement criteria please see:

[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/GuidanceGeneral)

# Bid process and timescale

The process for receiving and assessing bids for the 2007-09 round remains broadly the same as for the previous round (2006-08), with a two-stage application process. The first step calls for expressions of interest (EOI) that must be sent to the following e-mail address:

igp@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk, on the template provided, by 5:00 pm on 20th November 2006. The template is designed to restrict the length of project descriptions and may not be accompanied by any additional materials. EOIs received that exceed the specified length and/or have further explanatory attachments will not be considered for funding.

Organisations selected for inclusion in a short list of proposals that meet our criteria will be invited to work up their bids in more detail and submit them on the full application template by 5:00 pm on 14th

February 2007. Short listed organisations will be asked to develop bids in consultation with Housing Corporation Nominated Officers. As with EOIs, submissions of full bids will not be considered for funding unless they are submitted by the required date and conform to the required length, without attachments.

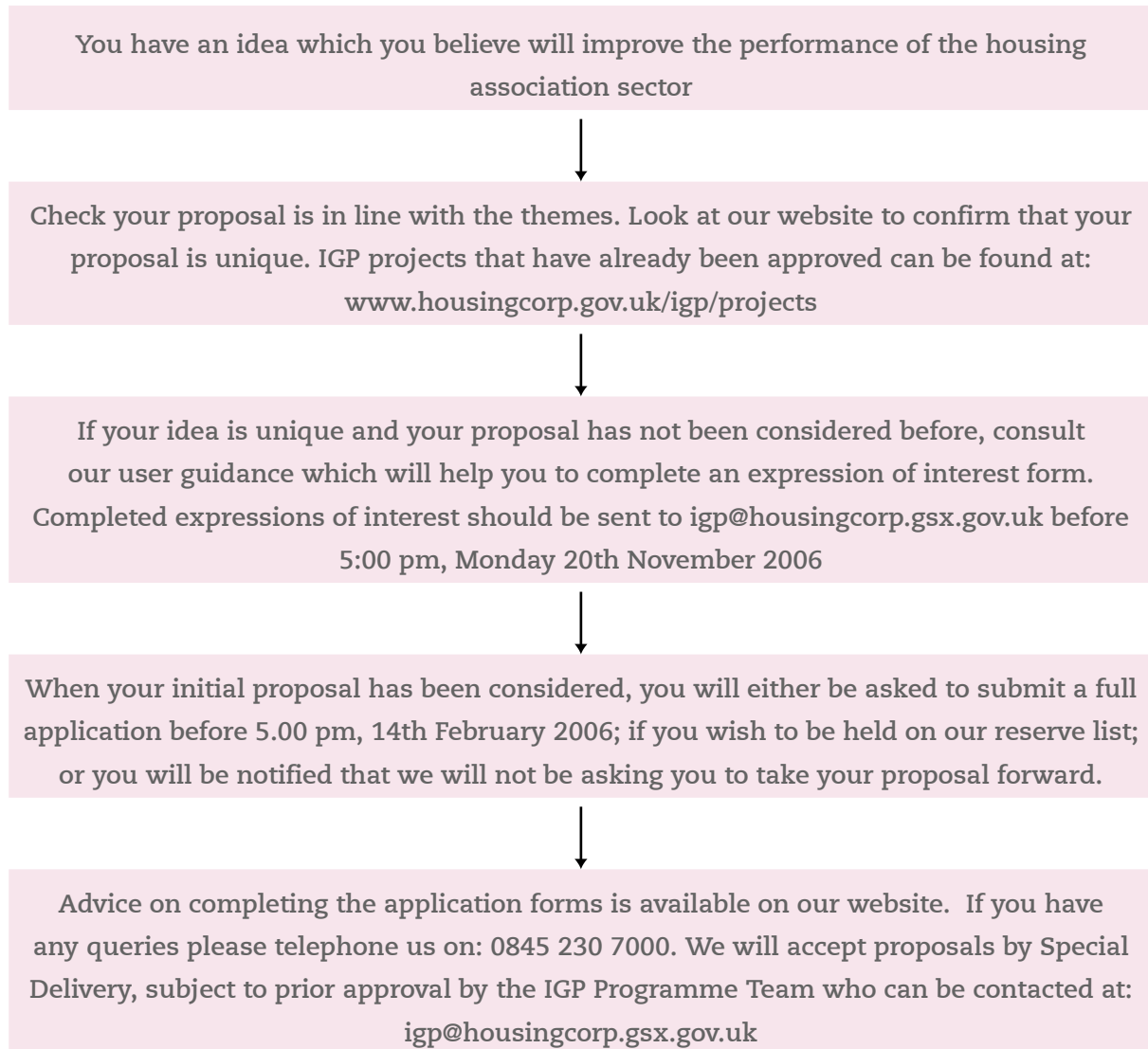
Recommended proposals will be submitted to the Corporation's Executive Management Team (EMT) for approval before grant can be awarded. Final bids will be assessed by a Moderation Panel of senior officers from the Housing Corporation.

We have set a timetable in advance to provide certainty to bidders and to our own staff involved in assessments. The bidding calendar is given below. For this round of bidding, no applications will be accepted after the submission deadline date.

Prospectus launch and call for expressions of interest (initial proposals)	23rd October 2006
Submission deadline for expressions of interest	5:00 pm, 20th November 2006
Deadline for return of full applications	5:00 pm, 14th February 2007
Applications approved and announcements made	23rd April 2007

# Next steps

The flowchart below outlines the process you must follow to apply for grant funding:



# Contact information

If you have an idea about a potential project which you believe the Housing Corporation should support, submit your proposal to:  
[igp@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:igp@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk)

If you have any queries regarding the bidding round, please contact the IGP Programme Team.

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Centre for Research and Market Intelligence  
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Westbrook House  
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E-mail: [igp@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:igp@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk)

# Bibliography

**Corporate plan 2005-08**, available from:  
[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/corpplan](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/corpplan)

**Research and innovation strategy 2005-08**,  
available from:  
[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/ri](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/ri)

**Expression of Interest form (EOI)**, available  
from:  
[www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/EOI](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/igp/EOI)

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For further information about this publication please call 0845 230 7000 or e-mail [enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk)

We can provide copies in large print, Braille and audio cassette, on request. Other language versions may also be available.

## **Innovation and Good Practice programme Prospectus 2007-09**

This prospectus opens the bid round for the Housing Corporation's Innovation and Good Practice Programme for 2007-09. It gives information on the support we are looking to give to projects that will help the affordable housing sector deliver more quality homes, stimulate ever better landlord performance and contribute to greater understanding of the challenges facing the housing sector. It also outlines a timetable for submissions.