



UK Government

Community Ownership Fund

Delivered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



- As the Chancellor made clear at the Spring Budget, the **UK Government is committed to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom** to ensure that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **The Community Ownership Fund forms part of the package of UK wide levelling up interventions**, helping to support recovery, build opportunity and empower communities to improve their local places.
- **The fund will ensure that communities can support and continue benefitting from community assets, amenities and facilities of value to them now and for future generations.**
- **This will involve the UK Government working more directly with local partners and communities across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**, who are best placed to understand and meet the needs of local people and places.



Community Ownership Fund: Overview

- **The Community Ownership Fund delivers** on the 2019 UK Government manifesto commitment to support community groups to protect and take over local assets of community value.
- The fund will provide **financial support to communities across the UK to take ownership of assets, amenities and facilities at risk of being lost** but have value for the local people and place.
- This represents a direct investment in communities across the country, to **improve local places** and **strengthen the social infrastructure** that brings people together, strengthens pride in place and helps communities flourish.
- **A total sum of £150 million** will be spread across multiple bidding rounds covering a period of four years from 2020-2025.
- The fund will invest in **sustainable projects** where community ownership of the asset or amenity makes the **biggest difference to the local place**, advancing the **social wellbeing and interests of the community**.
- **Voluntary and community organisations across all four nations will be eligible** to bid for match funding to save community assets and amenities and run them for the benefit of the local community.
- **Up to £250k matched-funding** to help communities buy, take over or renovate physical community assets at risk of loss. In exceptional cases, **up to £1m matched-funding** will be available to help establish a community-owned sports club or help buy a sports grounds at risk of being lost without community intervention.



The Community Ownership Fund will aim to:

- Provide targeted investment for communities to save community assets that would otherwise be lost
- Strengthen capacity and capability in communities to support them to shape their places and develop sustainable community businesses
- Empower communities in left behind places to level up
- Strengthen direct links between places across the UK and the UK Government

We will invest in projects that deliver against *all* of the following outcomes:

- Protect a community asset or amenity that is at risk and preserve its community value
- Develop a sustainable operating model to secure the long-term future of the community asset in community ownership
- Increase the use of community assets and improve access to local services or amenities



Community Ownership Fund: Funding Available

- **Communities will be able to bid for up to £250k matched-funding** to help them buy, take over or renovate physical community assets at risk, to be run as community-owned businesses.
- **Bidders will also be able to apply for some revenue funding** to help with the associated revenue costs of taking an asset into community ownership.
- **In exceptional cases, up to £1m matched-funding will be available** to help establish a community-owned sports club or help buy a sports grounds at risk of being lost without community intervention.
- **We are committed to providing fair opportunities to access funding through the Community Ownership Fund across the UK.** A minimum target of spending in line with per-capita allocations has been set in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure a fair spread of funding across the country.
- **A total sum of £150 million** will be spread across multiple bidding rounds covering a period of four years.



The fund will run over four years (until 2024/2025) and will have multiple bidding rounds.

- The first bidding round will be fairly short and most suited to community groups who will be ready to access capital grant funding to take over assets in the next year and be able to provide a full business plan for the ownership of the asset.
- The Government will learn from the first bidding round and amend the criteria as necessary to ensure that the Fund has the reach and impact intended to support communities.
- There will be numerous opportunities for groups in future bidding rounds if they are not ready to bid in the first round. Applicants will have equal opportunity to bring forward bids at these future stages.



Community Ownership Fund: Eligibility and Scope

- **Communities in all four nations** will be eligible to bid for this fund.
- **Bids should be made by established or newly formed community and voluntary organisations**, with formal governance arrangements and a charitable purpose, social purpose or public benefit.
- **Applicants must demonstrate that the community asset they want to save is at risk of loss**, has community value and use, and can be brought into long-term sustainable community ownership.
- **We will not publish a definitive list of eligible assets** as it is important for communities to set out what matters most to them.
- **Projects should be focused on place-based assets or amenities** such as community centres, sports clubs, cinemas and theatres, music venues, museums, galleries, parks, pubs, post office buildings, and shops.



Community Ownership Fund: Project Applicants

- **All bids should be made on the Community Ownership Fund Application Form which can be found online.** Applicants should use the form and guidance document to prepare all information required for their application, prior to submitting via the online portal.
- **The assessment criteria guidance document** will provide you with detailed information on the assessment criteria used and guidance on how to apply the assessment criteria in your application.
- **State Aid & Subsidy Control:** If funding from the Community Ownership Fund is used to provide a subsidy, expenditure must be compliant with the UK's obligations on subsidy control. Guidance on delivering in line with subsidy control can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Successful applicants will be required to report progress quarterly and provide a statement of grant usage audited independently by an accountant for our assurance process. A national programme evaluation strategy will be published in the Autumn.
- **Match-funding:** Applicants will be required to raise other sources of funding, alongside investment from the Community Ownership Fund. Having a range of funders contributing to a project can demonstrate the quality of the project and the support within the community.
- **Excluded projects:** Projects not in scope of the fund are specified within the Community Ownership Fund prospectus which can be found online at [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).



- The UK government will assess bids from across the UK against a common assessment framework. Applications will be scored using this framework.
- The Fund's assessment criteria is available online. There is a two-stage assessment process:
 1. **Gateway criteria**: Projects must pass all three gateway criteria (application forms must also be fully completed).
 2. **Selection criteria**: Projects will be scored against the following criteria: strategic case (30% weighting), management case (30% weighting), potential to deliver community benefit (30% weighting), added value of the community asset based on community need (10% weighting).
- All bids that pass the initial sift will be scored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) officials against the assessment criteria. MHCLG Ministers will take final funding decisions.
- Full due diligence on the project and applicant will be carried out once applications are submitted and before any funds are released.



UK Government

Community Ownership Fund: Delivery and Distribution UK-wide

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

- **The UK Government has a responsibility to support people, jobs, and communities across the whole of the UK**, particularly in the context of our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Through the **UK Internal Market Act 2020**, the UK Government can invest in supporting communities throughout the United Kingdom.
- **The UK Government will deliver the Community Ownership Fund on a UK wide basis** to ensure that all communities across the country will be able to protect valuable local assets today and for future generations.
- **The UK Government intends to work with the devolved administrations** to ensure that the funding is used to best effect and supports communities across the UK.
- **A minimum target of spending** in line with per-capita allocations has been set in Scotland (£12.3m), Wales (£7.1m) and Northern Ireland (£4.3m) to ensure fair opportunities to access funding.
- **Projects will be awarded on the basis of an open competition** and assessment against transparent criteria and a common assessment framework.



Community Ownership Fund: Role of Local Authorities

- Local authority and town and parish councils are excluded from bidding for the scheme as the purpose of the fund is to support community organisations who are seeking to bring asset at risk of loss into community ownership.
- However, we recognise the important role that local authorities play in enabling and supporting successful community asset ownership, and in ensuring that we reach out to and engage with the right community groups.
- We encourage the whole of local government to raise awareness of the fund amongst their local voluntary and community sector partners and will engage with the sector as part of the communication plan for the fund.



Community Ownership Fund: Role of the VCS

- We also welcome the input of the Volunteer and Community Sector in promoting the fund to communities across the country.
- We know that there are a number of experienced organisations who will also play a role in enabling and supporting successful community asset ownership, and whom groups will be able to turn to for advice and support.
- We also welcome ongoing feedback from the sector on the Fund.



Document	Description
Prospectus	Provides information on the fund, bidding rounds, eligibility criteria, assessment criteria and decision-making process.
Application Form	Provides detailed information on the assessment criteria used and sets out how to apply the assessment criteria in your application form.
Assessment criteria guidance document	A standard form to be used by all applicants to the fund, across the UK.

You can email COF@communities.gov.uk if you are unable to find the answer to your query in these documents, and an MHCLG advisor will be able to help.



Community Ownership Fund: Funding Delivery Timeline

July 2021

First bidding round for the Community Ownership Fund opens.

August 2021

Applications for the first bidding round must be submitted by 13th August 2021.

December 2021

Second bidding round for the Community Ownership Fund opens.

May 2022

Third bidding round for the Community Ownership Fund opens.



- The prospectus, full guidance document and forms for applicants is published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments#the-community-ownership-fund>
- We will be running webinars to provide an opportunity for you to hear from UK Government officials on how the scheme will operate and will include a Q&A session where you will be able to ask questions
- Use the links below or email COF@communities.gov.uk to sign up and register your interest for the following **upcoming webinars**:
 - Webinar session 1: Tuesday 20th July, 3pm – 4pm, <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-ownership-fund-webinar-registration-163339525919>
 - Webinar session 2: Friday 23rd July, 10am – 11am, <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-ownership-fund-webinar-registration-163337728543>