



Community  
Ownership Fund:  
Get your  
application right  
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# What is the Community Ownership Funds (COF)

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- Run & funded by Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC)
- Total fund of £150M
- Launched in 2021
- Planned to run until March 2025



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP (July 2021):

*“The £150 million Community Ownership Fund aims to ensure that local people across the UK can support and continue benefiting from treasured local institutions whose future may be in doubt.*

*Whether it’s the pub on the high street that’s facing closure, a village shop or a local sports team that might lose its ground, the Fund offers a great opportunity for local groups to take them over and to run them as businesses – by the community, for the community.”*

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# The Story So Far...

- 4 application windows have opened and closed (2 rounds)
- **£36.8 million to 150 projects** across the UK – First 3 windows
  - £25.5 million allocated to 97 projects across England
  - £5.2 million allocated to 24 projects in Scotland
  - £3.2 million to 15 projects in Wales
  - £3 million to 14 projects in Northern Ireland
- Average grant **£244K** – smallest **£24K**, largest **£1.05M**
- Round 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> window awards were announced 30<sup>th</sup> June (window closed 14<sup>th</sup> April – 2.5 months lead time. Largest number of awards to date.)
- ***Round 3 closes 12<sup>th</sup> July 11.59AM***



# The Story So Far...

Wide variety of assets,  
scale and organisations

## Caistor Market Place, Lincolnshire

- Raised £2.4M that will enable the complex to be turned into a home for shops, a café, a community venue and holiday rental homes.
- £225K capital grant from COF, £160K in share capital (including £75K from Community Shares Booster programme)



# The Story So Far...

- The Rising Sun, Woodcroft, Gloucestershire
- 10 Year battle
- Bought by housing developers in 2011, but subject to a CPO in 2019
- £175K grant (matched with share capital) for refurbishment
- Now open for business!

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# Overall Eligibility Requirements

- The asset is at risk of loss without community intervention
- The project is sustainable and viable
- There is a realistic chance that the asset could be sold or transferred into community ownership within 12 months of being offered funding, and the funds can be spent within 12 months of the date of the offer letter
- You can demonstrate you can 'match' the capital grant from the Fund at the required match funding rate (currently at least 20%)
- The project revenue funding does not exceed £50,000 or 20% of the total capital funding applied for, whichever is smaller
- Your organisation is an eligible organisation
- Your organisation is able to acquire the asset freehold, or the long-term leasehold of at least 15 years with reasonable break clauses
- The organisation that applies for funding must be the same organisation that will receive the funding and run the project

## Key Changes for Round 3 (closes 12<sup>th</sup> July)

- Match funding requirement reduced to minimum of 20% (10% in exceptional cases)
- Will fund up to £1M, but most awards expected to be up to £250K
- Will accept applications from Parish, town or community councils
- Increased number of bidding windows each year (typically 4)
- No restrictions on number of times same application can be resubmitted
- Improved guidance for full application from DLUHC
- Support, through Locality, for application criteria, and in depth support for EOIs deemed to be of ‘greatest need’

# Who Decides?

- Team at DLUHC draw up short list based on assessment criteria
- Secretary of State will chose successful applicant from short list based on;
  1. Balance spread of locations
  2. Balance of rural & urban
  3. Thematic split of asset types
  4. Balance of organisation types
  5. Balance of projects requiring large & small amounts of funding



# Expression of Interest (EOI)



First step. Relatively short application form, open for applications at all times with questions covering:

1. Is the asset in the UK?
2. Is the asset at risk?
3. Has the asset been used by the community in the past?
4. Address of the asset
5. Postcode of the asset
6. Describe your project and its aims
7. Main way the asset will be used
8. How much capital funding will you apply for?
9. What's the main way you'll use the capital funding?
10. Does a public authority own the asset?
11. Please can you summarise the stage you are at in terms of negotiating an agreement to acquire the asset from its owner?

12. Will the asset have a leasehold of at least 15 years when your organisation buys it?
13. Will you ask us for funding to support your revenue costs?
14. How much revenue funding will you apply for?
15. What do you expect to use the revenue funding for?
16. Do you expect to secure cash match funding?
17. Where do you expect to get the cash match funding from?
18. What progress have you made to secure the required match funding?
19. If you are going to undertake a community share offer, what financial size will the offer be?
20. Do you expect to secure any 'in-kind' match funding?
21. What sorts of 'in-kind' match funding do you expect to secure?
22. Will your organisation be both receiving the funding and running the project?
23. Is your organisation subject to any insolvency actions?

24. Would you be interested in receiving support to help progress your project and submit a COF application?
25. If you are interested in applying for support, what are the main things that feel you need support with, in order to submit a good COF application?
26. Organisation name
27. Address of organisation
28. Postcode of organisation
29. Type of organisation
30. Lead contact first name
31. Lead contact last name
32. Lead contact email address
33. Lead contact telephone number
34. When will you submit your application, if we invite you to?

# Full Application Assessment Criteria



Much more detailed and onerous online form – word version available at <https://mycommunity.org.uk/community-ownership-fund>.

Scoring questions fall in two two areas:

## The Strategic Case

- Community Use
- Benefits (x2)
- Community Engagement (x2)
- Environmental Sustainability

## The Management Case

- Funding Breakdown
- Financial Risks & Forecasts (x2)
- Skills & Resources
- Representation, Inclusiveness & Integration

# Full Application Documents Submission



In the full application you are asked to submit the following documents:

- Asset valuation or lease agreement (if you have these)
- Evidence of public ownership (if appropriate)
- Evidence to show support from the community
- Risks to the project
- Your business plan

# Full Application Support

- For round 3 onwards, DLUHC have provided detailed assessment criteria guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-round-3-application-form-assessment-criteria-guidance>
- Locality are providing support via the MyCommunity site at , <https://mycommunity.org.uk/community-ownership-fund> including;
  - Webinar about how to write a strong application
  - Guide to match funding
  - Editable version of the full application form
- Those passing EOI stage, but deemed to be ‘of greatest need’ will receive in depth support from 1 or more of Locality’s 10 support partners



# Should We Apply?



- 'Only game in town' (other than National Lottery)
- Much improved application guidance
- Much improved application support
- Reduced match funding
- No limit to number of resubmissions

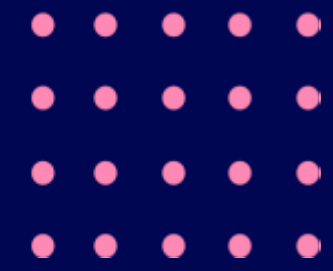


- Lots of work required for strong application
- DLUHC appear to have 'raised the bar'
- Success ultimately depended on Secretary of State and 5 criteria (lottery?)

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# Key Links

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus--3> (The full DLUHC prospectus)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-round-3-application-form-assessment-criteria-guidance> (DLUHC application form assessment guidelines)
- <https://mycommunity.org.uk/community-ownership-fund> (My Community support page) including webinar how to write a strong application, guide to raising match funding, and editable version of the full application form)
- [https://mycommunity.org.uk/how-to-write-a-strong-community-ownership-fund-application-webinar?utm\\_source=GovUK&utm\\_medium=Website&utm\\_campaign=prospectus](https://mycommunity.org.uk/how-to-write-a-strong-community-ownership-fund-application-webinar?utm_source=GovUK&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=prospectus) (My Community webinar about how to write a strong application)



**Plunkett Foundation provides practical advice, support and training to help communities establish and run successful community businesses with long-term survival rates.**

**To get information and support for your community business, please contact the Plunkett Helpline on 01993 630022 or [info@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:info@plunkett.co.uk)**