

# Community Ownership Fund: assessment criteria guidance

Published 15 July 2021      Policy paper    © Crown copyright 2021

This guidance provides you with detailed information of the assessment criteria used. It sets out how to apply the assessment criteria in your application.

You should also read:

Community Ownership Fund (COF) prospectus

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus)

Application form

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-application-form](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-application-form)

## Assessment framework

The UK government will assess bids from across the UK against a common assessment framework. Applications will be scored using this framework, and final decisions on funding will be made by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

### Bidding round 1

Our priorities for investment in Bidding Round 1 are to invest in good quality and viable projects which are ready to take on the ownership and management of a community asset and run it as a sustainable community business.

## Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed on the following 4 criteria:

1. Strategic case: applicants should show that without intervention the asset would be lost to the community, the impacts that this would have and support they have from the community and other partners.
2. Management case: applicants should show the objectives and deliverability of the project and how the asset or amenity will be run sustainably.
3. Potential to deliver community benefit: using the outcomes framework, applicants should show how the asset will deliver community benefits under community ownership.
4. Added value of the community asset based on community need: using local data and information on community need, applicants should be able to show the added value of the asset or amenity to the community.

## 1. Strategic case

This will account for 30% of the assessment.

### Case for community intervention

#### Assessment and guidance

Your case for community intervention should include:

- the risk currently facing the asset
- why without community intervention the asset would be lost to the community
- the role the community asset plays in your local place (such as what services and amenities does it provide)
- the impact which the loss of the community asset would have on the community

#### Scoring

This will be scored out of 5.

## **Community support**

### **Assessment and guidance**

You should be able to provide evidence of support you have for your plans to save the community asset or amenity. This might include:

- community engagement events you have run – and how these have shaped your plans
- community fundraising you have carried out
- how have you involved local people in your proposals so far and considered community views on the aims and objectives of your plan?

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

## **Local partnerships and links to other local plans**

### **Assessment and guidance**

You must be able to show you have built local partnerships around your plans, and the role your proposals could play within other local plans. You should include:

- the nature and extent of support and involvement from the local council or other public bodies locally
- what support you have from other local organisations, businesses or local public sectors
- how do your plans to save the asset relate to the aims of any other local plans (such as a neighbourhood plan, local economic strategy, health and wellbeing strategies)?

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

## **Environmental sustainability**

### **Assessment and guidance**

We welcome projects that can support the journey to Net Zero and incorporate low or zero carbon approaches.

We also welcome projects which consider and mitigate their impact on the natural environment.

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 3.

### **Total Score**

Total score possible for this section is 18.

## **2. Management case**

This will account for 30% of the assessment.

### **Financial viability of business model**

#### **Assessment and guidance**

You will need to include an overview of your business model, to show that you have considered all the risks and deliverables associated with your project. You will also need to attach your full business plan.

We will be assessing your plans for the longer-term sustainability of the community asset in community ownership through your proposed business model.

Please outline your plans for income generation and how you plan to resource the maintenance and management of the asset, alongside the activities and services you will deliver. Please include details of any expected surplus, and how this will be reinvested in your activities.

#### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 10.

### **Match funding and full project costs**

#### **Assessment and guidance**

You will need to provide:

- how much funding are you seeking from the Community Ownership Fund

- your full project costs
- sources of funding you have already received to develop your project so far
- sources of funding you have already secured for the capital costs
- sources of funding you plan to secure for your project

The Community Ownership Fund will provide up to a maximum of 50% of the capital costs to purchase (and renovate and repair) the community asset. You should demonstrate other sources of funding that you have secured or will be securing for the capital costs of your project.

Funding from the Community Ownership Fund may be committed ‘in principle,’ before you have secured other grants or loans. However, for this round of funding, we will need evidence that you will be able to secure all match funding for your community asset and drawn down capital within 6 months of your application.

**Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

**Skills and resources needed to manage the asset**

**Assessment and guidance**

We will be assessing how you have considered the management requirements of your project, and the steps you are taking to ensure your organisation has the right capacity and resources to run the asset sustainably. Please demonstrate you have considered succession planning for your organisation’s staff and trustees.

If you are planning to recruit staff to manage and run the asset and its services, please provide an overview of these plans.

**Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

**Community control, accountability, inclusiveness and integration**

**Assessment and guidance**

You should demonstrate you are accountable to the community you represent. You can do this by:

- showing who is on your board
- your governance structures
- ways in which you will involve the community in the running of the asset
- your organisation a membership structure
- if there will be any barriers on who can join

Please demonstrate how you have considered inclusiveness and integration issues as part of your proposals. Including how the community asset will be accessible and inclusive for all members of the community, including underrepresented groups.

**Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

**Total Score**

Total score possible for this section is 25.

**3. Potential to deliver community benefits**

This will account for 30% of the assessment.

**Community benefits delivered**

**Assessment and guidance**

You will need to demonstrate the community benefits of the asset, and how these will be sustained and improved through community ownership.

These benefits should relate to one or more of the outcomes set out in the prospectus, which are as follows:

- community pride and perceptions of the local area as a place to live

- social trust, cohesion and a sense of belonging
- participation in community life, arts and culture and/or sport
- local economic outcomes – including employment and volunteering opportunities, and employability and skills
- additional social and wellbeing outcomes – such as delivering positive impact in physical and/or mental health and reducing loneliness and social isolation

More guidance is outlined in section 5.

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 10.

## **Community beneficiaries**

### **Assessment and guidance**

You will need to demonstrate which groups in the community currently use the asset and amenity, and how they would benefit from protecting the asset.

You will show how the asset will be inclusive and deliver benefits for members of the wider community under community ownership. There may be one main beneficiary group within the community who primarily benefits from the asset, but successful applicants will need to demonstrate the asset serves the wider community of place and not solely a community of interest.

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

### **Total Score**

Total score possible for this section is 15.

## **4. Added value based on community need**

This will account for 10% of the assessment.

### **Demonstration of community needs**

#### **Assessment and guidance**

You will need to provide an assessment of community need using local neighbourhood statistics.

You should include relevant local data which helps to demonstrate why the asset is important to your community.

For example, bids could use individual IMD domains to appraise their relative need and show how the asset and project might address a particular challenge for their place – for example, health or employment.

This might include an appraisal of:

- availability of other similar services (i.e if the asset you are seeking to save, provide a unique amenity or service that people who have to travel elsewhere for)
- potential to address local challenges – for example, if you expect your project to deliver increased pride of place to the area, please explain the impact this would have in relation to how local people currently feel about the local place, or the need for regeneration

You may also want to include an overview of the current strengths within your community that your project can help harness and develop to address local challenges and deliver community benefits.

### **Scoring**

This will be scored out of 5.

### **Total Score**

Total score possible for this section is 5.

# Scoring

The assessment scores will be weighted according to the importance of that criteria, and a total score will be given as a percentage.

For example, the highest score of 25 for the management case (which is weighted 30%) would contribute 30% to overall score. The highest score of 5 for the added value based on community need (which is weighted 10%) would contribute 10% to overall score.

Proposals should score at least 11 for strategic case, 14 for management case, 9 for community benefit and at least 2 for community need to be considered for shortlisting.

## **Additional guidance: how to show community benefits and outcomes**

This section provides further detail on how applicants can address the assessment criteria 3: “Potential to deliver community benefits”.

### **Essential COF outcomes**

You need to demonstrate the potential to deliver ALL the following outcomes in your application.

#### **Protect a community asset or amenity that is at risk and preserve its community value**

You must demonstrate the community asset you seek to save is at risk of loss.

In your application, this evidence will be provided as part of your project overview and assessed as part of your strategic case.

Please refer to these sections of the application form template for more information on how you can meet this outcome.

#### **Develop a sustainable operating model to secure the long-term future of the community asset in community ownership**

You must demonstrate that your organisation has the management capability and the potential to deliver a sustainable operating model for the community asset.

In your application, this evidence will be provided as part of your management case and in your business plan. Please refer to these sections of the application form template for more information on how you can meet this outcome

#### **Safeguard and improve the use of community assets and associated local services or amenities**

You must be able to demonstrate that your proposal will safeguard and improve the use of the community asset and/or increase access to the services or amenities.

In your application, you should demonstrate this as part of your management case and business plan (in terms of deliverability) and in your outline of the community benefits your asset will deliver.

### **Additional COF outcomes**

Examples of how you can demonstrate potential to deliver one or more of these outcomes in your application.

These should be demonstrated through the ‘potential to deliver community benefits’ parts of the application form.

#### **Increase feelings of pride and improve perceptions of the local area as a place to live**

What benefits do you expect to achieve in relation to how people feel about the area as a place to live?

You can demonstrate this through:

- results of community engagement events or surveys and views from the community about the role the asset plays in how they feel about the local area or how the improvements you are seeking to the asset might change the way people feel about living in that neighbourhood
- views from other local stakeholders (such as local businesses) about the role the asset could play in supporting wider improvements to that place

For example, in the case of bringing a derelict high-street asset into community ownership, what impact might this have on other surrounding businesses?

### **Improve social trust, cohesion and sense of belonging**

What ways might you expect your project to improve social trust, cohesion and a sense of belonging in your community. This might be through the services and activities that already take place within the space, or through new services and activities.

What other groups locally do you work with and how does the way you work together bring together different members of the community? How might your proposal strengthen these partnerships?

You could show how the community asset will bring together different members of the community that might not otherwise mix or provide opportunities for different people to work together on community projects.

### **Increase local participation in community life, arts and culture and/or sport**

To demonstrate the impact of your proposal on participation in community life, arts and culture or sport, you should use information on the current usage of the community asset or amenity. Who currently uses the asset and who are the main beneficiaries?

You might find this information from the council, from the current owner, or through your own surveys and community engagement. You should try to show not only how you will preserve participation through safeguarding the asset, but also what the opportunities are for increasing participation. This might be through volunteering opportunities, new opening hours, or new activities provided.

You could also show how you will involve community members in the running of the asset, listen to and empower the community through community engagement.

### **Create additional local economic outcomes**

This includes job creation, volunteering opportunities and improving employability and skills levels in the local community.

You might expect your proposal to deliver local economic outcomes. This might include preserving the existing value to the local, as well as any additional benefits expected.

You could show this through:

- the volunteering opportunities you expect to deliver as part of your project
- the jobs you expect to create or support as part of your project
- additional employability and skills benefits, through the services and activities you expect to run from the asset as part of your proposal
- plans to address environmental sustainability, reduce carbon and minimise waste or contribute to a greener local economy through conservation and education
- opportunities for community enterprise or SMEs through tenant organisations
- plans to support the local economy through reinvesting surplus into local supply chains
- attracting tourists or new visitors to the local economy
- bringing in new investment into the local place (including through community shares or crowdfunding)

### **Create additional social and wellbeing outcomes**

This includes delivering positive impact in physical and/or mental health and reducing loneliness and social isolation.

You might expect your proposal to deliver additional social and wellbeing outcomes. This could include preserving the existing value to the health and wellbeing, as well as any additional benefits expected.

You could show this through:

- the services the community asset provides
- who uses the space and the impact this has on their health and wellbeing
- the services and activities of the tenant organisations which operate within the space
- the opportunities to address loneliness or isolation through bringing people together

### **Community need**

As part of assessment criteria 4, you are also required to demonstrate the difference the asset makes to the community based on need.

You can find and use a range of local data sources and information to show the need of your community, and the role that your project and community asset will play in meeting that need.

Relevant data sources might include the following:

- index of multiple deprivation – using the individual domains most relevant to your project
- evidence provided as part of a neighbourhood plan
- local neighbourhood profiles and data from your local council
- local health and wellbeing data from your local public health agency or NHS trust

This publication is available at

---

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-assessment-criteria-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-assessment-criteria-guidance)