

Information about the Building Strong Communities Fund and how to apply

This document is also available in the following formats:

British Sign Language Video:

Easy Read:

1. Introduction

Are you part of and/or work with a community that has been badly affected by COVID-19 and its effect, socially or economically? Do you have a great idea for a project to help rebuild community strength, voice and/or connection? Perhaps you already run a successful programme that you are ready to expand - to benefit more people or to reach new groups.

The GLA is inviting applications from London voluntary and community sector organisations with an annual turnover of £200k or under to the new Building Strong Communities Grants Fund. Funding is available in:

- **Microgrants** of £1,000
- **Microgrants** of up to £5,000
- Or **Small Grants** of up to £10,000

Grants will be awarded in three rounds, with applications being accepted from December 2021 and subsequent round from Spring and Summer 2022.

In this document you can find information that covers:

- Programme background
- Project criteria: what we want to fund
- Application process
- Submitting your application
- Accessibility
- Glossary

2. Programme background

About the Fund

London's communities have been hard hit by COVID-19. Some communities have been disproportionately affected, many of whom already experience long term inequality and disadvantage in areas such as health, employment, housing and access to green spaces. This fund has been created to support London communities that have been most affected by the crisis.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the London Recovery Board was set up to establish the priorities for the GLA and other partners across London. **Nine recovery missions were created which you can view [here](#)**. All work undertaken by the GLA must be clearly working towards one or more of these nine missions. This fund supports the objectives of the **Building Strong Communities Mission** and can also support projects which align with objectives of the **Green New Deal Mission**.

During 2020 the Mayor contributed £10m to the London Community Response (a collaboration of 67+ funders, coordinated by London Funders) to support small charities and voluntary organisations to deliver essential services for London communities.

The GLA is now launching a £900,000k Building Strong Communities Fund, open for applications at three points from December 2021 and August 2022 to support small charities and voluntary organisations in London. This fund will enable communities to shape their recovery from COVID-19. It is supported by an Advisory Group comprised of GLA teams, Rocket Science (the appointed grant management agency), London Funders and London community members.

The Building Strong Communities Fund aims to make sure funding reaches grassroots groups and communities that have been most impacted by COVID-19.

We will only fund work/projects that can show they will help to meet at least one of the below Building Strong Communities mission outcomes:

- **Londoners are supported to shape their communities post COVID-19**, e.g. meeting new or pre-existing needs that have emerged or been highlighted by the pandemic, to develop community activities and services.
- **Unheard voices are amplified** and heard so that communities have influence and control over decisions, e.g. people from communities who are under-represented in decision making have opportunities to have their voices heard and shape change.
- **Feelings of belonging are increased**; loneliness and social isolation are decreased.
- **Feelings of connection within and across communities are increased**, e.g. relationships are strengthened between neighbours and communities.

Applicants will need to show how their project meets the mission outcome/s they have chosen within the application.

All applicants will be asked to list key project outputs within the application.

For clarity, our definitions are:

An output is an activity that you will deliver as part of your project. These deliverables should have numerical targets attached to them.

An outcome: the result of the project, e.g. because of your outputs, what will be the difference for your community?

In addition to achieving project outcomes that support the BSC's Mission objectives, the Building Strong Communities Fund will work with London Funders (note 1) to co-commission support from experts within the equity and inclusion sector to ensure these grants can be accessed by and applied for by those organisations and communities who have been most affected by COVID-19.

How much funding can applicants apply for?

Applicants may apply for either one microgrant or one small grant:

Microgrant, Tier 1 (available for all three funding rounds)

- Funding of £1,000
- Project can take up to one year. They can start at any time but must be complete by June 2023
- Applicant selects the most appropriate grant outcome
- Available for groups with an annual turnover of £50k or under

Microgrant, Tier 2 (available for all three funding rounds)

- Funding up to £5,000
- Project can take up to one year. They can start at any time but must be complete by June 2023
- Applicant selects up to two of the most appropriate grant outcomes
- Available for groups with an annual turnover of £50k or under

Small grant, Tier 3

- Funding up to £10,000 (available for funding rounds one and two only)
- Project can take up to two years. They can start at any time but must be complete by June 2024

- Applicant selects up to two of the most appropriate grant outcomes
- Available for groups with an annual turnover of £200k or under

Funding available

We have a total grant pot of £900,000 to support community grants. This will be split into:

Round one: £350,000

Round two: £350,000

Round three: £200,000

For the first two funding rounds, between 10-20 microgrants and 20-30 small grants will be awarded.

For funding round three, only microgrants will be awarded of which there will be 50 x £1,000 grants and 30 x £5,000 grants. We expect to fund around 160 projects over a two-year delivery time period.

3. Project criteria

What activity will this fund support?

All projects must be community-led, meaning that the people benefiting or taking part in the project who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, must be involved in the design, planning and delivery of the proposed project. We know that many communities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and recognise that these groups will be different in different parts of London. Applicants must be able to tell us which group/s their project supports, along with a clear explanation on how they have been impacted by COVID-19.

We hope to receive applications from a broad range of projects. Examples could include a range of celebrations and festivals, community cooking or growing projects, story-telling and cultural activity, advocacy, intergenerational activity, working with children and young people, or a project to support a particular mental health need within the community. Projects can be either new or an adaptation or expansion of existing work.

We know that community needs in London are varied and so we are open to receiving applications from a variety of projects. We appreciate that some guidance is always useful though and so below are some examples of project headlines that would meet one of the four project/BSC mission outcomes:

- 10-week project in Lewisham to increase accessibility to key public services for London's blind, partially sighted and visually impaired people, who may be feeling disconnected or unaware of what's available in the area where they live.
- Fighting racism and raising the voices of South East and East Asian Londoners – groups that have experienced increased

levels of hate crime – through a series of monthly workshops and community activities over six months.

- Weekly mental health support groups for young people who are experiencing anxiety about their futures due to unfavourable labour market conditions due to the pandemic.
- Regular (e.g. weekly) walking, sports or other social activities for LGBTQ+ individuals who may have experienced social isolation during the pandemic.
- Community allotment is created on a disused space within a housing estate that lacks access to green space - bringing residents of all generations together for weekly sessions over a 10-month period, to grow healthy local food and build gardening and cooking skills.

Who can apply?

This fund is targeted at small grassroots groups or organisations, run by and for communities most affected by COVID-19 with:

- Annual turnover of 50k and under for a microgrant (Tier 1 or 2)
- Annual turnover of £200k and under for a small grant.

We have set these limits so that smaller grassroots organisations and informal groups will be encouraged to apply as well as those who may have faced barriers in the past. We know that many smaller and grassroots organisations have annual turnover of between £10,000 - £100,000 (as defined by (note 2) NCVO).

The aim is for groups to identify something that will make people's lives better now and to test ideas of things that can contribute to their communities (we are calling this an **immediate need**).

Organisations in all London boroughs can apply. We know that outer-London projects often receive less funding than those in inner London and will be mindful of this when deciding which projects to fund. However we also know that there are areas of every borough that will have a need for this funding.

To be eligible to apply, applicants will need to be one of the following:

- Registered Charity
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Community Interest Company (CIC)
- Charitable Company (limited by guarantee)
- Constituted Group/Organisation
- Excepted or exempted charity
- Community Amateur Sports Club
- Community Benefit Society

Or

- If your organisation is not legally constituted (e.g. mutual aid group or unincorporated association) you can apply through a constituted partner organisation (with annual turnover of any size) who will support your application as your sponsor (note 3). Regardless of the sponsor's organisation type, they will need to have three Trustees/Directors/Management Committee members who are not related.

Groups will need to:

- Have an annual turnover £50k or under (if applying for a microgrant, Tier 1 or 2)
- Have an annual turnover £200k or under (if applying for a small grant)
- Have a registered address and be located anywhere in Greater London. If your group is un-constituted and is applying through a sponsor, the sponsor will have to have an address that is registered in Greater London.

Priority will go to:

- Organisations that are equity-led (meaning led by the communities that they serve with at least 75% of the organisation's Trustees and 50% of staff members having personal experiences of the issues they are tackling).
- Projects that are community led (meaning that people from the community groups the project is supporting must be involved in the design, planning and delivery of the proposed project)
- Organisations that have historically not been funded by the GLA within the last three years or whose funding from the GLA over the last three years amounts to £50,000 or under. Funding from the London Community Response does not count towards the total.
- Applications that can clearly evidence how their project will address immediate community needs (something that will make their lives better now) regardless of the grant size.

How are decisions made on which projects to fund?

We will be reviewing applications against criteria. If at moderation stage we have projects that have scored the same, we will need to use 'reserve criteria'. This will be focused on:

- Geographical spread across London boroughs
- Project themes, e.g. we are keen to fund projects with themes of Arts and Culture, Children and Young People, Food, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Projects with an environmental or a community resilience angle
- Projects that involve volunteers to increase participation.

These criteria have been set by the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is comprised of people with diverse backgrounds and with varying knowledge and professional and lived experience.

The GLA won't fund

- For profit organisations
- Local Authorities
- Schools or formal educational settings (though we are happy to accept applications from small community education groups, e.g. library homework club, ESOL groups, after school projects)
- Project activities that generate profits for private gain
- Projects that practice or promote religion, or any activities actively promoting certain belief systems (or indeed the lack of belief). Faith Based organisations can apply but the activities funded under the GLA Building Strong Communities Grants must not fall under this stated exclusion.
- Projects for retrospective costs, including any costs incurred in community consultation and/or submitting your application
- Projects involving large-scale capital costs or routine repairs and minor improvements to community buildings
- Loan repayments
- Recoverable VAT – if you are not VAT registered, you will need to include VAT costs as part of the funding you request for your programme
- Individuals, or organisations applying on behalf of individuals
- General staff costs (but will fund project related staff costs)

Note that although priority will be given to equity or community-led organisations, we would also be keen to hear from projects if the organisation is not community-led but can demonstrate that the community benefitting from the project are also heavily involved in the design and delivery of it.

Priority **will not be given** to projects that meet the eligibility criteria but:

- Are not community or equity-led
- Are not meeting an immediate community need
- Have received a significant amount of GLA funding in the last three years (over £50k and excludes London Community Response Fund)
- Meet eligibility criteria but we are funding other projects in the same geographical area that meet the priorities better
- Meet eligibility criteria but do not meet the Building Strong Communities outcomes.

4. Application process

Funding rounds

There will be three rounds of funding with £350k, £350k and £200k allocated respectively for the following time periods:

Round one (open for nine weeks)

Application period open: Monday 13th December 2021

Deadline for application submission: Monday 14th February 2022

Round two and three will be opening in Spring and Summer 2022.

We will create a regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions section on our webpage to answer any questions that applicants may have outside of this prospectus.

What information will applicants need to submit alongside the application?

We are keen for these grants to be as accessible as possible to small groups and are therefore requesting that applicants submit and confirm the following essential documents/information at application stage:

- Governing documents, e.g. memorandum articles of association or constitution
- Bank statement - dated within last 3 months with the organisation name stated
- Financial documentation – latest set of financial accounts and/or income and expenditure document

- Confirmation of organisational policies: safeguarding and insurances

If the grant is being held by a sponsor, we will need to see the above documentation for the sponsor organisation and also receive a sponsor letter to confirm that they are aware of the application and happy to hold and receive the grant on behalf of the applicant.

If you are a new organisation (established since April 2020) and it is therefore perhaps not possible to share the above information with us, then applicants can consider applying through a sponsor or in partnership with another organisation that can meet these requirements (as stated previously).

When will applicants hear whether they have been successful or not?

For round one, all applicants will be contacted by email during the week commencing 30th May 2022.

5. Submitting your application

How do applicants apply?

To help you decide whether or not you want to apply for a grant, the following options are available:

Information session (pre-application stage)

We will be holding some information sessions so that organisations can hear about this opportunity and have the chance to ask questions. These will happen both in person and virtually. Further dates will be shared once confirmed on our webpage but two confirmed webinars will be on:

- 11th January 2022, 14:00 – 15:30
- 18th January 2022, 10:00 – 11:30

Discuss your idea (Pre application stage)

If applicants have a project idea they would like to discuss before applying for a grant then our partner, Rocket Science have a team of people who will be happy to speak with you for a support call - either over the telephone (020 3291 3026), exchange of email to communitygrants@rocketsciencelab.co.uk, or through a Teams, google call or zoom video call.

Eligibility Quiz (Application stage)

Please call Rocket Science on 020 3291 3026 to check your eligibility and to discuss any questions you may have for a supported journey through your application.

Each grant application has three levels of assessment which are proportionate to the level of grant.

Microgrant (£1k)

1. Complete eligibility quiz.
2. If eligible complete application form – applicants can decide whether to do this through video/audio/written answers. Applicants may want to focus on one question at a time.
3. Shortlisted applications will have a scheduled follow up phone call with a GLA Programme Officer to gain more insight about the project and whether it meets our criteria. The call will last approx. 20 minutes.

Microgrant (up to £5k)

1. Complete eligibility quiz.
2. If eligible complete application form - applicants can decide whether to do this through video/audio/ written answers.
3. Shortlisted applications will have a scheduled follow up call with a GLA Programme Officer to gain more insight about the project and whether it meets our criteria. The call will last approx. 30 minutes.

Small grant (up to £10k)

1. Complete eligibility quiz.
2. If eligible complete written application form.

If an organisation is successful, what happens next?

Our partner, Rocket Science will carry out checks on the documents you have submitted. If the checks are all met, then we will draw up the funding agreement. We may also work with successful applicants to agree finalised SMART outputs and outcomes for the project.

Microgrants will receive full payment upfront.

The grant payment for small grants will be a split of 90% upfront and 10% upon completion of a final report form.

We will give successful applicants more information about the monitoring and evaluation information that we will want them to collect at a welcome/inception meeting before the project starts.

We will share details of any incorporated appropriate networking and sharing of learning for grantees. We want to ensure that such events are of the best value for grantees in terms of their time and energy (and our budget) and so we will consult on this activity with awarded grantees at each of the three rounds. We greatly value organisations' time for additional events like this and therefore encourage applicants to include budget for an hour or more of the CEO's time, for example, within your costs.

In addition to monitoring information, applicants for micro and small grants will also be asked to provide a case study. We will keep monitoring and evaluation requirements as light touch as possible.

6. Accessibility

Please include budget lines to show your projects' accessibility needs where appropriate, e.g. providing information in different formats or community languages, providing a British Sign Language Interpreter at events.

If this application process is not accessible to you, please contact Rocket Science by phone on 020 3291 3026, or email at communitygrants@rocketsciencelab.co.uk, or arrange a video call through Teams, google call or zoom, to discuss your needs.

If you are from a DPPO (Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation) and need advice on completing your application, please contact our partner, Inclusion London at Ailsa.McWilliam@inclusionlondon.org.uk or by calling Ailsa McWilliam on 07935 378564/landline on 020 7237 318/SMS only on 0771 839 4687.

7. Glossary

Building Strong Communities Grants Advisory Group

Made up of GLA teams, Rocket Science (the appointed grant management agency), London Funders and London community members. Comprised of people with diverse backgrounds and with varying knowledge and professional and lived experience. The role of the board is to advise on development of the grants and make final decisions on awards.

Building Strong Communities Microgrant

Funding for a project of £1,000 (for Tier 1).

Funding for a project of up to £5,000 (for Tier 2).

Building Strong Communities Small grant

Funding for a project of up to £10k (between £5001 and £10,000).

Community-led organisation

Puts the people most affected by its work at the forefront of all activity. An organisation that is led by the community it serves, be that a community of place (geographical) or a community of Interest (issue based).

Community-led project

The people benefiting or taking part in the project, who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, must be involved in the design, planning and delivery of the proposed project.

Equity-led organisation

Led by the communities that they serve with at least 75% of the organisation's Trustees and 50% of staff members having personal experiences of the issues they are tackling. These organisations are working particularly with communities with

protected characteristics (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, disability).

Immediate need

Something that will make people's lives better now.

London Community Response

Collaboration of 67+ funders to support small charities and voluntary organisations to deliver essential services for London communities (coordinated by London Funders). Funding was delivered to community groups in 2020-2021 through the LCR collaboration.

Outcome

The result of the project, e.g. because of your outputs, what will be the difference for your community.

Output

An activity that you will deliver as part of your project. These deliverables should have numerical targets attached to them.

SMART (outputs and outcomes)

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Sponsor organisation

If your organisation is not legally constituted (e.g. If it is a mutual aid group or unincorporated association) you can apply through a constituted partner organisation (with annual turnover of any size) who can support your application as your sponsor. Regardless of the sponsor's organisation type, they will need to have three Trustees/Directors/Management Committee members who are not related.

Notes:

1. A strategic partner of the GLA which is a membership network for funders and investors of London's civil society.
2. <https://beta.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-publications/uk-civil-society-almanac-2021/profile/>
3. Explained in more detail later on

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We welcome feedback so please get in touch!
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