Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Local News Fund (LNF)

Webinar Questions & FAQ Guide

1. Eligibility & Organisational Requirements

Geographic Scope

Q: Can a defined geographical area for both funds be Wales or England in general? Can a project partner or contractor be based outside the UK?

A: LNOF bidders must provide evidence of their provision of high quality news and information relating to a local or regional area within England or Wales. IF bidders must be able to demonstrate how the benefits of their projects would be realised by local media in any or all parts of England and/or Wales.

Consortium partners or contractors can be based outside the UK.

Q: Why are publishers based in Scotland and Northern Ireland excluded from applying?

A: While the overarching objective of the Local Media Action Plan is to support local journalism across the UK, the Local News Fund is currently available to local news outlets in England and Wales only, given that press funding is a devolved matter in the other nations. Regarding the IF portion of the Fund, bids are invited from across the UK, with no restrictions on where the project's benefits can be felt, except that bidders must be able to demonstrate in their bids how benefits would be felt at least by local media in England and/or Wales.

Company Type & Size

Q: Would it be possible for a publishing company to apply for both funds?

A: If you are eligible, you may apply for both LNOF and IF funding streams under separate applications, one per funding stream, ensuring that these are substantially different projects.

Q: Can you confirm there isn't a minimum organisational size (in terms of revenue or other factors) required to apply for a grant?

A: There is no minimum organisational size requirement to apply for the Local News Fund.

Q: I am a sole trader but can demonstrate that I have a sustained track record of providing local news for at least 12 months, can I still apply

A: The eligibility criteria requires businesses to have been registered in England or Wales for LNOF applications, and within the UK for IF applications, for at least 12 months as of July 2026. Sole traders are not eligible.

Q: Am I able to apply for a start-up business that I am in the process of setting up, which is currently not off the ground due to personal financial access—with a seed grant I would seek to launch in the next two months before the October 2026 deadline? Would a start-up be eligible?

A: The eligibility criteria require businesses to have been registered in England or Wales for LNOF applications, and within the UK for IF applications, for at least 12 months as of July 2026.

Consortia, Partnerships, & Subsidiaries

Q: If we submit a bid for a funding stream as a lead partner, and a bid to the same stream as a delivery partner, does this affect the maximum sum we can be awarded?

A: The total public funding your organisation receives cannot exceed £315,000 over a rolling three-year period, under Section 36 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Lead organisations in consortium bids are responsible for ensuring that a successful bid would not lead itself or any partners to exceed this minimum financial assistance threshold. Further information is available on the Government website.

Q: If consortia applications apply for both funds—where the project from one fund is reliant on the success of the project from the second fund—would those applications be assessed separately or as a whole?

A: Your applications will be assessed separately. The two parts of the Fund are subject to separate assessment processes.

Q: In a consortia bid, does only the lead organisation have to meet the eligibility criteria? Could more junior partners in the consortia be sole traders, for example?

A: Consortium partners do not have to meet the eligibility criteria, but the consortium's lead organisation must meet the eligibility criteria.

Q: If a subsidiary company has received a grant for content production, would that prevent the main company from applying for the Local News Fund?

A: The total public funding your organisation receives cannot exceed £315,000 over a rolling three-year period, under Section 36 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Further information is available on the Government website.

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2. Funding, Budgets, & Reserves

Q: Does there need to be any match funding on our behalf?

A: Match funding is not a requirement of the Local News Fund. However, to maximise the impact of the fund, match funding is encouraged where organisations have the financial capacity and are seeking to deliver larger projects - we encourage those organisations not defined as small businesses on the basis of an annual turnover above £15m to consider this as part of any bid.

Q: Is it all-or-nothing with regards to the budget a bidder asks for—can you get a yes to the bid, but with less budget than asked for?

A: Certain elements of a bid could be funded while other elements are not. For example if a multi-title publisher submitted a bid proposing several different projects for several different titles under its ownership, it is possible that some but not all titles could get funding.

Q: How does the unrestricted reserves rule work for upfront funding?

A: The grant guidance states that upfront payment is available to bidders whose "unrestricted cash reserves are less than 25% of the value of the grant they are bidding for". This must be verified by a signed confirmation from an independent chartered accountant.

Q: If we were to work with Freely, which is run by major broadcasters, is that eligible?

A: As long as the lead organisation in any consortium bid meets the eligibility criteria, consortium partners or subcontractors do not need to meet the criteria. We cannot offer a judgment at this stage on Freely's own eligibility for the Fund should it seek to bid as a lead organisation, but note with regard to the LNOF portion of the Fund that services owned by the national broadcasters, including the BBC, ITV and S4C, are ineligible.

Q: For the LNOF fund, could we submit one bid which includes several mini-projects across different local news brands?

A: Local news organisations can submit a single bid with multiple parts, proposing for example different projects for different titles under their ownership, up to a total equal to or less than the £125,000 threshold.

3. Eligible & Ineligible Expenditure

Q: Is there a minimum amount (£) to apply for?

A: There is no minimum amount set for this Fund.

Q: Can funds in either grant go towards paying people to create relevant digital content, whether they are on a salary or freelance?

A: As set out in the examples of eligible expenditure provided in the advert, salaries of staff involved in funded projects can be covered using the Fund and evidenced via PAYE/HMRC or invoiced freelancer costs. However, funds cannot be used to cover content production or business as usual activities.

Q: Can funds also be used for buying technical equipment, software, etc.?

A: Funds can be used to buy technical equipment and software in support of the delivery of your bid's goals.

Q: Can funds be spent on operating and running costs?

A: Funds cannot be used to cover business as usual activities, but instead projects which demonstrate a business impact related to the financial sustainability of your organisation.

Q: Is bootcamp-style training in local live event organisation eligible to help newsrooms get a revenue-generating event off the ground?

A: Training costs would be eligible expenditure if associated with a project related to the financial sustainability of local media.

Q: Does 'training costs for beneficiaries' mean the beneficiaries can be paid to participate in training?

A: You cannot directly pay the beneficiaries as a wage, stipend, or incentive to attend the training. In UK government grant terms, "training costs for beneficiaries" refers to the direct costs of delivering the training to them, not compensating them for their time.

Q: Can we pay 12 months of salary upfront to extend new roles past the grant window?

A: You cannot pay 12 months of salary upfront to extend roles beyond the grant window. While we expect activities related to funded projects in many cases will continue after the grant window closes, the cost of sustaining those projects after that time cannot be covered by the grant. The financial rules applying to government expenditure require that expenditure must be recorded in the financial year in which it was incurred.

Q: Can the cost of the required independent accountant's letter be recovered in the grant?

A: The cost for accountant verification or any other costs associated with the application process are not recoverable.

Q: Would it be possible to use the funding to appoint a freelancer to carry out the majority of the work, rather than going through a massive subcontracting procurement process?

A: DCMS does not strictly require applicants to undertake a procurement exercise for any subcontracting which any grantee needs to undertake in order to deliver their project - including with regard to standard freelance services. However, we would need some other assurance of value for money in such cases. In the case of freelance services, this can be achieved by benchmarking the freelancer's day rates against industry averages and clearly outlining their key deliverables and milestones. This should be included in the application or, where this is not possible, at the relevant payment claims stage.

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4. Application Process & Logistics

Q: How are application forms submitted and where are they found?

A: Word copies of the application forms are available on the Find A Grant page advert on gov.uk under “Supporting information”, for information only. Applications must be submitted via the ”How to apply” tab.

Q: Will a recording of the webinar be made available?

A: A recording of the webinar will be available on the Find a Grant advert in due course.

Q: Does the process allow the application to be saved and then returned to before submitting?

A: The application portal will allow for the application to be saved before submitting.

Q: Can images of publications or other media formats be used in the application?

A: Any format is acceptable: images, URLs, audio descriptions, etc.

Q: What does 'fully mobilised' mean in practice?

A: It means you should have finished the planning stage and moved onto the action stage. The grant spending window is challenging. For the vast majority of projects, contracts should be signed, the team must be in place, and active project work should be underway in October. This is because of the hard deadline of 22 March 2027 for completing projects and submitting final payment claims.

5. Any other questions:

Q: What if, at the point of applying, we have slightly more than 25% in unrestricted reserves, but we anticipate spending this before the date of the first payment?

A: Applicants seeking upfront payment will need to demonstrate that the current unrestricted cash reserves of their organisation are less than 25% of the value of the grant they are bidding for, via a signed confirmation from a chartered accountant on a letterheaded document. This would be at the time of applying, where the letter from the chartered accountant will be submitted, and it would be a matter of personal judgment for the accountant as to how to treat imminently committed funds, depending on the particular circumstances of the applicant.

Q: If we bid to run a learning network under the infrastructure portion of the Fund to 'supplement and guide grantees' and we don't know how many grantees might be involved, how would you advise us to set our budget?

A: We cannot advise on individual bids in this way. Questions about the size of each bid are a matter for the bidding organisations.

Q: LNF documentation states that organisations can submit a single bid with multiple parts for different outlets under its ownership; elsewhere it says 'only one application per organisation will be accepted per funding stream.' Does this mean a large local news publisher must submit only one unified application, or is there room to submit separate applications on behalf of different news brands?

A: Organisations can submit only one application for each of the funding streams, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for either. This means that a large local publisher seeking to bid for multiple newsbrands under its ownership would need to submit this as a single unified application.

Q: Would the minimum financial assistance (MFA) rule apply to Year 2 of the Fund? If so, would the Fund be prepared to offer a subsidy in the form of grants that would take individual grantees over the £275k threshold over the two years?

A: Minimum Financial Assistance rules derive from the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and require that no organisation can receive more than £315,000 of MFA subsidy from any source within a three-year period. Further information is available on the Government website. Further detail on plans for Year 2 of the Fund will be announced in due course.

Q: Does the application question on 'unrestricted cashflow' refer to the financial status of the company involved, or the personal finances of individual shareholders?

A: Applicants seeking payment upfront will need to demonstrate that the current unrestricted cash reserves of their organisation are less than 25% of the value of the grant they are bidding for, via a signed confirmation from a chartered accountant on a letterheaded document. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that only those organisations which would confidently not be able to initiate their projects after any funding is confirmed without additional support can qualify for payment upfront. It would be a matter of personal judgment for the accountant as to how to treat the personal finances of individual shareholders, depending on the particular circumstances of the applicant

Q: Will grants in the next financial year be on a similar basis/criteria?

A: Further detail on plans for Year 2 of the Fund will be announced in due course.

Q: Can UK Gov provide support to ensure single sourcing is applied where possible if Value for Money (VfM) can be demonstrated in other ways?

A: DCMS does not strictly require applicants to undertake a procurement exercise for any subcontracting which any grantee needs to undertake in order to deliver their project. However, we would need some other assurance of value for money in such cases. This should be included in the application or, where this is not possible, at the relevant payment claims stage. In many cases, the most obvious way of assuring value for money would be to run a fair and open procurement process, but where this is not possible, other forms of assurance of value for money could for example include reference to other contracts for similar services.

Q: The original announcement had an emphasis on the use of AI, but this was not mentioned today. Is there a separate fund for this, or is this incorporated in the wording a 'tool'?

A: The “Objectives” tab of the Local News Fund webpage includes some illustrative examples of the type of bids and projects we envisage may be funded through the Local News Fund, while stressing that bids will not be disadvantaged if they do not fall within these categories and still meet the overarching objectives of the Fund. Some of the examples included reference to AI, but this is not a particular focus of the Fund and nor is there any separate AI-related fund connected to the Local News Fund.

Q: Will other professional qualifications (e.g., IFA) be acceptable for the verification letter if the independent accountants aren't chartered?

A: If you require payment in advance you will need to provide a signed confirmation from a chartered accountant on a letterheaded document. This will need to be from an independent Chartered accountant so a member of the IFA would not be acceptable in this case.

Q: How much detail needs to be given about partners/third parties delivering parts of an infrastructure project? What are their eligibility criteria, and are they classed as a 'consortium' or a 'delivery partner'?

A: If applying as a consortium, only the lead organisation needs to meet the eligibility requirements. As lead organisation of a consortium bid, you would need to ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements for the part of the Fund into which you are bidding, and would also be responsible for providing information on all consortium partners, for ensuring that due diligence has been conducted on all partners, that you have reviewed the financial soundness of all partners, that you are able to confirm that your bid does not duplicate the proposed activities of any separate bid submitted by any of your partners, and that a successful bid would not lead you or any partners to exceed the minimum financial assistance threshold. Generally, we consider a consortium to be a partnership formed by a group of organisations, normally under a relevant legal agreement, to cooperate on a project, programme or scheme. One partner acts as the lead for the consortium and takes the legal responsibility for the grant. The expenditure incurred by all partners is treated and accounted for as grant expenditure.

Alternatively, you may wish to structure the application as a non-consortium bid with delivery partner/s and enter into a subcontracting agreement with those partners. In this case, we generally consider a delivery partner to be an organisation which is working for the grant recipient via a contract for services. They are paid under the terms of the relevant contract. We would normally expect to see a competitive process for such awards, or some other assurance of value for money in such cases where the delivery partner is already known and/or a procurement exercise would not be appropriate or proportionate (for example reference to other contracts for similar services).

Q: If a project is started but not completed by March 22, 2027, is there a danger of sanctions (such as losing the grant award) against the bidder?

A: All grant funding must be fully spent and all goods/services received by the grantee by 22 March 2027. In cases where grantees are not able to provide sufficient evidence that they are making satisfactory progress towards completion on time, or otherwise reach the end date without having completed the project, DCMS may suspend or cease payments, reduce the overall value of the grant or claw back funding already distributed.

Q: For an infrastructure project, how does the project consider build costs vs. project running costs? Can funds be spent on operating/running costs after March 22? Can money be spent before March 22 on services (such as third-party AI/inference costs) which will be delivered after that date?

A: While we expect activities related to funded projects in many cases will continue after the grant window closes, the cost of sustaining those projects after that time cannot be covered by the grant. Successful awardees must be able to spend all grant money by 22nd March 2027. This means that all goods and services purchased using our funding must be received by the grantee during the grant funded period and expenditure cannot be incurred in advance of need (unless specifically seeking upfront payment on the grounds of financial capacity under the terms set out in the application form, but in these cases also, all expenditure must still be incurred by 22 March). Where goods are purchased during the grant period and utilised during the grant period then clearly the grantee can continue to own and use those goods after the grant period ends.

Q: Can you give some examples of the kind of projects you have in mind that can be self-contained within a six-month completion deadline? Are you expecting applicants then to be able to fund projects after the grant is spent?

A: The "Objectives" tab of the Local News Fund includes some illustrative examples of the type of bids and projects we envisage may be funded through the Local News Fund, while stressing that bids will not be disadvantaged if they do not fall within these categories and still meet the overarching objectives of the Fund. While we expect activities related to funded projects in many cases will continue after the grant window closes, the cost of sustaining those projects after that time cannot be covered by the grant. Successful awardees must be able to spend all grant money by 22nd March 2027.

Q: Please can you explain a bit more about how you can apply for funding from both parts of the fund—specifically the types of projects/services that would be eligible for both parts.

A: The "Objectives" tab of the Local News Fund webpage includes some illustrative examples of the type of bids and projects we envisage may be funded through the Local News Fund, relating to both parts of the Fund, while stressing that bids will not be disadvantaged if they do not fall within these categories and still meet the overarching objectives of the Fund. If you are eligible, you may apply for both LNOF and IF funding streams under separate applications, one per funding stream, ensuring that these are substantially different projects.

Q: The BMT states "salaries of staff involved in funded projects (not content production)" - we anticipate some content production is required for our proposal, can you advise on the allowed staff costs

A: Staff costs must be used for project delivery only and not for any business as usual services or activities. Costs will be assessed in line with the proposal submitted and applicants should demonstrate that any staff costs included in their budget are directly related to the delivery of their project.

Q: On the BMT, How do I determine if an item should be included as staff costs or non-staff costs

A: Staff costs will be employees of your organisation, with the amount stated being the number of hours or proportion of costs being submitted which are directly related to project delivery, and are not to be used as business as usual services or activities. Non-staff costs would be related to an external contractor/freelancer, who will be submitting an invoice to you for payment.

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Q: When I go to apply, the ‘Start new Application’ button is greyed out and I am unable to access the application

A: As we have two application forms for this grant for each funding stream, the general 'Start a new application' button has been disabled but the applications can be accessed in the text of the 'How to apply' section where there is a hyperlink to each application form (highlighted in yellow).

Start new application

Summary | Eligibility | Objectives | Dates | How to apply | Supporting information

How to apply

Eligible applicants are invited to submit an application by selecting the relevant application form in the 'How to apply' tab" and "You can begin your application and return to it at a later time through your 'Find and Apply for a Grant' account" and "You can begin your application and return to it at a later time through your 'Find and Apply for a Grant' account Please note that only one application per organisation will be accepted per funding stream, if more than one application per organisation has been submitted for the same funding stream, only the first submitted application will be scored. If you are eligible, you may apply for both LNOF and IF funding streams under separate applications, one per funding stream. You can begin your application and return to it at a later

separate bid as Lead Organisation which proposes the same project).

Applicants working with subcontractors are responsible for ensuring that these partners can meet their obligations and must carry out appropriate due diligence checks.

Local News Outlet Funding (LNOF) Application: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/apply/applicant/mandatory-questions/start?schemeId=1582

Infrastructure Funding (IF) Application: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/apply/applicant/mandatory-questions/start?schemeId=1585

For queries please contact dcmslocalnewsfund@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Please let us know if you are still experiencing any issues.

6. Application error notification:

Q: What went wrong with the application form, and how does it affect my application?

A: Prior to the grant launch, an error led to the omission of one mandatory question from the Local News Outlet Funding (LNOF) Find and Apply online form. This question, which pertains to project objectives and financial sustainability, accounts for 25% of the total score. The impact on your bid depends on its current status, with specific guidance provided below to ensure your application is submitted correctly. Applicants should note that the Infrastructure Funding application form remained unaffected by this error.

Q: What steps do I need to take if I have already submitted or started my application?

A:

- **If you already submitted:** You should have received direct guidance from GGMS regarding next steps. If you have not seen this communication, please contact the team via email as a matter of urgency.
- **If you started before 30/07 but haven't submitted:** Please access the updated application form and transfer your existing responses across to the new version.
    - The new version will be visible in the 'Manage your application' area of the portal as 'Local News Outlet Funding - LNOF (amended)'.
    - Once you have completed the amended LNOF form, please submit only that version; no further action is required for the original application form.
- **If you start on or after 30/07:** No additional action is needed, as the current online form is fully complete.

Q: What is the deadline for providing the missing information, and can I email my response?

A: All required information must be provided through the Find and Apply form by **12 noon on 7th August 2026**. Please note that responses sent directly by email are not accepted as part of the formal application process.