Guidance for National Lottery Community Fund applications

This is an informal guide to making an application to the National Lottery Community Fund.

**Firstly, identify your community**

Most importantly in this context your ‘community’ is not necessarily simply people who live near one another. It can also be a group of people who have the same needs or life experiences. This is crucial when looking at how the space is going to be used, and by whom, and how people will benefit.

**Secondly, change the way you view your project**

When looking for funding, we often focus on what we practically need – eg toilets and kitchens, but what the NLCF are actually interested in what your vision is, eg what is it that you are trying to achieve – the bigger picture. Eg If your vision is to turn the church space into a community space with toddler groups, dementia café, food banks etc, then the result is that you will have to have a toilet and a kitchen. We can explore this more by looking at the questions they will ask, below.

These are the questions you will be asked at first stage. You will get the chance to delve deeper into these answers in the next round. They will ask you for the project details and actual costings when we have convinced them that we have a great project!

1. **What would you like to do?**

This is your **vision**. You’ve spotted something that’s missing and needed, and you want to fix it to make people’s lives better.

Your community might be people who are isolated and need a meeting place. You are then providing support for wellbeing and mental health, creating networks of peer support.

Your community might be young people, who have nowhere to go after school, and are being disruptive through boredom – and you would like to create a youth hub drop-in. You are then giving young people the best chance at a good start in life.

Perhaps your community is carers – whether that’s parents with toddlers or those looking after people with disabilities, illness or dementia. Perhaps it’s a foodbank or a café to make food affordable and social for everyone. Perhaps what you are providing is a space where people can meet for friendship and peer support. Perhaps it’s access to expert support through third party organisations (eg other charities providing support around debt, domestic abuse or addiction).

It’s not one community per se, but consider the shared characteristics that cross over all these groups.

It’s important to be able to draw on people’s experiences of being in lockdown and how this impacted on people’s mental health. This has been especially highlighted by schools on the effects on young people’s mental health. I expect other groups will say the same, especially carers who were looking after older people and those with dementia. I honestly don’t know how anyone with a new baby coped – toddler groups were my lifeline in the days of becoming a new parent.

1. **How does your project involve your community?**

This is where you have to truly demonstrate that it is ‘people-led’. In this case you would be best if you could show how you have spoken to your community and that you have listened to what they want, and that this has actually shaped your plans. Remember this is the people who will benefit, not necessarily the wider community who live nearby.

How are they involved in the planning? How did you ask them? Are you working with a youth group, or third sector charities? What was it like during Covid not being able to be around people, and how did it impact on everyone’s mental health and wellbeing. What does your community space offer that others don’t. For example, is yours ‘people-driven’ rather than a ‘hall hire space’.

Building on strengths is an interesting one – in my view this is where they want to know that the people involved in the plan have a track record.

If you have previously run a village hall, or others have, demonstrate that you have existing contacts and can rely on people who are experienced in this. If not, you might like to think of another church that has a church hall – and consider how that differs to the village hall, in what it offers.

Another thought is the strong track record that churches can typically demonstrate in volunteering. No-one does volunteering like CofE. It gives people of all ages purpose – so you might explore that more as one of your ‘communities’.

1. **How does your idea fit in with other local activities?**

This is where you show you have mapped out the services offered locally and identified the gap. What makes your idea the solution? Is what you are offering an affordable – or in some cases free space? Is it the location? Who else works in this area and what do they think? This is where you demonstrate that you have a great network of experts around you.

**In summary: what are the National Lottery looking for?**

Do watch this – it’s great! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UFinrBsuog>

Listen out for the phrases they use:

* Prosper and thrive
* The difference local projects make
* Opportunities
* Energy
* Ambition
* Hope
* Friendships
* Confidence
* Health and wellbeing programmes
* Enjoyment
* Thrives on it
* Given me purpose
* Happier and brighter
* Variety of support
* Means the world
* Safe comfortable place
* Friends for life
* Unlock and unlease the potential
* What are you seeing about how we can partner together
* The rewards are great

**Finally, do read through the NLCF guidance with this new lens!**

NLCF definition of Community: for organisations that work with their community, whether that is for people living in the same area, or people with similar interests or life experiences.

**The projects we fund**

We fund projects that work to make positive changes in their community. By community, we mean people living in the same area, or people with similar interests or life experiences.

We like to see projects that can test new approaches to issues in the community.

In order to support communities to thrive, we aim to:

* build strong relationships in and across communities
* improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
* help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage.

We are here for you as communities recover, rebuild, and grow following the COVID-19 pandemic. You can apply for funding to deliver new or existing activity or to support your organisation to change and adapt to new and future challenges.

## ****We're also looking for projects to be people-led, strengths-based and connected****.

People understand what’s needed in their communities better than anyone, especially during these unprecedented times. We want to support projects that:

* involve people and communities from the start
* build on people’s strengths
* are connected in their community

### **Involving people and communities from the start**

By putting communities first, we support people and communities to prosper and thrive. We want your funding proposal to demonstrate this clearly.

We believe that people understand what's needed in their communities better than anyone. So it’s important to us that you involve your community in the design, development and delivery of the activities you’re planning.

#### You might want to ask yourself:

* Have I spoken to the people in my community?
* Have the people in my community told me what they need and what's important to them?
* Have I listened to them and used what they've said to create my project?
* What can I do to find out what’s important to people in my community? For example, surveys, meetings, telephone calls, conversations with helper agencies and engaging with stakeholders.
* Who's involved in delivering my project? Think about encouraging people who benefit from your project to get more involved in running your organisation and making decisions. For example, they could become trustees or volunteers, or you could find ways to employ them.

### **Building on people's strengths (or 'strengths-based')**

We’d like to support people and communities to build on the knowledge, skills and experience they already have, to make the changes they want.

#### You might want to ask yourself:

* What’s already working in my community?
* How will my project add to these positive things that are already working?
* How will my project make the most of any resources that are already helping my community?
* What are the skills, knowledge and experiences people in my community have to contribute to the project?
* How can the project make sure it utilises these?

### **Connected in their community (or 'connected')**

We want to know that you’ve a good understanding of other activities and services in your community. We’d like to see how you’ll compliment these. So you can add value to what’s already there.

#### You might want to ask yourself:

* Have I spoken to other groups in the area that are doing something similar to my project?
* Have I thought about how we can all help each other?