

FUNDING GUIDELINES



CHALLENGING POWER WITH PARTICIPATION

Who are we?

The Connect Fund is managed by the Barrow Cadbury Trust on behalf of Access – The Foundation for Social Investment. The Connect Fund was established as the social investment infrastructure fund. Its objective is to improve the social investment (SI) market in England by supporting and strengthening the infrastructure, so it can better meet the needs of charities and social enterprises. By infrastructure, we mean social investment market intermediaries and support organisations, as well as the shared processes, tools, networks and partnerships that enable best practice.

Why the Challenge Fund a priority?

This strand identifies the challenges and gaps within the infrastructure of the social investment market and invites applications for projects that will solve them using the principles of Participatory Design. This approach seeks to involve the communities affected by investment decisions in decision-making processes. In a sector that exists to serve those on the margins, how can we re-configure the system to reduce marginalisation?

What will we fund?

We are looking to select 5/6 different projects in the areas below:

1. Participatory Funding

What if the investment decisions that affect communities, were made by those communities? This strand supports projects that pilot community involvement in investment committees. It could link to community wealth funds, or connecting local authorities' potential desire to invest democratically in their local areas.

2. Finance by Design

What if financial programmes were designed not only for, but also by and with the people they are intended to support? This strand supports projects to design financial products that better meet the needs of charities and social enterprises, by including them in the decision-making process.

Or is there another problem affecting the social investment sector that you would like to tackle? Come and speak to us to discuss it.

Key considerations

- We will support projects that address specific problems in the sector by challenging power and decision-making
- The projects should address power imbalances with principles of design justice, prioritising equity, diversity and inclusion
- Projects should be driven by partnerships designed to impact sector-wide rather than individual organisations
- We would like to support projects that build and disseminate knowledge in the sector and pilot ideas with the potential to crowd in further financing
- They could expand an R&D project that is already taking place or run as a new initiative

Expected outcomes

We expect all projects that we fund under this strand to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

- Action taken to address (or a better understanding of) the barriers faced by organisations led by under-served groups in accessing social investment.
- Investment flows particularly to organisations led by under-represented groups
- Funders and investors more responsive to needs in the VCSE sector.
- Collaboration between VCSE infrastructure and social investment intermediaries, connecting the infrastructure to the market.
- Investors able to provide more tailored and appropriate finance more efficiently. VCSE's able to access that finance more efficiently.

Who can apply?

All Connect Fund applicants must meet **all** the following criteria:

- Your organisation must be based in England.
- Your organisation must be a social investment fund manager, intermediary or advisor; membership body; sector or place-based network; umbrella organisation; voluntary sector infrastructure organisation; or community foundation.
- Your organisation must be incorporated and registered as a charity, social enterprise or have social purpose clearly incorporated into your articles of association with an appropriate asset lock and/or mission lock.

To address imbalance, we actively welcome applications from organisations led by black and minoritised communities, disabled people, the LGBTQ+ community and women.

Overview of the process

The next application deadline is January 09th with final decisions made on February 7th. Smaller grant applications are completed on a rolling basis.

Please note the application process from Expression of Interest to final decision usually takes no longer than 8 weeks but it can take up to 4 months depending on the size of the grant request and when it is submitted in our meeting/decision-making cycle.

1. Expression of Interest

Submit a short online form outlining the project you are seeking funding for. We can provide initial advice by phone or email if required.

2. Full Application Online

We will review your Expression of Interest and if it meets our funding criteria we will invite you to complete a full application. We may contact you to discuss your application in more detail before doing this. You will be required to submit your organisation's financial and legal documents at this point.

3. Full Assessment

We will carry out a full assessment of your project, complete due diligence on your organisation and may meet with you on site or via video call to review your proposal. Please note, if you are a previous Connect Fund grant holder your past track record will be taken into consideration.

4. Decision

We will submit our full assessment for decision and get back to you with the outcome and/or feedback. If successful we will send you a grant offer letter and payment schedule for your approval, along with reporting requirements.

Please contact us if you have further questions or to schedule a time to speak with one of the team.