

FUNDING GUIDELINES



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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 is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) a priority?

Tackling inequality and the lack of diversity within the social investment sector has been a key priority for the Connect Fund since it launched in 2017. To date it has funded and championed a number of EDI-focused initiatives that have identified and sought to tackle barriers to accessing social investment experienced by under-served communities. It seeks to increase the sector's understanding of how systems and processes contribute and lead to inequality.

What will we fund?

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

Direct support to implement procedural and system changes

The Connect Fund will provide one-off grants to social investors and fund managers that are looking to implement changes to their existing processes or systems to increase their accessibility to those often excluded from investment.

This strand will be expecting applications until 30 June 2023.

Key Considerations

- We will fund projects that have a practical and tangible impact on the social investment sector.
- Where appropriate, we will prioritise applications from organisations that are led by or/and serve under-represented groups, such as those that primarily serve black and minoritised communities, disabled people, members of the LGBTQ+ community and women-led enterprises.

- We will prioritise applications from those looking to implement changes or recommendations identified through working with the Equality Impact Investing Project, Diversity Forum, or other Connect Fund EDI partners.

Expected Outcomes

We expect all projects that we fund under any of these strands to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

- More open, diverse and transparent access to social investment
- Investment flows particularly to organisations led by under-represented groups
- Action taken to address the barriers faced by organisations led by under-served groups in accessing social investment.
- Greater board and investment committee diversity, ensuring a diverse range of voices is included at every stage of the social investment journey from fund design and application to decision making and delivery.

Closed funding strands:

Continued support for EDI Infrastructure operating in the social investment market

The Connect Fund will continue to provide grant funding to support infrastructure organisations and investment intermediaries to deliver projects that will lead to greater equality, diversity and inclusion on both the supply and demand side of the social investment market.

This strand is now closed for applications.

Diversifying the advisor market

The Connect Fund wants to see the diversity of the advisor market increased. The advisor market provides a bridge between the supply and demand roles of the social investment sector. Advisors work with charities and social enterprises seeking investment, often providing extra support in areas such as governance, financial modelling or business planning. We want to work with existing black and minoritised community infrastructure groups and networks to address the current gap, supporting them to engage with this part of the market and increase their capacity to be able to provide social investment advisory support.

This strand is now closed for applications.

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 that as the Connect Fund approaches the end of its life in March 2024, this strand is rapidly diminishing. **If you are interested in applying, it is recommended that you contact us first to discuss your proposal.**

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.