

CRITERIA

THE LUTON CITIZENS' FUND – ROUND 5

A PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING FUND
FROM LUTON COUNCIL AND LUTON RISING

MANAGED BY

BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



INTRODUCTION

The Luton Citizens' Fund is administered by the Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation (BLCF), on behalf of Luton Borough Council (LBC) who are committed to equitable funding through The Fairness Taskforce. Be Active and Plane Saver Credit Union also contribute funds to this programme.

The fund observes the principles of **Participatory Budgeting (PB)**, a form of citizen participation in which citizens help to decide how public money is spent. Community involvement is core to this fund which will enable local residents to decide which community organisations should receive funding. For more detail, please see Appendix A.

Each of the 20 wards in Luton will be split into 1 of 5 Areas, as outlined below:

- Central: Beech Hill, Biscot, Dallow, and Saints.
- North: Banfield, Bramingham Northwell, and Sundon Park.
- East: Round Green, Stopsley, Wigmore and Vauxhall.
- South: Central, Farley, High Town, and South.
- West: Challney, Leagrave, Lewsey and Poets.

Groups will need to attend a public decision day for the area in which they are planning to deliver a project. This will take place on the morning of Saturday 21st February 2026. Groups will present their ideas to members of the public through a showcase style event. Each group will be provided with a table, and members of the public will talk to each group before voting. **At least 1 representative of each group must be able to attend on the public decision-making days.**

Each member of the public will be required to vote for all projects for their votes to be valid. Individual votes will be cast and then tallied by the Luton Citizens' Fund team (made up of LBC Social Inclusion Team and BLCF). If you have concerns regarding attendance or presenting at these public events please contact BLCF at grants@blcf.org.uk or Sanjeev Kumar on sanjeev.kumar@luton.gov.uk

HOW MUCH CAN GROUPS APPLY FOR?

Grants of up to £3,500 can be considered for organisations working to address themes linked to the Luton 2040 plan. Projects can only apply to one area and one themed funding area.

Funded activity must fit with one of the priorities of the fund. **Up to 15%** of the grant can be used **for core costs** (essential running expenses like rent, utilities and staff costs, needed for an organisation to operate, not for specific projects or activities). If you have any queries, please contact us at grants@blcf.org.uk

OBJECTIVES

Luton 2020-2040 is a town-wide vision built around a shared ambition that by 2040, **Luton will be a healthy, fair, and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive, and no-one has to live in poverty.** For more detail, please see Appendix B.

One of the 3 underlying commitments at the heart of the **vision is to tackle inequality and build the town on fairness and social justice**. BLCF are working alongside the Fairness Task Force to identify and overcome structural barriers and enable all parts of the community to make a real difference by delivering this Participatory Budgeting programme.

BLCF are members of the [Funders for Race Equality Alliance](#) and as part of our commitment to being an equitable funder, we have agreed that all **eligible organisations serving communities experiencing racial inequity and are also led by members of those communities (majority board and management staff)** will be fast-tracked to the decision days.

The Luton Citizen's Fund has 4 key thematic areas for 2025/26 which organisations can apply to:

1) A town built on fairness and social justice

- This theme is for projects supporting and promoting equity, diversity and social inclusion.

2) Community safety and cohesion

- This theme covers those working around cohesion, tackling serious violence, domestic violence, and working to make the town safer.

3) Improving health inequalities

- This theme is to support groups who are working to improve health inequalities and the root causes of poverty across the town.
- This theme covers wider aspects of health inequalities, such as supporting individuals with debt reduction, homelessness prevention, and wellbeing (including wellbeing and social isolation).

4) Employment and skills

- This theme is for groups who are supporting individuals into work and improving their skills. We expect groups to have considered activities happening around them already before applying for this specific pot.
- We will not fund further ESOL classes or youth mentoring schemes without considerable evidence that there is additional need which is not already being met through ongoing work.

5) Increasing physical activity and active lifestyles

- This theme is for projects that create opportunities for physical activity, especially those that engage under-served groups or address barriers to participation.
- We welcome applications that promote inclusive, community-led initiatives to improve physical and mental wellbeing through movement and sport.
- This theme is supported in partnership with Be Active, who are working to inspire Luton to move more.

If your organisation is delivering activities which fit multiple themes, please contact us at grants@blcf.org.uk so that we can advise you which one to apply under.

We Fund

Registered charities and other not-for-profit groups making a positive difference to people in the community (i.e. community groups, sports groups, PTAs, etc).

You need to be able to demonstrate that you have:

- A constitution or other governing document.
- A committee of at least 3 unrelated Trustees / Directors (no-one with 'significant control').
- Good financial management and health, without large free / unrestricted funds. If you are unsure what we mean by unrestricted funds, please contact us.
- An annual organisational budget of less than £250,000 per year (excluding educational establishments).
- Not received funds from **all 3** of the most recent rounds (2, 3 & 4) of Luton Citizens' Fund, unless annual income is less than £50,000. (If you have only received funding from **less than 3** of the previous rounds, you are still eligible).
- A proposed project which has not already been funded by BLCF (or separately applied for BLCF funding).
- A clear plan to support residents in at least one of the ward areas you are bidding for.
- A comprehensive safeguarding policy (for work with children / adults at risk).
- A comprehensive equity, diversity & inclusion / equal opportunities policy.
- Sought funds from a range of sources, made efforts to become self-sustaining, and have a clear strategy for when funding ends.

If your organisation is a social enterprise (including CICs) there is specific guidance available [here](#).

We Do Not Fund

- Individuals.
- Organisations based outside of Luton (based upon your registered office address, e.g. with Charity Commission / Companies House).
- Community Interest Companies (CICs) limited by shares.
- Profit-making organisations.
- Organisations or activities that promote political parties or religion. (We do fund activities that demonstrate wider public benefit).
- Professional marketing / advertising (unless you can demonstrate that this is only to publicise the funded work to engage beneficiaries).
- Professional fundraising.
- Costs incurred prior to grant approval.
- General appeals or sponsorship.
- Animal welfare, unless the project directly benefits people.
- Trips and / or fundraising events.

Key Dates

- W/c 15/09/2025 Launch of fund and Meet the Funder event (online).
- W/c 22/09/2025 Meet the Funder event (in-person).
- 27/10/2025 Application deadline (12pm midday).

PLEASE NOTE, we reserve the right to close applications early should the fund be heavily subscribed. Please submit your application as soon as you can.

- 23/01/2026 Shortlisted applicants invited to appropriate Decision Days.
- 21/02/2026 Decision Days (10am-12:30pm).
- 24/02/2026 Applicants notified of outcomes and agreements sent out.
- 17/03/2026 Terms and conditions to be returned by successful applicants.
- 27/03/2026 Funds paid to successful applicants.
- 07/07/2026 Interim monitoring report due date.
- 31/12/2026 Deadline for funds to be spent.
- 16/01/2027 Final monitoring report due date.

Supporting Documents

We require a full budget breakdown and project plan for the project or activity. You must also upload the following supporting documents with your application:

- Annual accounts.
- Governing documents.
- Bank statement.
- Equal opportunity policy.
- Safeguarding policy.
- Trustees and directors (names, roles, confirmation of any related trustees / directors and any other potential conflicts of interest).

Monitoring & Evaluation

Successful applicants must complete interim and end-of-project monitoring reports. We will ask how you spent the grant, including providing receipts. You will need to tell us about the project outcomes, impact, important issues, and lessons learned. We will contact successful applicants to discuss progress and organise visits to help with learning and development.

All groups will be required to attend a Luton Citizen Fund Showcase on Thursday 10th September 2026 4:30-7:30pm.

Before beginning the project, please consider:

- Who will write your reports.
- Your aims and objectives.
- How you will measure progress and what information you will collect:
 - Numbers (quantitative data) – how many people use the service, goals achieved (e.g. employment, improved health).

- Stories / Case Studies (qualitative data) – user / volunteer feedback, observed increase in skills, confidence, etc.
- Learning – user / volunteer feedback, what went well, what would you do differently, etc.
- Partner feedback.

Applicant data and monitoring will be collected by BLCF. Contact details and some additional information will be shared with LBC and with CVS Bedfordshire as required.

Additional Information

All applications are thoroughly assessed, including due diligence checks (more information [here](#)). Only applications which clearly meet the fund's criteria will be presented to our panel of local volunteers. We reserve the right to decline or accept any application according to the grants panel's decision.

We encourage all applicants to explore other funding sources. Your local Community Voluntary Service (CVS) can provide funding advice. For CVS Bedfordshire, visit www.cvsbeds.org.uk

Equal Opportunities

We commit to promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity including all protected characteristics. We expect applicants to also be committed to the promotion of equality, cohesion, and inclusion.

If you have any queries, please contact us at grants@blcf.org.uk

Need Support?

If you need support or have any questions about your project, please get in touch with LBC's Social Inclusion Team who can assist and offer advice:

- Central: Beech Hill, Biscot, Dallow, and Saints -
Sanjeev.Kumar@Luton.gov.uk
- East: Round Green, Stopsley, Wigmore and Vauxhall -
Ian.Johnsen@luton.gov.uk
- North: Banfield, Bramingham Northwell, and Sundon Park -
Antoinette.Carty@luton.gov.uk
- South: Central, Farley, High Town, and South -
Sammy.Frostick@Luton.gov.uk
- West: Challney, Leagrave, Lewsey and Poets -
Riffat.Mahmood@Luton.gov.uk

Please note, the team above can not write your application for you.

If you need assistance with governance documents (safeguarding, etc), please contact the relevant team member above or CVS Bedfordshire:

danita@cvsbeds.org.uk or david@cvsbeds.org.uk

For all other enquiries, please contact grants@blcf.org.uk

Appendices

Appendix A

Participatory Budgeting (PB) was introduced circa 2011 to Luton Borough Council (LBC). Since then, successful decision day events have been held consistently with residents on an annual basis at ward and area levels. These have enabled local residents to decide which community organisations should receive grant funding to deliver community projects and services in their neighbourhoods. PB has formed a key element of the ward councillors programme previously under the banner of 'Your Say, Your Way'. Most decision days, particularly in the earlier stages of the programme, have achieved a range of consistently positive outcomes:

- Providing support to smaller, local, grassroots VCS organisations and projects.
- Positively involving a more diverse range of local citizens in local decision making.
- Positioning Ward Councillors as community leaders and enablers, and providing new fora where residents can learn about and connect with the Council's priorities.
- Offering funders and partners a direct means to include and involve residents and community organisations in their programmes.

Due to the pandemic, PB did not take place in 2020. LBC took the opportunity to **devise a new approach** to make better use of the participatory model, provide the required outcomes, use resources effectively, maximise outputs for the investments, and deliver on Council priorities.

Appendix B

During the summer of 2020, residents and organisations in Luton and the surrounding areas were consulted through virtual consultation sessions and online surveys. The consultation raised several important points for strengthening the vision, including a greater focus on aspiration and inclusion by broadening the focus from no-one in poverty to one of thriving and prosperity for all, and a greater emphasis on the short-term objectives of the vision. The vision document sets out how Luton Borough Council (LBC) will lay the foundations for the journey from 2020 to 2040 over the next five years. LBC will work together with residents and partners across Luton and the wider region to overcome the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, while beginning to deliver on our overall ambition for no-one in poverty by 2040.