

The Big Local plan

The Big Local plan describes how your area will work towards becoming an even better place to live. It captures and builds on your vision, priorities and actions. It describes how your partnership will use a range of resources in the best possible way.

This doesn't just mean telling us and the community how to use the money – Big Local is much more than the money. So the plan describes how you're going to use people, talents, ambitions, skills, energy, support, training and networks alongside the money to achieve your vision.

Your plan should build on what is already good about your area. It should explain how you will provide community-wide benefits, respond to local needs and priorities, and achieve Big Local's four outcomes.

Why do we need a Big Local plan?

A Big Local plan sets out what you want to achieve, and why, and how you are going to achieve it. It serves as a guide for ensuring your area makes Big Local happen, and as a tool for sharing the vision and inspiring others to get involved. So it should be something that people in your area can understand, relate to and be proud of.

You also need a Big Local plan to say how you intend to use your £1 million, and to be able to draw on the funds. Your plan can be produced in any format, so it is not the same as the proposal forms that you may have submitted previously. But the idea is the same in that it tells us what you want to do and what you want to achieve.

Creating a Big Local plan

What is in a Big Local plan

There's no required format for a Big Local plan - the decision is yours. Plans should be simple and straightforward, make sense, and be clear to anyone who reads them.

Think about creative ways to package your plan, including a good design to grab attention and capture the essence of what you are trying to achieve.

In Big Local Community you need to tell us:

- your vision
- budget with proposed payment schedule, usually six monthly
- date that the plan review will be submitted to Local Trust
- start and end date of the plan and therefore the grant agreement (month, year)

Within the plan itself or in the supporting information we'll want to know:

- community involvement and buy-in
- community need and opportunities
- how your plan relates to Big Local outcomes
- contribution their plan makes to lasting/sustainable change in their area

Your Big Local plan can be for as few or as many years as you like - some cover one or two years, others five. The important thing is to keep your options open and be flexible, so that you can use and respond to emerging local needs as well as technological developments (think how fast social media have transformed our world). So it's better not to plan too far ahead, but to produce regular follow-on plans instead.

How do we create a plan?

Creating your Big Local plan should build on all the work your area has done so far and the important lessons learned along the way, as well as consultations with your community and data about your local area.

It's up to you who writes the plan, providing the decisions in the plan are free of conflicts of interest.

What funding is available to create our plan?

Not every area will need the same resources to develop a Big Local plan - some rely on volunteers, but this may not be possible everywhere.

Over the lifetime of Big Local you will want to update, refresh and create new, follow-on plans as current ones become outdated. There is no additional Big Local money available to pay for this, this is within your £1m. So if you want to pay someone to create a follow-on or refreshed plan you will need to budget for this.

Assessment of Big Local plans

Your first Big Local plan

When your plan is ready, please submit it to us through [Big Local Community](#) (our funding management system).

Assessments are carried out by a member of our assessment team, checked by a senior programme coordinator, and then authorised by the head of programmes.

As part of this process, the assessor will read your Big Local plan, speak to the rep and LTO, and may involve a visit to your Big Local area to meet your partnership and discuss the plan, depending on whether it is a desk-based or visit-based assessment. They will perform a due diligence of the LTO. It usually takes a month from receipt to endorsement, but that depends on when you can speak with one of our assessors.

Here are the kinds of questions we might ask **when you submit your next Big Local plan** and why we ask them.

| What we might ask | Why we might ask it |
|---|--|
| Have you completed your plan review and sent us the evidence? | We need to know you have reviewed your earlier plan and sent us details about it. The evidence will help answer the questions below. |
| Did you complete what was in previous plan (or if not, why not)? | We want to hear what you have already done, and, if things didn't turn out as you first planned, why not. This helps us understand what you've learned and how that influences what you are now proposing. |
| What evidence is there of learning from previous experience? | We are keen to encourage reflection, which will benefit the next things you do in your area. We also want to share the learning with other Big Local areas. |
| Have the priorities changed (and, if so, why)? | We know things change, so we want to check that the priorities you plan to focus on now are relevant ones. If they've changed from the priorities in your earlier plan, we want to understand why. |
| Has the funding been spent and accounted for, and does it match the budget? | Our assessor will have your budget and will be able to compare what you said you were going to do with what actually happened. |
| How will your plan help you progress against the Big Local outcomes? | <p>This helps you and us measure your progress towards achieving the Big Local outcomes. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities will be better able to identify local needs and take action in response to them. • People will build their skills and confidence, so that they can continue to identify and respond to needs in the future. • The community will make a difference to the needs it prioritises. • People will feel that their area is an even better place to live. |
| Are the new, timescale and budget in place for your activities? | These documents are what we will endorse for your future activities, so you need to share them with us. |

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| <p>What evidence is there of community buy-in to the updated plan?</p> | <p>Just as with your earlier plan, residents in your Big Local area need to buy in to Big Local. So we want to know how they have been involved in creating your next plan.</p> |
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When we assess your plan, we also carry out due-diligence checks on your locally trusted organisation(s) and might also have a conversation with them. For more information, read our guidance on [locally trusted organisations](#).

What happens after a plan is endorsed?

Once your plan is endorsed, we write to the chair of the Big Local partnership and the LTO. The letter confirms endorsement of your plan and the amount of money we will award to your locally trusted organisation(s) on your area's behalf. The endorsement usually covers the timeline of the plan, so if your plan runs from 2020-23, that's the plan we endorse. We put together a payment schedule that sets out when your locally trusted organisation(s) will draw down funding to deliver the plan.

The letter also confirms that the plan has been endorsed, the value of funding, and the period that the agreement covers. Included in the letter will be the grant terms and conditions, along with a payment schedule. We pay the first six months of this funding once we get the signed terms and conditions back from the locally trusted organisation, and then pay further instalments every six months once the locally trusted organisation completes the monitoring forms that trigger the payments.

Towards the end of each payment period we will contact your locally trusted organisation and ask them to complete a spend report. This is so that they can update us on what's been used so far and what they expect to use in the next payment period. This will enable us to work with your locally trusted organisation to ensure they have the right amount of funding to deliver the plan. We know not every plan runs exactly to time or as set out in the payment schedule, and with your locally trusted organisation we are able to amend this timetable so that it works for you locally.

Changing your Big Local plan

Can you change your plan once it is endorsed?

Yes, you can. We expect that as the plan starts to be delivered you will learn things from your experience and want to incorporate it in your plan. If you choose to change the activities or the total amount you are drawing out, our Big Local partnership and locally trusted organisation should get in touch as soon as possible to agree these changes with us.

Moving between one plan and another

If your first Big Local plan covers the period 2020 to 2023, your follow-on plan might run from 2023 to 2025. To ensure that there are no gaps in funding, please send us the plan at least four weeks before you expect it to start.

Throughout the period of the grant we will be asking your locally trusted organisation(s) to report on spending. If, at the end of the period, there are funds remaining, you have a few options:

1. Return any underspend to Local Trust so we can close the grant agreement. This money will be added to what remains of your £1m.
2. Extend the grant agreement, so that the locally trusted organisation(s) has longer to use the money. We would do this in agreement with the partnership, and for no longer than six months.

Reviewing your Big Local plan

We want you to review your Big Local plan in a way and at a time that suits you locally. When you submit your Big Local plan to us, we will ask you to tell us when you are planning to review it. You will find more information about this in our guidance on [reviewing your Big Local plan](#).

This document will be developed over time with input from the people using this material.

If you have thoughts on how this document can be made more useful for you, particularly if you live in one of the Big Local areas, please let us know.

Local Trust

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The endowment for the Big Local programme is held by the Big Local Trust and overseen by Local Trust. The Big Local Trust was established by the National Lottery Community Fund with a National Lottery grant of £196,873,499.

If you need this document in other formats or a community language please get in touch with Local Trust and we will help you.

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