



Closing out and moving on: Essential guidance for LTOs and partnerships

Introduction

The Big Local programme will close in March 2026. This guidance has been developed to support Big Local partnerships (partnerships) and Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) to complete the close of Big Local in their area, though it is relevant to others involved in the programme. It is essential reading that includes the requirements to close Big Local in an area and provides details of considerations, preparations and actions for closing out successfully. It also covers how an area can keep connected to the wider Big Local programme and Local Trust after the final grant has been closed, up to March 2026.

It is a "live" document, which means it will be reviewed and updated from time to time. This version was updated in October 2023 to reflect a more flexible approach to supporting areas to close.

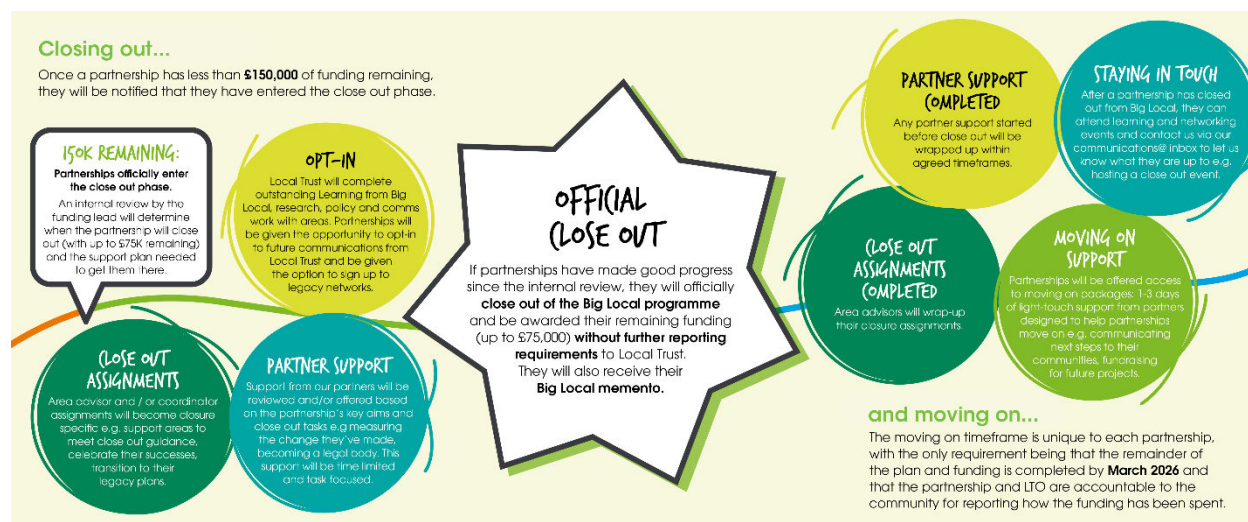
What is close out?

As delivery of an area's final plan reaches completion, the programme will need to be 'closed' at a local level. Partnerships and LTOs will need to complete the administration of the grant including funding and activities. **'Close out' means the completing administration and reporting to Local Trust of the Big Local grant in a particular Big Local area.** Local Trust will confirm in writing that an area has 'closed out' of the Big Local programme.

Close out phase

Local Trust has developed a new approach to help areas close out and move on from the programme, based on learning from the closure of the [Creative Civic Change](#) programme, and the experience of the first few Big Local areas to close out. This approach has been designed to remove the administrative burden on partnerships and LTOs in the final stages of the programme, to allow them time and resource to focus on closing out with confidence.

This infographic gives an overview of the approach.



- When a partnership has less than £150,000 of their Big Local funding remaining, they will enter the close out phase. They will be provided with support to successfully meet close out criteria and prepare for what comes next. Areas will continue to deliver and spend funds locally during this phase, in line with their Big Local Plan.
- The LTO role will stay the same for the duration of the close out phase and the terms and conditions of grant will continue to apply to the Big Local funding that LTOs hold, and until plan and funding is completed, by March 2026. The main difference is that the requirement for LTOs to report to Local Trust on final spend is waived.
- Partnerships will officially 'close out' of the programme with up to £75,000 of their Big Local funding remaining. At this point, they will no longer be required to report to Local Trust and will deliver the remainder of their funding, in line with their Big Local Plan, with oversight from their LTO. Reporting that will no longer be required includes [financial \(spend\) reports](#) as well as partnership reviews and [plan reviews](#). Local Trust will send the LTO a final grant award letter outlining the remaining funding that has been released to the LTO.
- Funding that LTOs are managing after close out will still be subject to the standard terms of grant. The only requirement after an area closes out is that the remainder of the plan and funding is completed by March 2026 and that they are accountable to the community for reporting on how funding has been spent, via publishing this information online.

Preparing to close out

Partnerships and LTOs should start to think about closing out preparations at least 12-18 months before the end of the final plan. With two and half years remaining for Big Local, as of October 2023, it is a good idea to be aware of timelines and plan for close out, even if there is more than £150k of Big Local funding left to spend. This allows time to deliver the final plan, manage local relationships, finalise any plans to continue work after Big Local and complete close out successfully. For areas aiming to close out sooner, the points in this guidance still apply, though your timeframes may be different. Please discuss any questions or concerns with your main contact at Local Trust.

[This infographic](#) is a good starting point when beginning to deliver the final plan and holding discussions on preparations. It can also be used as an early indication of what to expect when closing out.



Partnerships that are due to complete their final plan and close out in the six months leading up to March 2026 should aim to spend all funds by September 2025. This will allow time for delays or for partnerships to use any underspend and complete the close out process by March 2026. Funding **cannot** be held beyond March 2026.

To prepare for close out, partnerships and LTOs should consider, discuss and take the following actions.

Decide whether to operate after Big Local

Partnerships and individual members will need to decide whether they would like to continue to operate for the benefit of their local community after Big Local. As a partnership, it's worth discussing and reaching a decision as early as possible so that any closure or amendment steps can take place in time and to access support for the

agreed next steps. There is no expectation or requirement that the work of a partnership continues and it is up to them to make the decision.

If members of the partnership do wish to continue to operate for the benefit of the local community after Big Local and wish to do so using their current structure, the governing document of the partnership must be reviewed to confirm what amendments need to take place to provide for this. Partnerships can access [support](#) and [guidance](#) on setting up legal bodies if they decide a legal body is the best form for future work.

Access support

Accessing support well in advance of close out is recommended and can take a number of forms. Local Trust recommends partnerships:

- Meet with the Big Local area advisor or coordinator early on to discuss, agree and plan the support needed from them; and to go through the close out checklist.
- Access any support needed through [Make it Happen](#) or via local providers. Visit this [webpage](#) detailing the offers partnerships may find useful as they approach close out.
- Read or revisit relevant programme guidance that will help with delivering the final plan (including legacy plans) and with closing out.
- Contact the area's funding team lead with any grant queries, including how remaining funds can be spent. If the area is approaching a balance of £150k, Local Trust will be in touch to introduce the close out phase and discuss options. Areas that have already reached £75k will be contacted in autumn 2023.

Consider how to manage relationships and communications

It's likely that the partnership will have built up several relationships and connections through Big Local and it is a good idea to consider and agree messaging to partners, local organisations and the wider community before close out. This could include communicating to people in the local area when close out is anticipated to happen, information about plans for legacy and the impact Big Local funding has had. Support to communicate close out is available with our [communications support partner](#). It's important to contact Local Trust as early as possible to discuss accessing support.

Make preparations to complete the close out checklist

Understanding and preparing for completing the close out checklist early on can help make the process run smoothly. It's essential that partnerships and LTOs work together closely on this and are aware of their own and each other's responsibilities.

Partnerships and LTOs will need to:

- Review the close out checklist and meet to plan and prepare for completing the requirements.
- Local Trust will contact the partnership and LTO about the close out date, particularly as the area approaches having £150k of Big Local funding remaining.
- Review all open grants, service level agreements and contracts and note end dates and termination notice periods.
- Decide who will act as the designated contact within the partnership for closing out and notify Local Trust, with contact details.

- Notify Local Trust as soon as possible if any major delays, complications or disruptions to the timescale of delivery arise or are anticipated.

Contribute to Learning from Big Local

Local Trust is recording each Big Local area's story of change and their achievements. This will be shared on a website, called Learning from Big Local, that will exist beyond the end of the programme. Each Big Local area's story of change will sit alongside learning from across the programme so that others can continue to learn from Big Local and incorporate resident-led approaches in their work.

Big Local plans and plan reviews, including any final plan review will contribute to these area profiles. Partnerships may also have the opportunity to engage with the research team at Local Trust to add to their stories of change and reflect on their journey and achievements. This may be through a workshop with the partnership, interviews with a small number of partnership members or an alternative approach.

Consider how to move on from Big Local

Whether or not there are plans to continue work for the community after Big Local, the end of the programme will signify a change for the partnership and for individual members. Responses to the programme ending will vary and partnerships and individuals may want to consider how to manage reactions to the change.

Plan to mark achievements

Many Big Local areas are recognising the importance of marking and communicating the achievements and contributions of the partnership, volunteers and wide range of partners in delivering the programme. Spending more than £1m is a huge achievement and an opportunity to communicate the great work of the partnership, legacy plans and the impact of Big Local in the area. If partnerships are considering ways to mark the successful delivery of their Big Local plan or reaching close out, they can visit [this page](#) for some ideas.

Getting support to close out

Partnerships will be primarily supported to close out by their Big Local area advisor or coordinator. This support will run up until close out is confirmed. Support will also be available through the Make It happen support offers. the majority of this support will be completed before an area closes out, but some 'moving on' support may continue to be accessed post-close out, but will need to be agreed before close out.

This infographic illustrates support at various stages:

MAKE IT HAPPEN WITH Big Local

Get the support you need to successfully deliver your plan and close out of the programme with confidence



Support will be tailored to the specific needs of a partnership and may include:

- helping partnerships understand their roles and responsibilities relating to close out and work through the close out checklist
- sharing tips, advice or examples of good practice for close out actions
- talking through areas of concern and supporting partnerships in trying to deal with obstacles
- helping partnerships to delegate and allocate closing out tasks between members
- supporting partnerships in planning to continue to operate for the benefit their local community following close out, if they are planning to do so
- providing options and information for partnerships to access other support beyond that offered by Local Trust

LTOs should be in close contact with their funding team lead to ask any questions on close out planning or concerns or to request support. For example, reporting obligations to Local Trust that may have arisen under the grant terms and conditions or questions relating to grant spend or administrative logistics. Where an area closes with funding remaining, this will also include the LTO's obligations for the remaining spend.

Further information on support during the close out phase can be found [here](#).

Partnerships and LTOs are encouraged to review the [events calendar](#), and to attend events on close out and beyond.

The [Make it Happen](#) webpage may be a useful resource for partnerships and LTOs during the approach to close out, to help consider what additional support may also be relevant.

Successfully achieving close out

In order for a partnership and LTO to close out, Local Trust must have formally confirmed the completion of the administration of the Big Local programme in their area. Close out does not automatically occur on an anticipated close out date.

It is important for partnerships and LTOs to ensure they have addressed all the items in the close out checklist, and any other concerns or queries from Local Trust, on or before their anticipated close out date. Otherwise, close out is likely to be delayed. The close out checklist applies where closing out with some Big Local funding remaining has been agreed.

Close out checklist

The table below outlines the various steps that need to be completed in advance of close out. The table clarifies who is responsible for completion of each step and provides explanatory information in relation to those steps. An indicative timeline is set out, however it is important to be aware of remaining funds alongside the timeline and plan ahead to ensure local obligations and the LTO's responsibilities can be completed by the time Big Local funding is spent.

Requirement	Who is responsible?	Explanation	Timeline
1. The employment position for any staff working to advance the Big Local plan must be appropriately managed	LTO	<p>If individuals are employed to support the development and delivery of a Big Local plan, the employing organisation (whether it is the LTO itself, or a third party receiving grants from the LTO) must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the employment contracts and its legal obligations to these employees, particularly in relation to the termination of their employment • where they decide employment is to cease when Big Local funding is spent, make appropriate and timely provision for terminating employment contracts, or for their transfer to another employer under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. Planning for this should be clear and agreed at the point of close out. <p>Where employment is to terminate, necessary action includes dealing with final payroll and benefits, redundancy and pension requirements.</p> <p>LTOs need to be alert to redundancy costs, include them in budgets and spending plans and report on this in the final spend report to Local Trust. (This may include termination payments to the employee and/or the costs of HR support for consultation meetings).</p>	Final 12 months

Requirement	Who is responsible?	Explanation	Timeline
		<p>LTOs are responsible for informing third party employing organisations that closing out is underway, and of the anticipated close out date. LTOs are also responsible for notifying such organisations of the requirements of this section of the close out checklist and monitoring their adherence to these requirements. If an LTO has concerns about this, it should notify the Local Trust funding team, and consider its rights, remedies and options under its agreement with the third party organisation.</p> <p>Local Trust's guidance on workers and Big Local contains more information in relation to employment considerations for LTOs.</p>	
<p>2. Any assets funded by Big Local grant monies must be protected in accordance with Local Trust's asset guidance</p>	<p>Partnership and LTO</p>	<p>The intention is that the legacy, impact and benefits of a Big Local plan will continue long beyond close out. It is therefore important that any assets related to a Big Local plan are properly protected (now and for the future), so that they can benefit the local community in the way they were intended to after close out.</p> <p>If any large physical assets (such as buildings) have been obtained as a result of Big Local grant funding, the partnership and LTO must ensure these assets are currently being held and used, and will continue to be held and used, only for the charitable purposes for which they were acquired.</p> <p>Local Trust's assets guidance outlines in detail the requirements for safeguarding large assets funded by Big Local. This guidance must be reviewed carefully by relevant partnerships and LTOs, and its requirements must be applied to any such assets acquired as a result of Big Local funds.</p> <p>LTOs should ensure proper records of documents relating to all Big Local funded assets are kept. The grant terms and conditions state that LTOs must retain records for a period of 7 years after Big Local grants are spent.</p> <p>Any equipment and/or sundries, such as vehicles, gazebos, laptops, printers, marketing materials, acquired from Big Local funds must have been dealt with in accordance with the Big Local plan.</p>	<p>Final 12 months</p>

Requirement	Who is responsible?	Explanation	Timeline
3. Data protection legislation (including GDPR requirements) must have been complied with	LTO and partnerships	The guidance on GDPR provides information and further links on how to comply. Data protection legislation must be complied with by LTOs and partnerships.	Final 9 months
4. All contracts, agreements and grants relating to Big Local must be reviewed and appropriately wound down	Partnership and LTO	<p>The LTO can refer to guidance on Managing Big Local Funding, and Locally Trusted Organisations.</p> <p>Any contracts or agreements entered into by an LTO in relation to the Big Local programme must have been appropriately wound down when delivery is complete and funds are spent in full. Notice periods and requisite steps for termination should be checked carefully. In the case of any contracts or agreements where the other party has breached its obligations, appropriate remedial action must have been taken and issues resolved prior to completing delivery and spending all Big Local funds.</p> <p>This is particularly important where an LTO has taken a premises lease on behalf of the partnership, and is also relevant where an LTO has entered into contracts for items like utility supplies, cleaning, and/or web hosting.</p> <p>The LTO and the partnership must have considered all recipients of Big Local grant funds, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed each grantee's use of the Big Local funds, and satisfied themselves that this was in accordance with what was required • ensured that each grantee has provided appropriate records and information about how they have used their grant, to enable a final spend report to be completed. 	Final 9 months

Requirement	Who is responsible?	Explanation	Timeline
5. All obligations, commitments or conditions relating to the partnership's and LTO's relationship or agreements with Local Trust must have been met (or waived)	Partnership and LTO	<p>The LTO will need to have reviewed the grant terms and conditions (including the award letters) and ensured that all its obligations to Local Trust, including in relation to reporting to Local Trust and the expenditure of grant funds (and, if relevant, the return of any grant funds), have been adhered to.</p> <p>The partnership will need to have ensured any obligations and commitments that it has made to Local Trust have been met and any procedures or conditions agreed with Local Trust have been complied with, unless Local Trust has agreed otherwise. The partnership's obligations include completion of delivery of all aspects of the Big Local plan.</p> <p>Close out is separate to termination of the grant terms and conditions between Local Trust and an LTO and does not affect any of the rights and obligations with the grant terms and conditions.</p>	Final 3 months
6. Partnership closure plans, or amendment plans, must have been agreed by the partnership and be in place		<p>The partnership's closure or amendment steps and timings must have been agreed by the partnership, in liaison with the LTO.</p> <p>Partnerships that are not continuing in some form beyond close out must have wound down financially, according to procedures agreed with the LTO.</p> <p>Partnerships that are continuing to operate for the benefit of the local community must have transitioned to a new form according to its own policies and financial procedures, agreed with the LTO.</p> <p>If those forming a partnership wish to continue to operate using their current structure, they must have amended their governing document. These amendments must reflect the reality that the organisation will no longer be a Big Local partnership. Use of the Big Local name and logo must be in line with guidelines. Local Trust will be protecting the Big Local name and logo after 2026 to ensure it is not used inappropriately by organisations that have no legitimate connection to the programme. For this reason, it's important that Big Local areas check that their name and logo can be used longer term by referring to the guidance.</p>	Final 3 months

Requirement	Who is responsible?	Explanation	Timeline
7. The partnership and LTO must have provided Local Trust with all evidence and documents required to close out	Partnership and LTO	<p>The following documents must be provided to Local Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The completed Big Local plan review - unless otherwise agreed with Local Trust. Local Trust may discuss waiving the formal need for a final plan review as the area enters the close out phase, but partnerships may find it helpful for their own learning and to recognise achievements to complete it. • The final spend report, which accounts for all expenditure of Big Local grant funds by the LTO; unless otherwise agreed with Local Trust. This must match the expenditure specified within the Big Local plan and the LTO's own records. LTOs will need to keep financial records of how the partnership spent the grant for a period of seven years. All expenditure needs to include VAT where applicable. Local Trust will discuss with the partnership and LTO how this will apply during the close out phase. • (If relevant) details of how any large physical assets acquired as a result of Big Local funds are being appropriately held and used in accordance with Local Trust's guidance, and the safeguards in place to ensure this will continue beyond close out. • (If relevant) any information or evidence requested by Local Trust during closing out, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to demonstrate obligations, conditions or commitments of the partnership or LTO have been complied with ○ to show that income held by an LTO for the Big Local programme that was not provided by Local Trust has been properly applied ○ relating to income held by Local Trust in relation to the Big Local area. • The LTO's audited accounts or management accounts covering the duration of the LTO's receipt of and expenditure of Big Local grant funds. 	Final 3 months

Guidance on income from other sources (if applicable to the Big Local area)

If the LTO is holding income for an area that falls outside of the restricted Big Local pot, the partnership will need to decide with the LTO how the funds will be managed and spent as per the normal obligations depending on the funding source and type. This may be through donating funding to a local organisation or asking the LTO to hold it in reserves. In both cases, it is recommended that a local agreement is put in place that includes how it will be monitored. Funds must only be used for the purposes for which they were given.

If Local Trust is holding any income for a Big Local area that falls outside of the Big Local programme budget (for example, repayments received from a social investment agreement), the LTO must contact the funding team lead in order to discuss and agree how this income will be applied.

What happens when the final grant is closed?

If all the requirements detailed in the close out checklist have been met, and Local Trust has no outstanding concerns or queries, Local Trust will confirm to the partnership and LTO that close out has successfully taken place.

Where Local Trust agrees the final funding as part of the close out phase, the terms and conditions of grant continue to apply. At this point, the LTO will no longer be required to report to Local Trust and the partnership will no longer need to complete the annual partnership review or plan review. The area will deliver the remainder of their funding, in line with the Big Local plan, with oversight from the LTO and with accountability to the community, until the funding related to the final grant agreement is spent in full.

From the moment close out occurs, or as the close out phase is completed, the partnership will cease to be a 'Big Local partnership': partnerships will no longer be required to meet our partnership criteria (at least 8 members, 51%+ residents), but may for example wish to elect a small voluntary monitoring group to oversee any final expenditure. An LTO will continue to operate as an LTO, and be responsible for the funds under the terms and conditions of grant, until the plan has been delivered and funds spent in full, including delivery by third party organisations. At this point, the LTO will cease to be a 'locally trusted organisation'.

If some or all of the members of a partnership wish to continue to work together for the benefit of their local community after close out, this is something Local Trust would encourage and support. They will need to adhere to Local Trust's [use of name and logo guidance](#), including its requirements for ceasing to use the name and logo without prior agreement.

Keeping in touch after closing out

To enable a smooth transition from Big Local and provide continued support and networking opportunities for ongoing or future work, Local Trust will provide access to

some support offers for partnerships that have closed out. This page details network opportunities you can sign up to for support after you have close out.

Local Trust also recognises that knowledge and experience from partnerships and LTOs following close out will be valuable to other partnerships and LTOs as they continue to operate, as well as for other organisations or groups outside of the Big Local programme working to deliver benefits to their local community.

LTOs can keep in touch by signing up to the Local Trust newsletter.

Partnership members can opt-In to future communications. A sign up form will be sent by email once an area is in the close out phase. Partnership members can choose to keep in touch about the following:

- **Learning and networking events:** Find out about attending online and face-to-face learning and networking events to keep building the community's skills and capacity
- **Visits to the area:** Local Trust may get in touch about visiting the area, to see the impact of work through the Big Local programme and beyond
- **Policy events and advocacy opportunities:** Find out about opportunities to attend or participate in policy and campaign events, and how to contribute to shaping the future of neighbourhood renewal by being part of our policy and advocacy panel
- **Participating in research:** Find out about opportunities to be involved in future Big Local research, such as surveys, workshops or interviews
- **Local Trust newsletter:** Receive the monthly email newsletter, with all the latest updates from Local Trust and Big Local

Workplace: Individuals can continue to make use of [Workplace](#) to network with other areas to help increase connections and benefit further from peer sharing.

Local Insight: [Local Insight](#) is an online platform that allows users to access open-source data specific to a Big Local area in a simple and visual way. Data is available on themes such as jobs and economy, population, services and housing. This tool would be of benefit to successor organisations seeking further funding. Visit our [webpage](#) to find out more about Local Insight.

Social media: Keep connected and informed with news and opportunities through [Facebook](#), [X](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

Useful links and guidance

The following associated webpages provide more information relevant to closing out:

- [Close out and Big Local legacy](#)
- [Closing out and moving on approach](#)
- [Close out overview - infographic](#)

- [Close out FAQs](#)
- [Legacy network offers from Local Trust](#)
- [Wider networks for support after close out](#)
- [Ideas for communicating your close out](#)

It is recommended that this guidance is read alongside other guidance:

- [The Big Local plan](#)
- [Grant terms and conditions](#)
- [Managing Big Local funding](#)
- [Using the Big Local name and logo](#)
- [Setting up a new legal body](#) – for partnerships planning to set up a legacy organisation before Big Local funding ends
- [Assets and Big Local](#) – essential for partnerships that have or intend to acquire or invest in large physical assets
- [Workers and Big Local](#) – essential for employing organisations
- [VAT and Big Local](#) - essential for LTOs
- [Plan reviews](#)

Appendix I: Accessing Big Local learning events after closing out

Partnership members that are continuing to operate for the benefit of the community may find it beneficial to attend learning and networking events after close out. We welcome this and have set out below how this will work. After an area closes out:

- It will be possible to attend selected online learning and networking events. For attendance at face-to-face event expenses (such as travel) would no longer be covered by Local Trust.
- Attendance at in person events will be limited to two people per former Big Local area. If an event is oversubscribed, current Big Local areas will be given priority.
- Attendance at online events will remain free of charge.
- It won't be possible to access bespoke support, training or chair and worker network events.