

UK Community Renewal Fund: prospectus 2021-2022

We explain the UK Community Renewal Fund priorities, submission and assessment of proposals and points to note for authorities.

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This article is taken from May's public matters newsletter. [Click here to view more articles from this issue.](#)

Introduction

Following the UK's departure from the European Union (EU) and the Covid-19 pandemic, it is now time for national recovery. The UK government released updated guidance on 7th March 2021: [UK Community Renewal Fund: Prospectus 2021-22](#) (Prospectus) to detail their plans for funding under the UK Community Renewal Fund (UK CRF) which will prepare the UK for the UK government's long term funding plan, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF). The Prospectus sets out how funding obtained through the UK CRF can be used, how to submit a bid for funding, the assessment criteria which bids will be measured against and the main aims of the fund.

The UK SPF will be launching in 2022, with the UK government estimating that they will invest around £1.5billion per year through this scheme. The UK SPF aims to unite and level up the whole country, funding places and people most in need. Further details on the UK SPF will be released shortly within a UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Framework.

The Prospectus and this article focus on the UK CRF. This is being implemented for the 2021/2022 financial year only, to help the UK prepare for the introduction of the UK SPF by supporting local areas in piloting new approaches and plans. The remainder of this article will focus on the aims of the UK CRF, how bids for funding under this can be made and will be assessed.

UK CRF Investment Priorities

The UK CRF is focused on four Investment Priorities, detailed below. Proposals may align with one or more of these Investment Policies and must always, regardless of which Investment Policy applies, evidence that their project does not conflict with wider UK government policy.

1. Investment in Skills;

Aim:

To equip people with skills needed to seize new opportunities and to ensure local communities are prosperous and productive.

Proposals:

The UK government are keen to see Proposals for innovative projects which address both current and emerging local skills needs; therefore, Proposals may include plans to address the following opportunities:

2. work-based training;
3. retraining, upskilling and reskilling members of the workforce; or
4. promotion of the advancement of digital skills and inclusion.

5. Investment for Local Business;

Aim:

To help local residents by providing opportunities for increased employment, better training and in-work opportunities and by creating new entrepreneurial ventures.

Proposals:

The UK government, wanting to create an innovative culture across the UK, have a particular interest in receiving Proposals which target support for under-represented groups and community level investment, which could increase opportunity for all individuals, including coastal and rural enterprises. Proposals could, for example:

6. find new ways to promote green and tech adoption; or
7. promote commercialisation.

The UK government are equally interested in Proposals that address local business and innovation needs; bids may therefore include:

8. support for entrepreneurs and local businesses to create new job opportunities for current and new employees; or
9. support for decarbonisation measures.

Any Proposal submitted in line with this Investment Priority should demonstrate how their project links to local economic and business need.

10. Investment in Communities and Place;

Aim:

To maximise opportunities to bring people together, build our social fabric and boost recovery and resilience. This is in order to promote communities which are at the heart of our cultural and economic heritage and identity; to in turn create areas in which people want to work, visit and live.

Proposals:

The UK government are interested in projects with pilots which address community needs and support local areas. Proposals may therefore include:

11. feasibility studies for delivering net zero and local energy projects; or
12. plans to improve green spaces and preserve important local assets.

Any Proposal should evidence a link to the local community and/or social or economic needs in the area.

13. Supporting people into Employment.

Aim:

To reduce the additional barriers faced by individuals so they are able to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Investment will help to support those individuals furthest from the labour market, who find it difficult to engage with or are not able to access the mainstream provisions in place to find employment.

Proposals:

Any proposed project shall be in addition to any current public support and must complement mainstream activity (for example, the Kickstart Scheme, the Restart Programme etc). Proposals shall also include plans to work with the local community and voluntary sectors and provide a combined and coordinated service for those individuals finding employment.

The UK government is particularly interested in Proposals for innovative pilots and projects which focus on delivery of bespoke programmes and utilisation of a needs-based approach in order to assist those with barriers to gain employment. Bids may therefore include:

14. support for people to engage with local services which will support them on their journey towards employment; or
15. plans to support people to gain the basic skills required to develop their potential for sustainable work.

Proposals must demonstrate a link to the local labour market and employability needs.

Submission and Assessment of Proposals

All areas in the UK are eligible to apply for funding under the UK CRF. All bids must be submitted to; and will be managed by; the lead authority in that area, who will be either the:

- Mayoral Combined Authorities, where they exist in England;
- The Greater London Authority;
- County Councils; and
- Unitary Authorities elsewhere in England and in Scotland and Wales.

The lead authority will select a shortlist of project bids which must be submitted by noon on Friday 18th June 2021, via email to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk). Any bids not submitted via the lead authority or submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

The UK government has identified 100 priority places in the UK which, based on economic resilience (measuring productivity, household income, unemployment, skills and population density), are most in need and likely require investment; however, being listed as a priority place does not guarantee funding. Lead authorities in priority places will receive capacity funding to assist with management of bids, this will not be available in other places. A full list of the 100 priority places, including the named lead authority, can be found [here](#). A different approach will be taken to distribute funding within Northern Ireland and Gibraltar.

The Proposals submitted will be reviewed against the assessment criteria, detailed at part 6 of the Prospectus. All bids will firstly be reviewed against the 'UK-wide gateway criteria' and must pass all of these criteria to be considered for selection. Bids meeting the gateway criteria will then be assessed against the 'UK-wide selection criteria', with applications being sifted depending on themes of strategic fit and deliverability, efficiency and effectiveness. Should the bids be successful at this stage, ministers are able to then exercise their discretion to check that the bids meet additional considerations (which differ slightly between Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

Should you be successful in your bid for funding, following conclusion of the selection process, then you will be notified of this in late July 2021. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will then enter into agreements with lead authorities (for an agreed package of projects) or individual project deliverers (successful project applicants in Northern Ireland), with the first tranche of funding flowing from this shortly afterwards.

Points to note:

Project shortlists must be submitted via a lead authority to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by **noon on Friday 18th June 2021**.

Further guidance for lead authorities on how to manage Proposals, as well as details on eligibility for capacity funding (only available in priority places), will be made available later on this year.

Full details on applying for funding through the UK SPF shall be released in a UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Framework later this year, with the full profile of details on this to be confirmed at the next Spending Review.

Further clarification of the content in the Prospectus Guidance can be obtained by contacting UKCommunityRenewalFund@communities.gov.uk. It has been advised that any frequently asked questions and answers will be published online.

Should you be considering a bid for funding under the UK CRF, please do get in touch and we would be delighted to assist you with your project and Proposal.

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