Better Futures Fund Round 1 - Application Form Guidance and Questions

The Better Futures Fund Round 1 application process will involve completing an initial application form in order to check eligibility. Following this, if you pass eligibility, you will then be invited to develop a full application with two members of our Grant Assessment team. The full application will be judged against a set of Assessment Criteria that will dive deeply into theory of change, contract design, commitment to learning, impact, and readiness, and will be presented to a Grants Committee who will make the final decision on which projects receive funding.

This document contains additional information on definitions and an offline version of the application form questions. If you have any further questions or need support completing the application form, please contact **enquiries@sibgroup.org.uk**

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Application Form Questions

Page 1 – Application Form Guidance

This page contains useful information about the fund, a general overview of the eligibility criteria for the fund and a link to the key definitions used in the eligibility criteria. There is also a link to a form to register your interest in receiving more information about future rounds of Better Futures Fund if you are not eligible for round 1.

The **Better Futures Fund** (BFF) is a **£500 million outcomes fund** designed to support up to **200,000 children**, **young people and their families** across England over a 10-year period. The fund brings together government, local communities, charities, social enterprises, commissioners, investors and philanthropists to deliver place-based solutions to complex social challenges. It is expected to leverage significant additional investment and funding to improve outcomes and tackle the root causes of child poverty.

The fund will support **Social Outcomes Partnerships** (SOPs), where funding is linked to the achievement of agreed outcomes and measurable improvements in people's lives. Projects are expected to focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families, while addressing underlying drivers of poverty and disadvantage.

This application form is for Round 1 of Better Futures Fund and will provide up to £37 million of government match funding towards the Better Futures Fund objectives.

The first round is aimed at organisations with prior experience of participating in Social Outcomes Partnerships and existing SOP projects that are ready to deliver.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- be part of the impact economy, including purpose-led organisations and commissioners;
- have a track record of delivering Social Outcomes Partnerships; and
- demonstrate a clear link between their proposed project and child poverty outcomes.

Is this fund right for you?

The Better Futures Fund is intended to support **Social Outcomes Partnerships** (SOPs) and is aimed at organisations and partnerships that are developing or delivering outcomes-based programmes for children, young people and families.

Applications may involve charities, social enterprises, public sector organisations, private organisations, commissioners, investors and delivery partners working collaboratively. Organisations should be able to demonstrate strong partnerships, a clear focus on measurable outcomes, and the capacity to participate in an outcomes-based programme.

This fund is unlikely to be suitable for organisations seeking funding solely for general organisational costs, standalone projects, or early-stage ideas that are not yet supported by established partnerships, delivery plans, and a clear outcomes framework.

Not ready for Round 1?

Round 1 is aimed at organisations and partnerships that already have experience of delivering Social Outcomes Partnerships (SOPs) and have projects that are sufficiently developed to begin delivery within six months of funding approval.

If, after reviewing the eligibility criteria and guidance, you believe your organisation is **not yet ready for Round 1** but may be developing a suitable opportunity for the future, then please do register your interest.

Please click here to register your interest.

By providing your contact details, you consent to the Better Futures Fund team and relevant delivery partners contacting you with information about future funding opportunities, including **Round 2**, guidance, events, and other support that may help you prepare a future application.

Please note that registering your interest does not constitute an application and does not guarantee eligibility for future funding rounds.

Key Definitions and Guidance

For Round 1, applicants must be operating within the impact economy and seeking to improve outcomes for children, young people and families through outcomes-based approaches.

Before completing this Expression of Interest, applicants should familiarise themselves with the key definitions and guidance

Expression of Interest

This Expression of Interest (EOI) is the first stage of the application process. It is intended to help us understand your organisation, your proposed project, and its potential fit with the Better Futures Fund.

This Expression of Interest should be completed by the lead organisation on behalf of the proposed partnership. We welcome applications from individual organisations and partnership-led proposals where multiple organisations are working together to deliver outcomes. Details of known partners will be requested later in the application.

For Round 1, we expect applicants to have:

1. A relatively well-developed project, partnership or service model.
2. The ability to begin delivery within 6 months of funding approval.
3. The lead applicant, or at least one named partner in the application, should be able to demonstrate a track record of delivering a previous Social Outcomes Partnership related to child poverty outcomes.
4. Strong local partnerships and stakeholder engagement arrangements.
5. A focus on delivering measurable outcomes for children, young people and families.
6. Appropriate governance, capacity and resources to participate in a Social Outcomes Partnership.
7. Credible access to match funding from public bodies, charitable grants or others for at least an equivalent amount to that requested from the fund.

Successful applicants may be invited to progress to the next stage of the application and assessment process, where more detailed information will be requested.

The Better Futures Fund is a programme of the **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport** (DCMS). Further information about the fund, its objectives and timelines is available on **GOV.UK**.

Need Help?

You can save your progress at any time and return to your application later. Simply tick the **Save my progress and resume later** checkbox at the top/bottom of the form. To go back to a form you have previously saved, please click the **Resume a previously saved form** link at the top/bottom of the page.

If you have any questions about the Better Futures Fund or need support completing this Expression of Interest, please contact us at **enquiries@sibgroup.org.uk** or call **+44 (0)204 591 2400**. Our team will be happy to help and direct your enquiry to the appropriate colleague.

Our office hours are **Monday to Friday**, **9:00am to 5:00pm**. Further information is available at **www.sibgroup.org.uk**.

Page 2 – Eligibility Confirmation

This page contains a list of the eligibility criteria for BFF Round 1. The applicant must confirm they meet the requirements for each of these and this will be reviewed by the assessment team following submission of the application form.

Eligibility Check

Before proceeding, please confirm that your organisation and proposed project meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the Better Futures Fund.

These questions are intended to establish basic eligibility only and do not form part of the assessment process. **If you cannot confirm all of the requirements below, your organisation is unlikely to be eligible for funding through this programme**.

Further guidance on the Better Futures Fund, including programme objectives and applicant expectations, is available on **GOV.UK**.

1. England-Based Delivery

The proposed project will primarily deliver services and outcomes for children, young people and/or families in England.

2. Social Outcomes Partnership

The proposed project is intended to be delivered through, or developed into, a Social Outcomes Partnership (SOP) or another outcomes-based funding model.

3. Target Beneficiaries

The proposed project is focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and/or families.

4. Previous Social Outcomes Partnership Experience

The lead applicant, or at least one named partner involved in the proposed project, has a track record of participating in a previous Social Outcomes Partnership (SOP), focused on child poverty outcomes.

Only applications that include a partner with a track record in a previous SOP related to child poverty outcomes are eligible for Round 1. If none of the proposed partners can meet this requirement, please wait for further information regarding future rounds of the Better Futures Fund.

5. Legal Status

The applicant organisation is legally constituted and is able to enter into funding, contractual and due diligence arrangements if required.

6. Collaborative Delivery

The applicant has a well-advanced plan to raise match funding from public bodies, charitable grants or others for at least an equivalent amount to that requested from the fund, and the ability to begin delivery within 6 months of receiving a decision on BFF funding.

Page 3 – Primary Contact Details

This page requests contact details for the application. Any communication regarding this application will be sent to the primary contact details. If these change after submission of your application, please contact **enquiries@sibgroup.org.uk**.

Primary Contact

You will be the main point of contact for this application. Should your application progress, we may ask for additional contacts, including finance contacts and authorised organisational signatories, for due diligence, legal documentation, and payment purposes.

Please provide a direct, monitored email address (not a generic inbox such as info@), as we may contact you about important updates that require a timely response.

The details provided below will be used for all communications relating to this application and the fund. You can ask us to update the contact details at any time.

Details that will be requested (* means compulsory question):

- First Name*
- Last Name*
- Email Address*
- Position*
- Phone Number
- A option to select if you are happy to be contacted by phone or email about other relevant funding opportunities and sector updates.

Page 4 – Lead Organisation Details

This page requests information about the lead organisation completing the application form. It requests legal form, postcode and charity/company number where relevant. It also asks about board and senior leadership diversity.

Organisational Details

These questions are about the lead applicant. There will be further opportunity to provide information about partners on the project.

Details that will be requested (* means compulsory question):

- What is the organisation's legal name?* (*This is the official name registered with Companies House or other regulators.)*
- Does your organisation use another name in day-to-day use (a trading name)?* (Yes/No question, selecting Yes results in another question, “What name do you trade under?”)
- What type of organisation are you? (Legal Form)*
  (Where relevant this may bring up another question asking for the Company Registration Number)
- Is your organisation a registered charity?* (Yes/No Question, selecting Yes results in another question asking for the Charity Registration Number)
- Organisation Postcode*
- Is your organisation part of a Group?* (Yes/No Question, selecting Yes results in another question: “Please list the names of the other organisations in your group”)
  Select “Yes” if your organisation is part of a larger organisation or is owned or controlled by another.
- Please provide a brief overview of your organisation, including what you do, who you support, how you deliver your services, and how your organisation is funded.* (This is an open text field with a 250 word limit)
- Is this organisation the legal entity that will receive the funds and enter into the funding agreement?* (Yes/No Question)
  If you are applying on behalf of another organisation that will receive the funds and be legally responsible, you will be asked to provide their details during the assessment stage.

Board and Senior Leadership Diversity

We collect equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data to better understand the organisations supported by this fund.

This information helps us monitor the reach of our funding, identify potential barriers to access, and inform future programme development. **Data is analysed in aggregate** and used for reporting, evaluation and learning purposes.

For further information on how SIB uses diversity data, please visit our **Diversity Data Dashboard**.

For the purposes of this section, people whose day-to-day activities are limited by a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness are considered disabled.

Completion of these questions is voluntary but encouraged.

What percentage of your board and senior leadership team identify as:

(These questions are compulsory on the form, but there is a drop down option to select Prefer not to say or We do not have this information. The other options are: 0%, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%.

- Women
- LGBTQ+
- Disabled
- Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic

Page 5 – Partnership and Project Information

This page of the application form asks questions about the project itself and the partners involved at this point. We understand some details may not be finalised, but it provides assessors with a better understanding of the project. If the application is eligible, then you will be contacted by a team of assessors to gather more in-depth information about the project.

Partnership and Project Information

This section is intended to help us understand your proposed Social Outcomes Partnership, the organisations involved, the outcomes you are seeking to achieve, and the current stage of project development.

Please provide as much information as is known at this stage. We recognise that partnership arrangements, commissioner engagement and project details may continue to develop as proposals progress.

Round 1 of the Better Futures Fund is intended for projects that are relatively well developed and capable of mobilising at pace. The information provided in this section will help us understand the readiness, scale and delivery experience of the proposed partnership.

You will be asked to provide:

- Information about your organisation's role within the proposed Social Outcomes Partnership.
- Details of the proposed commissioner(s) or outcome payer(s).
- A summary of the proposed project and intended outcomes.
- Information about the geographical areas where delivery is expected to take place.

- Details of known partners and their role within the partnership.
- Relevant experience of participating in previous Social Outcomes Partnerships.

Please provide concise but sufficiently detailed responses to support assessment of your proposal. Where information is not yet confirmed, please provide your current expectations or best estimate.

Details that will be requested (* means compulsory question):

- What role will your organisation take within the proposed Social Outcomes Partnership?* (Drop down options of Commissioner, Provider and Intermediary)
- Please provide a brief overview of your proposed project, including the target cohort, outcomes, and scale* (Word limit of 400)
  Your response should include: Target cohort, Proposed intervention or service model, Intended outcomes, Scale of delivery, How the project will help address child poverty and improve outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Who is the potential commissioner/outcome payer/s for this project and what stage are you at with securing commitment?* (Word limit of 400)
- Which geographical areas do you expect the project to operate within?* (Word limit of 400)
  Please be specific with the scale of geographical area (e.g. local neighbourhood or Local Authority)
- Which organisation or partner in this application has previous experience of delivering a social outcomes partnership related to child poverty outcomes? Please provide a brief overview of this project.* (Word limit of 400)
- Please list all known partners involved in the proposed project at this stage.* (Word limit of 1000)
  For each organisation, include:
    - 1. Organisation name
    - 2. Organisation type or legal structure
    - 3. Role within the project (Commissioner, Provider, Intermediary)
    - 4. A brief description of their involvement and responsibilities

Page 6 – Declaration

This is the final page of the application form and contains a declaration that you must confirm you have read and understood in order to submit your application form. A copy of the declaration is below.

By submitting this form, you confirm that the information provided is true, complete and accurate to the best of your knowledge. You also confirm that you are authorised to submit this application on behalf of the organisation.

By applying to this fund, you consent to the sharing of your information (including your name, contact details, organisational information, and relevant financial information) with the fund partners for the purposes of assessing, administering and managing the fund.

Your information may also be shared, where necessary, with the fund's investors, advisers, agents, contractors, auditors and service providers involved in the operation, administration or evaluation of the fund. Each organisation's privacy notice can be accessed via its respective website.

Your information will not be shared with any other parties except where required by law, regulation, or for the purposes described above. All personal data will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

The full privacy policy of The Social Investment Business is available at:

https://www.sibgroup.org.uk/data-privacy-policy

BFF Key Definitions

Social Outcome Partnership

Applicants may use either of the below two definitions:

University of Oxford definition

The INDIGO database at the University of Oxford defines a Social Impact Bond as follows (Social Impact Bonds are an earlier version of Social Outcomes Partnerships):

A contractual relationship that includes two core factors:

• *Payment for social or environmental outcomes achieved*

• *Up-front repayable finance provided by a third party, the repayment of which is (at least partially) conditional on achieving specified outcomes*.

UK Government definition

DCMS define a Social Outcomes Partnership as follows:

- Outcome-based projects (where at least 50% of payment for services are contingent on achievement of outcomes vs fee for service or other arrangements).
- The commissioning authority (the outcomes payer) identifies outcomes they would like to change, e.g. homelessness, youth unemployment, long-term health issues. Service providers set out to achieve these measurable outcomes. For example, payments would be made from the commissioner to the service provider if a young

person has entered a job or if a homeless person has been supported into sustainable accommodation.

- This refers to the main contract between the commissioners (outcome payers) and the delivery organisations/consortium. It does not apply to any subcontracts that may be in place between various parties.
- Able to use private funding from social investors to cover the upfront capital required for a provider to set up and deliver a service. SOPs do not need to have upfront capital from social investors, but they are able to access it and usually do.
- The social investment is repaid over time only if outcomes are achieved. SOPs differ from traditional fee-for-service contracts due to a focus on outcomes rather than only inputs or activities.
- Delivered by VCSE organisations or impact driven business (as defined below), either a single organisation or through a consortium.

Child Poverty Outcomes

The government's Child Poverty Strategy includes outcomes that reduce the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families. They are split into two broad categories:

1. Reducing the number of children in poverty. This could include projects related to parental employment, family stability, financial stability and housing and accommodation for families with children.

2. Reducing the impact of poverty on children. This could include projects related to school readiness, educational engagement, children's health and wellbeing, families in contact with the care system, children's safety, youth employment, and criminal justice.

Projects may work with:

- Children and young people defined as those aged 0-21
- Young people with special education needs and disabilities aged 21-25.
- Parents and/or carers of dependent children aged 0-16 or children aged 17-19 if the child is in education.
- Parents who have experienced child removal.

Social Impact Economy

The social impact economy encompasses a broad range of organisations. Generally these can be summarised into these main groups with more formal definitions below. Given that funds are being granted under Section 70, should a delivery organisation not fit into any of these categories, we would expect them to be a part of a larger consortium where VCSEs

are present, and would expect the lead bidder to be a VCSE organisation or local authority commissioner.

1. **Public bodies with a mandate to commission / contract for public services.**

This could include Local Authorities, schools, Mayoral Strategic Authorities, government departments, universities, health commissioning bodies, or other statutory public service delivery bodies.

2. **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs)**.

Organisations that exist wholly or mainly for the benefit of society or the environment which: (i) is incorporated and based in the United Kingdom and will deliver its social purpose in the United Kingdom; (ii) has a social object and an asset lock or similar restriction on the distribution of its assets; and (iii) is one of the following legal forms:

- charitable incorporated organisation registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and/or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland;
- company limited by guarantee registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and/or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland;
- community interest company limited by guarantee;
- community interest company limited by shares;
- a registered society (for community benefit) under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014; or
- community benefit society registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

3. Social Businesses

If a delivery organisation does not fall into any of the above legal forms it must have a social object, asset lock and restriction on profit distribution (must distribute less than 50% of post-tax profits) written into its governing documents.

Social Outcome Partnership Roles

We consider there to be three roles in a Social Outcomes Partnership: a commissioner / outcomes payer and a provider, who are always present, and an intermediary, who is usually present and can take on a range of responsibilities.

Commissioner / outcomes payer

– always present.

The organisation(s) who pay for the service, chiefly when outcomes are achieved.

- Government funder: Local Authority, health agency, central government department or similar
- Non-government grant provider: private philanthropist, trust or foundation, corporate

Provider

– always present.

The organisation(s) delivering the service

- Can be of any legal form, though there are strict restrictions for non asset-locked organisations – see 'impact economy' definition.
- Can be of any scale and geographic reach to be eligible.

Intermediaries

– sometimes present.

These organisations often hold together multiple stakeholders and may also pre-finance the service with repayable investment sourced by them.

- Social investment fund managers, who arrange financing, often linked to outcome achievement
- Performance management consultants, who operate data infrastructure and help to ensure that the project is on-track to meet outcomes
- Backbone organisations / prime contractors, who hold contracts with multiple providers and ensure they work in a joined-up way