**What is it?**

The National Lottery (TNL) have launched their The Local Connections Fund. This is a new £4 million fund to help charities and community groups in England that are working to reduce loneliness by helping build connections across communities. The funding is to:

* build relationships in and across communities to help reduce loneliness and build connections between people and communities
* bring together organisations who are working on social connections to celebrate their work, share learning and best practice, and form/bring together peer networks.

This is to help make:

* people and communities feel more connected
* individuals feel supported and less lonely or isolated
* people more aware of services available that help them to connect with others and get involved
* organisations learn from each other.

**How does it work?**

There are 2 rounds of funding, the first opens on 5th January and closes on 26th January. The next round of funding will be in Summer 2021. You can apply for one of the two rounds of funding and if you are unsuccessful in the first, you can apply in the second round.

**What are the key dates?**

There is a tight timeframe for spending the grant so please apply if you have a project that is quick to launch and can finish in the space of less than 2 months.

1. Applications for phase 1 open on **5th January 2021**
2. Applications for Phase 1 closes on **26th January 2021**
3. Decision made and payments made in **late January, early February 2021**
4. Funded activity takes place in **February to March 2021**
5. Progress update will be approximately halfway through the activity period
6. All funds must have been spent and all activities completed **by 31st March 2021**
7. End of grant learning from **31st March to mid-April 2021**

**How to apply**

**Who can apply?**

This funding is available to small constituted voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations with an annual income of £50,000 or less. You must be able to contribute to reducing loneliness and isolation/build connections between people and communities and be one of the following:

* a voluntary or community organisation
* a registered charity
* a not-for-profit company or Community Interest Company
* a faith group (but we cannot fund religious activities)
* a constituted group or club.

There is lots more information on who can and can’t apply on the Local Connections Fund website, click [here](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/local-connections-fund#section-2) to take you to the right place.

**How much can I apply for?**

These ‘microgrants’ are between £300 and £2,500. The fund opens on 5th January and closes on 26th January with a decision by late Jan/early Feb.

**What can I apply for?**

You must be able to contribute to reducing loneliness and isolation/build connections between people and communities and meet online one of the two funding priories, see more below. TNL are encouraging applicants to apply for funding for remote activities such as and telephone activities, as well as **safe and COVID-19-compliant** work.

TNL understand that lack of digital skills, devices and access to the internet can be barriers to participation in online activities. This funding can be used to help you overcome these issues.

They also encourage applications for work which strengthens eligible organisations such as:

* staff/volunteer training and development, including digital skills
* systems improvements, like communications, fundraising, leadership development
* networking
* sharing learning and best practice
* development of materials
* equipment
* small-scale venue improvements

Please click [here](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/local-connections-fund#section-3) for more help on what to apply for.

**What information do I need to apply?**

The online application form opens on 5th January. You’ll need general information such as legal name of the organisation, contact details and bank details/bank statement from the last 3 months.

You’ll need to answer the 3 following questions as part of the online application form;

1. What would you like to do?
2. How does your application meet at least one of the funding priorities?
* build relationships in and across communities to help reduce loneliness and build connections between people and communities.
* bring together organisations who are working on social connections to celebrate their work, share learning and best practice, and form/bring together peer networks.
1. How does your project involve the community?

Please click [here](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/local-connections-fund#section-1) to see in more detail on what you’ll need to apply and what happens once you have applied.