



Working in
partnership with

HS2



Department
for Transport

BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY FUND GUIDANCE & FAQs

This document applies to applicants to the HS2 Fund (London to West Midlands) as defined by HS2 Ltd. [Additional information](#) has also been developed with example activities that can be funded.

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE FUNDS

- 1.1 Introduction to the Funds.
- 1.2 The Business and Local Economy Fund objectives.
- 1.3 The Funds current priorities.
- 1.4 Does the funding have any set allocations per region?
- 1.5 Decision timescales.

SECTION 2: APPLYING FOR FUNDING

- 2.1 Who can apply for funding?
- 2.2 What governing documents do you need?
- 2.3 What kind of accounts do you need?
- 2.4 What documents do we need to submit with our application?
- 2.5 Who should be the two contacts for our application?
- 2.6 Can we apply as part of a partnership/consortium?
- 2.7 Are there any restrictions on how many times an organisation can apply?

SECTION 3: YOUR PROJECT & APPLICATION

- 3.1 Definition of a project and general overview.
- 3.2 Can BLEF funding be used for the continuation of existing projects?
- 3.3 Are there any project costs that you consider to be ineligible?

- 3.4 Capital funding
 - 3.4.1 If I'm applying for capital funding, do I need security of tenure?
 - 3.4.2 Additional information on the security of tenure requirement
 - 3.4.3 Will you require grant security?
- 3.5 Revenue funding
 - 3.5.1 Can we apply for costs to cover salaries?
 - 3.5.2 Can I apply for equipment?
 - 3.5.3 For BLEF projects over £100K please refer to section 3.8.
- 3.6 Your project budget
 - 3.6.1 Do I need to include VAT in my project costs?
- 3.7 Match funding
 - 3.7.1 Do you require partnership funding (known as match contributions)?
 - 3.7.2 What type of match contributions will you consider?
- 3.8 Additional information for over £100K applications.

SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT OF YOUR APPLICATION

- 4.1 How can I ensure I submit a good quality application?
- 4.2 What criteria will my application be assessed against?
 - 4.2.1 Need
 - 4.2.2 Planning
 - 4.2.3 Disruption
 - 4.2.4 Sustainability/Legacy
- 4.3 Do you have any priorities within the assessment process?
- 4.4 What is the process for applying to BLEF?
- 4.5 Can we provide additional supporting information with our application?

SECTION 5: APPLICATION DECISION

- 5.1 When will we know the outcome of our application?
- 5.2 What happens if our application is successful?
- 5.3 How grant payments are made
- 5.4 What happens if our application is unsuccessful?
- 5.5 Is there any further help available to us?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

1. When will the funding be available and for how long?
2. What is the definition of Public Benefit?
3. What is your definition of the line of route?
4. Is the full £40 million allocated to the Business and Local Economy Fund?
5. Why is £10 million unallocated to a specific geographical region?
6. Can BLEF funding be used for a road safety project?
7. Can BLEF funding be used for public realm improvement projects?
8. Can I apply for a cycle route project?
9. Is land eligible as partnership funding?

10. Is crowdfunding an eligible source of partnership funding?
11. How will the funding be managed to ensure a fair spread of investment along the line of route?
12. How will the Funds be governed and managed?
13. What is the Grant Management Body's role?
14. Who is on the independent decision-making Panel and how were they appointed?
15. Why can I no longer apply for over £250,000?
16. Is CEF compensation for the impacts of the construction of HS2?
17. Why are broadband projects ineligible for funding?
18. What other HS2 funding and support is available?
19. My home will be disrupted by HS2, can I apply for money to the Fund?

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE FUNDS

1.1. Introduction to the Funds.

High Speed Two (HS2) is a new high speed railway between London and the West Midlands which received Royal Assent in early 2017.

In October 2014, Government announced two funding programmes to offset the disruption of HS2 on local communities – the Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) and the Community and Environment Fund (CEF). The following guidance applies only to applications for funding from the Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF). A separate guidance document has been created which relates to the Community and Environment Fund (CEF).

A combined total of £40m has been made available for these two funds for the London to the West Midlands route over the period of construction and the first year of operation. Both Funds (BLEF & CEF) will allocate awards from the same £40 million funding pot and so the amounts allocated for each fund will depend of the number and quality of applications. The geographical allocation of funds (where applicable) are set out in section 1.4 of this document.

The Funds will provide support for good quality bids and rigorous management of the spend profile will ensure that money is available throughout this time period. Accordingly, potential applicants can be assured that there will be no advantages of submitting early or disadvantages of submitting later during the construction period.

The Funds opened for applications on 8th March 2017.

1.2 The Business and Local Economy Fund objectives

The objective of the BLEF is;

To add benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation to support local economies that are demonstrably disrupted by the construction of HS2. Initiatives BLEF may support might include:

- General promotional activity for local economic benefit such as running ‘open for business’ campaigns or implementing town/village discount cards to retain spend in local areas;
- Creating and running a programme of events that maintain or increase regular footfall, or promote business activity (for example, summer festivals, farmers markets or Christmas events);
- Projects that aim to maintain or increase tourist visits to a specific disrupted business area and have a direct benefit to those businesses;
- Enhancements to a public realm*¹ around local economic centres*² or destinations to encourage footfall to the area. For example, for a concentration of independent food retailers, a place of heritage if it is a tourist attraction located in a local economic centre that benefits an identified disrupted local economy or a disrupted area’s night-time economy;
- Business support services and training for disrupted businesses, for example providing advice and guidance covering current business development issues.

*¹ In relation to BLEF, public realm is defined as any publicly owned street, pathway, publicly accessible open space and any public and civic building and facilities that is located in a local economic centre and can directly support businesses located in that centre.

*² In relation to BLEF, a local economic centre is defined as a number of businesses (within a reasonably short distance of each other) with economic interests that trade and plan to continue to trade on the level of a village, town, city centre.

The above examples are illustrative and we look to local business support organisations, including Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Business Improvement Districts and Trade Associations to identify appropriate projects which will help maintain business activity in local economic centres that are disrupted by the construction of HS2.

Applications will be invited for capital or revenue grants from £10,000 up to £250,000. Through this funding, we are looking to fund interventions that will have a positive impact on local economies (this may include a number of small schemes within the same location that are brought together in a package of interventions). Grants of between £10,000 and £100,000 will typically be for smaller scale and targeted local interventions. Grants of between £100,001 and £250,000 will typically be for larger scale interventions. Value for money is considered for all projects and the size of any award will be based on the number of businesses supported by your project and the benefits to businesses your project will deliver.

1.3 The Funds current priorities

The Funds are prioritised for projects that are closest to the route and the most disrupted by construction. The current priority geographical areas and priority project themes can be found on the Funds website [here](#).

1.4 Does the funding have any set allocations per region?

Combined indicative regional allocations for both CEF and BLEF were publicly announced by the Transport Secretary on the 12th October 2016. These allocations are as follows;

- £7.5 million for the Greater London area.
- £15 million allocated for the Central area (Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire).
- £7.5 million for the West Midlands area (Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry).
- £10 million will remain unallocated to allow flexibility to fund bids for cross-border, route-wide projects, as well as to fund bids from other areas affected by the construction of the Proposed Scheme, but geographically separated from the main route (such as off route construction as contained within the High Speed Rail Act). For further information please see number 5 of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at the end of this document.

Priority will be given to projects that are based within 1km (0.62 miles) of the high speed rail line and areas disrupted by construction.

1.5 Decision timescales

There are currently no deadlines for submission as this is a rolling grants programme. The decision to run a rolling grants programme has been taken so as to reduce the time pressure on applicants, therefore encouraging the submission of the best quality applications. The independent Grant Management Body, Groundwork UK, will be able to manage application flow more easily which will reduce the time period between application submission and decision. Potential applicants can be assured that there will be no advantages of submitting early or disadvantages of submitting them later during the construction period.

- For BLEF grants from £10,000 to £100,000 applicants should expect to receive a decision in approximately 8 weeks from when a fully completed application is submitted.
- For BLEF grants between £100,001 up to £250,000 applicants should expect to receive a decision on a fully completed Stage 1 application in approximately 16 weeks from when a fully completed application is submitted. If a Stage 1 application is encouraged to the next stage of the application process organisations will be given 6 months to submit a Stage 2 application. Applicants should expect to receive a decision on a submitted Stage 2 application in approximately 16 weeks. The full process could take approximately 12 months for a decision.

Decisions on BLEF applications over £100,000 are linked to Strategic Panel meetings. Applicants should contact Groundwork UK for advice on submission timings, that will need to be factored in by applicants for the assessment and decision process.

SECTION 2: APPLYING FOR FUNDING

2.1 Who can apply for funding?

You are eligible to apply for funding if your organisation is formally established for public benefit and is not for profit. For non-statutory bodies, you must have a governing document (e.g. constitution or memorandum and articles of association) which includes appropriate statements on members, Directors or Trustees not benefiting financially from the organisation or its dissolution, a minimum of 3 unrelated people on the committee, this will be unrelated trustees for charities and unrelated directors for companies limited by guarantee, and have your own bank account (which requires 2 signatories).

If your charity or company is registered on the [Charity Commission website](#) or the [Companies House website](#) we would expect all reporting to be up to date.

Primarily this funding programme is targeted at organisations which have formal objectives that support the development of local business/tourism.

Subject to meeting the requirements set out in the guidance document, examples of eligible organisations include;

- Local Authorities when they represent partnerships of businesses or businesses in a certain geographical area;
- Charities representing a partnership or a coalition of charities, including social enterprises and Community Interest Companies (limited by guarantee only);
- Specific business support organisations, including Business Improvement Districts, Chambers of Commerce, Growth Hubs, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Trade Associations;
- Registered Community Interest Company (CIC), limited by guarantee only – a limited company created for the use of people who want to conduct a business or other activity for community benefit (and not purely for private advantage) and which has a suitable asset lock clause. Examples of CICs include social enterprises, community businesses and co-operatives. Please also see additional eligibility information below.
- Registered Company, limited by guarantee only. Please also see additional eligibility information below.
- Tourism Boards;
- Development Trusts.

Additional Eligibility Information

Companies limited by guarantee and CICs limited by guarantee must have been operating for a minimum of 2 years and submitted at least their first set of accounts to Companies House.

Companies limited by guarantee and CICs limited by guarantee should review the Companies House [website](#) to check whether their company lists any directors as having significant control. To be eligible for funding, no person with significant control can hold more than 50% of the voting rights or have the right to appoint or remove the majority of the board of directors (or trustees). It is important to note that we would expect that important decisions about the CIC/Company are shared equally between at least three unrelated directors and that undue influence/control does not rest with one or two directors.

If Companies House lists any other reason for significant control and/or influence you should contact Groundwork UK before starting an application to check whether your company is eligible to apply.

Social enterprises - if your organisation operates as a social enterprise i.e. operates using income gained from trading. Your governance document must have a clear local social mission and a fully completed asset lock to ensure assets are used for community benefit. The Funds will not support general capacity building of your organisation, for example staff costs unrelated to project delivery, business development or improvement or organisational overheads that do not directly contribute to the funded project.

When an organisation registered on the Companies House website submits an application to the Fund as part of our due diligence checks we will ask you about other companies that your directors are involved in. This is because the Funds can only be used for charitable purposes and cannot be used to benefit the commercial businesses of your directors or those of their family members.

We will not directly fund individuals, limited liability partnerships, private sector company/business or any organisation that cannot demonstrate appropriate governance.

2.2 What governing documents do you need?

A governing document is a legal document which represents the rule book for the way in which your organisation will operate.

There are a number of different types of governing documents, including constitutions for an association, a trust deed for a trust, a will for a will trust, articles of association for a company and rules for an Industrial and Provident Society. You should submit the document which formally governs the running of your organisation.

2.3 What kind of accounts do you need?

The type of accounts we need will depend on the type of organisation you are;

- A new organisation may only be able to provide a basic document showing projected income and expenditure. This is appropriate for a new organisation and shows planning. It should demonstrate how you expect the organisation

and the project to grow over the next year. If your organisation is less than a year old, you will also need to provide a copy of a recent bank statement.

- From an organisation with income less than £25,000 we would expect to receive a basic document highlighting income and expenditure and any balance sheet items.
- From an organisation with income over £25,000, but less than £1 million we would expect to receive accounts that have been reviewed by an appropriately qualified person (this is not deemed an audit). We would expect this to be a slimmed down version, but still similar to the accounts that a large organisation produces. Audited accounts will be needed if total assets (before liabilities) exceed £3.26 million and the organisation's gross income is more than £250,000.
- From an organisation with income over £1 million we would expect to receive externally audited accounts. This is likely to be a reasonable-sized document with a detailed Trustee or Directors report and notes to accounts.

A full copy of your organisation's accounts will need to be provided with your application - micro company accounts will not be accepted.

If you are an organisation registered on Companies House and/or the Charity Commission website your accounts must be up to date on these websites.

The organisation name on your accounts must be the same organisation name as your governing document and the same organisation name that you enter on your application form.

Accounts are not required from local authorities (including parish and town councils) or institutes of further or higher education.

2.4 What documents do we need to submit with our application?

Governing documents, accounts, bank statements and leasehold/freehold documents need to be in the same organisation name.

If your organisation works with children, young people or vulnerable adults you will need to provide a copy of your organisation's **safeguarding policy** with your application.

The following table confirms which documents you need to submit based on the type of organisation you are. If you are a new organisation, you must provide a copy of a recent bank statement for your organisation. This can be uploaded to your application.

Organisation Type	Governing Document	Previous Years Accounts	Copies of last 3 months Bank Statements	Lease / Freehold Document (if a capital project over £20,000)
Fully constituted organisation, association or trust (an organisation generally within the community/voluntary sector with its own constitution or memorandum and articles of association)	Yes	Yes	If requested by Groundwork UK	Yes
Company limited by guarantee only, a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee only, or Industrial Provident Society (IPS)	Yes	Yes	If requested by Groundwork UK	Yes
Local Authorities (county councils, metropolitan district councils, unitary authorities, district council and the London boroughs), Local Education Authority other public sector statutory bodies (parish and town councils)	No	No	No	Yes

We reserve the right to request further documents or information if required to fully assess your organisation's eligibility and your project.

The organisation name on your governing document must be the same organisation name as on your accounts and the organisation name entered on your application form.

The additional information can be uploaded directly with your application. You will need to scan any documents you only have in hard copy.

2.5 Who should be the two contacts for our application?

Both contacts must be from your organisation. Your grant account must be set up in the name of your lead contact with their email address. The name and email address you enter for your grant account will automatically be set up as your lead contact for the application.

The lead contact should be a senior contact from your organisation (for example Director, CEO, Treasurer, Company Secretary). The lead contact should be able to talk about your project and provide further information if required. It is very important that you provide the correct email address and daytime phone number so that we can communicate updates and decisions on your application with your lead contact. If your application is successful, the grant offer will be emailed to the lead applicant. They will be responsible for sending us all updates and monitoring information

through the period of your project and when your project has ended. If your contacts change throughout the lifetime of the project it is your responsibility to confirm any changes, we will not be able to discuss the application with anyone who is not a named contact on the application form.

One of your contacts must also be a bank signatory. The exception to this is Local Authorities (county councils, metropolitan district councils, unitary authorities, district council and the London boroughs), other public sector statutory bodies (parish and town councils) and institutes of further and higher education.

You need to make sure that you have at least one additional contact that can be responsible in the event of the lead applicant's absence. This contact should also be a senior contact for your organisation, for example, Director, CEO, Treasurer, Company Secretary. By entering their details, you are confirming that you have fully briefed them about your project and have their permission to include their details.

Your contacts should not be from the same household or related.

2.5.1 If your organisation is **NOT** registered on Companies House or the Charity Commission website and you are **NOT** a public sector organisation/school, you will need to provide proof of identity and proof of address for your Main Contact.

Identification documents

You cannot use one form of identification for both name and address. For example, if you provide your driving licence as proof of your name you must provide another form of identification for your address, such as a utility bill.

- Proof of identity – your current signed passport; or a current UK or EEA photocard driving licence.
- Proof of address – utility bills (gas, electric bills issued within the last 3 months), UK water bill, Local Authority Council Tax bill for the current council tax year, a tenancy agreement from a housing association or a council or a current UK driving licence (but only if it has not been used as proof of identity).

You can take a photograph of documents with your mobile phone (please ensure that the details of clearly visible and not blurry) or you can scan your documents and then upload them.

2.6 Can we apply as part of a partnership/consortium?

Some organisations may decide to work together and adopt a joint approach; however, any application to BLEF must be made by an organisation which has a legal entity. So, one organisation in the partnership needs to be nominated as the lead organisation and make the application. That organisation will be legally accountable for managing the grant and reporting back on project delivery, including the management of any workers funded by the project, and for ensuring that the project achieves its stated outcomes.

Any partnership/consortium based application will be asked to submit a partnership agreement that has been signed by all parties if they are successful with their funding application. However, it is only the applicant organisation that Groundwork UK will liaise with about the application and the project, if the application is successful.

Neither the accountable lead organisation nor the partner organisation(s) receiving awarded grant funding via the lead organisation can use the awarded grant funding for private benefit or gain.

A maximum of 40% of the total amount of BLEF funding requested can be utilised by partners, therefore the lead partner (i.e. the applicant) must be directly responsible for 60% of the total BLEF funding. All partners must be eligible organisations.

If a partner will deliver some services that will be funded from BLEF these services will still need to be value for money and you may need to tender for this work to evidence this.

2.7 Are there any restrictions on how many times an organisation can apply?

Only one application from each lead applicant is allowed at a time - organisations that have previously received a CEF or BLEF award are eligible to apply again. However, in the interest of ensuring that there is a fair and inclusive spread of funding across the route, priority in subsequent years may be given to organisations that meet the criteria but have not received funding previously, taking into account the regions along the line of route.

In exceptional circumstances we will, however, consider applications more frequently from the same applicant. This time period may vary, depending on the demand for funds and the construction timetable; on occasions, quality applications may be brought forward or deferred for consideration due to this.

Second applications can only be submitted six months after a satisfactory Final Completion Report has been submitted to demonstrate that a first project has achieved its outcomes. For capital projects, the Final Completion Report is submitted 12 months after the capital work has finished. If an applicant receives an award and grant management is considered to have been poor or the project does not achieve its outcomes (even following sustained engagement with Groundwork UK), subsequent applications will be deemed a low priority and are unlikely to be successful and may not be accepted.

Written confirmation must have been received from Groundwork UK confirming that a second application will be considered by the Fund. Second applications may not be considered in areas that are not a current priority for the Fund.

Please note we will not fund the same project twice.

There are no restrictions on reapplying if a previous application has been unsuccessful.

SECTION 3: YOUR PROJECT & APPLICATION

3.1 Definition of a project and general overview

For the purposes of BLEF the definition of a project is a planned piece of work that will be started and completed within a given timescale. It will have its own budget and produce specific outputs during the period of the BLEF project that enable the project to achieve BLEF outcomes. Your project can be a stand-alone project or a discrete, self-contained part of a larger scheme or phased project. Please also note section 3.5 relating to direct project costs.

A detailed breakdown of the budget for your project must be included in your application. It is important for us to make sure that your project costs are realistic, so your budget must include all the costs that will be incurred. You also need to tell us where any partnership funding will be sourced from. Evidence of confirmed match contributions will need to be provided with your application. If you are requesting a grant which covers multiple years, we will consider reasonable increases each year to account for inflation, please include inflation costs in the cost breakdown.

You should ensure that your project start date is realistic, taking into consideration the decision timescales identified in section 1.5, any permissions you may need (for example planning permission) and additional time for you to accept an award if your application is successful.

For a BLEF £10,000 - £100,000 application funding can be capital only, revenue only or a blend of revenue and capital grants. BLEF £100,001 - £250,000 applications are for capital projects only.

We will not provide funding retrospectively for projects for any related work that has already taken place, or any costs incurred prior to receiving your award offer.

3.3 Are there any project costs that you consider to be ineligible?

The following costs/projects are not eligible for funding through BLEF;

- Personal equipment and clothing. For example, uniforms that would become an individual's private property. Any items must belong to the organisation rather than an individual.
- Purchasing vehicles.
- Buying land or facilities.
- Projects intended primarily for private gain.
- Direct financial benefits to individuals such as bonuses, gifts, prizes, vouchers.
- Funds to pay individuals to attend training or work experience.
- Any initiative where the main benefit will be increasing an organisations surplus rather than serving the community.
- Funds for the general capacity building of organisations.
- Projects that contribute directly to a company's distributable profits.

- To help with budget shortfalls, debt repayments or endowments (including funds to build up a reserve or surplus and loan repayments).
- Retrospective funding – we will not reimburse costs already incurred.
- Projects or activities that are primarily for the promotion of religion, religious belief or faith. Whilst religious organisations and faith groups may be able to apply for funding, the project must deliver wider community or public benefits to be eligible. In addition, we will not part fund a post which provides both community and religious/faith based work or decorations or lighting for religious festivals/events.
- Projects or activities that are primarily for the promotion of politics or political beliefs.
- Any project or activity that may bring HS2 Ltd, its sub-contractors or its partners (including Groundwork UK) into disrepute.
- Projects that do not meet the 'Additionality' principle (set out below).
- Projects used solely for delivering curriculum activity (if your project is applying for a school or education establishment it should ensure it opens opportunities for the wider community). Please see additional guidance for school applications.
- Projects that primarily benefit schools during the school day.
- Unspecified expenditure.
- Costs associated with fundraising or bid writing.
- Any project where funding will be passported to other organisations (for example through a grants programme).
- Organisational overheads or running costs which the organisation would incur whether the project was running or not (although we will consider funding support costs incurred as a direct result of running the project).
- Campaigning or lobbying projects.
- Feasibility studies.
- Projects that are not based in disrupted areas (set out in section 1.4).
- Trips (for example to the beach, to the theatre)
- Trips (UK and overseas) or any international activity.
- Any activity that would be in breach of State Aid rules or the subsequent UK Subsidy Bill/Act 2022.
- Broadband (please see FAQ 17 at the end of this document).
- Business rates and subsidies.
- Car parking subsidies.
- Ongoing maintenance costs or ongoing running costs linked to capital projects.
- Road safety measures or improvements including speed cameras or vehicle activated signs, speed bumps or other speed reduction measures such as speed tables, speed cushions, priority narrowing or chicanes, installing or enhancing pedestrian crossings (including Puffin, Zebra, Toucan, Pelican and Pegasus) or junction improvements or changes to road layouts.
- Maintenance/upkeep of pavements, public rights of way or public footpaths.
- The set up and /or running of community radio stations.

Please note that the above list of examples is not exhaustive.

In addition to the above, funding requested should conform to the 'Additionality' principle tests;

- Any funding provided through the BLEF should not act as a replacement for government funds where there is a statutory obligation to deliver a service or activity (for example the national curriculum or adult social care services).
- All public funding (including BLEF) has to obey State Aid rules or the subsequent UK Subsidy Control Bill/Act 2022 rules. These provide a clear set of rules covering any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis to any organisations that could potentially distort competition and trade in the European Union (EU) or across UK regions.
- This funding is additional to the comprehensive mitigation outlined in the Act and Environmental Statements to address the environmental impacts of HS2. Funding from the BLEF cannot be used towards costs or projects that are already being covered through other mitigation schemes, compensatory mechanisms or specific funding related to HS2.
- BLEF awards will be made after consideration is given to the Road Safety Fund, the Woodland Fund and any Additional Mitigation/enhancement packages which have been areas approved through the hybrid Bill process, to avoid any duplication. The Additional Mitigation packages, the Road Safety Fund, the Woodland Fund and the Community Investment Programme (CIP) via contractors are separate to the CEF and BLEF, though are aligned to avoid duplication of funding or double funding. The CIP can be used as in-kind match for applications as it is delivered by third party contractors but no other HS2 initiative can be used as match as they are delivered direct from HS2 as the funding source. However, you may be able to apply to BLEF for a distinct project on a site that adds benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation and has been funded from another funded scheme. As long as it is not for the same project, the fact that you might have received or applied for funding across other schemes that distribute HS2 funding would not be taken into account when your application for BLEF is assessed.

3.4 Capital funding and security of tenure

Funding can be used towards capital infrastructure costs, including, the refurbishment of existing facilities, the installation of fixed equipment, new buildings and structures, enhanced access and landscaping (including planting). If you are unsure whether your costs are classified as capital funding by this funding programme, please contact Groundwork UK before submitting an application.

Capital work will only be considered in locations that are sufficiently disrupted by construction and that primarily benefit a disrupted business community. The maximum distance we will consider is 5km from the construction route, however the location must still be a sufficiently disrupted location. Please note, not all locations are sufficiently disrupted up to 5km. Funds are prioritised for projects that are closest to the route and the most disrupted by construction.

For capital grants, capital work should be in the same location/site and work should be able to start within 6 months of an award being received with works completed within 2 years.

A contribution of up to £1,000 towards legal fees on capital grants to enable grant security (e.g. securing a lease or placing a restriction on title) to be obtained can be included in the budget. However, the fund will not pay for any other up-front development costs, such as planning permission or feasibility surveys that are required to be completed.

Relevant planning permission, other permissions (e.g. Environment Agency consent) and building regulations do not need to be in place at the time an application is submitted but will need to be evidenced (if relevant) before any funding can be drawn down if your application for capital funding is approved.

3.4.1 If I'm applying for capital funding, do I need security of tenure?

- If you are applying for capital funding of up to £20,000 you do not formally need security of tenure if the freeholder/landowner is a not-for-profit organisation. However, you will require permission from the freeholder/landowner which includes a statement guaranteeing public access to the project for a minimum of 2 years from when the capital work is completed. You will find the Funds permission form that will need to be completed by the freeholder/landowner and submitted with your application here <https://hs2funds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/HS2-Landowner-Permission-Form.docx> If you have any queries regarding landowner permission you should contact Groundwork UK before starting an application for a capital project.
- To be eligible to apply for capital funding of £20,000 or over, your organisation must either own the freehold interest or have a sufficient leasehold interest in the land involved in your project. To demonstrate this, you must supply a copy of your leasehold or freehold document with your application. If you do not own the land or facility, you will also need the permission of your landlord (or the landowner).

The relevant lease term required varies depending upon the size of the grant sought. The guide is as follows:

- £20,000 to £100,000 – Five years from when the capital work will be completed.
- £100,001 to £250,000 – Ten years from when the capital work will be completed.

The ability to exclude all others must remain for the duration of the grant. Sometimes leases contain what are known as 'break clauses' which allow either the landlord or the tenant to terminate the lease for an agreed reason prior to the otherwise agreed end of the lease. Break clauses that allow a lease to be terminated before the end of the grant term fall foul of the

programme's requirement and should therefore be removed prior to an application being made.

3.4.2 Additional information on the security of tenure requirement

Whether you own the freehold or have a lease, the name that appears on the document must be the same as that which appears on your organisation's governing document and accounts.

Please be aware of the distinction between a lease and a license. This programme requires that applicants have the ability to exclude all others from the land (even a freeholder) for the duration of the grant. A lease will achieve this, but a license will not. Look in your documents for words to the effect that "the tenant will enjoy quiet enjoyment" or "exclusive possession" of the land. These words generally indicate a lease. The absence of such words may indicate a license – a license cannot be used as security of tenure for this programme.

Capital projects that do not meet the Funds security of tenure requirement cannot be funded. If you are unsure whether your organisation has sufficient security of tenure to meet this requirement you should contact Groundwork UK before submitting an application.

3.4.3 Will you require grant security?

Through the award conditions attached to any capital funding, organisations cannot sell, transfer, lease or otherwise dispose of land or buildings refurbished, altered or improved with the award or change the purpose for which the capital assets are being used during the asset liability period without written approval from HS2 Ltd (or an organisation that has been given delegated responsibility on their behalf). The asset liability period for awards of between £20,001 and £250,000 is ten years and for awards over £250,000 it is twenty-one years,

3.5 Revenue funding (for BLEF up to £100,000 applications only)

Revenue grants can be used to cover running costs, staffing and project delivery costs.

Revenue grant awards are available for up to a maximum three years in length.

We will only fund direct project costs, that is, costs that relate clearly and directly to the delivery of the project. These can include salaries, volunteer expenses, building hire costs and travel costs. In many cases project costs will also include less delivery-focused aspects such as administration, insurance and utility costs.

We will also allow applicants to apply for up to 20% of the total funding request to cover a contribution to existing costs such as overheads (e.g. heating, lighting, rent) and management costs - as long as the costs are linked to the project. These costs will need to be included in the project budget with a breakdown of what is included.

Revenue projects must be able to start within six months of the date of an award being offered to your organisation.

3.5.1 Can we apply for costs to cover salaries?

Yes. If your request is partly or wholly for salary costs, please ensure that the salary element of your budget includes the salary plus on-costs, including National Insurance and pension contributions (if applicable). Salary costs must relate directly to the delivery of the project for which you are applying, and staff must be employed by the applicant organisation.

If your application includes the employment of staff to support the delivery of the project, you need to confirm that you have followed or will follow an open and fair recruitment process to ensure that the right candidate is selected for the role. Reasonable recruitment costs can be included in the BLEF grant request.

3.5.2 Can I apply for equipment?

Yes. Funding to purchase equipment to support the delivery of a project is eligible. We are also happy to fund projects where the costs are 100% only for equipment. If equipment is moveable (e.g. not fixed to the floor or building) the costs are classified as revenue expenditure.

If you are requesting funding for items, such as equipment that will be used by the project but also used for other work of your organisation then we cannot pay for the full cost of that item. We can only cover the amount that is proportionate to its use on the project.

The Funds will not pay for the purchase of minibuses or vehicles, however will allow reasonable vehicle hire costs on a project by project basis if it is integral to the delivery of the project (e.g. a sports activator who delivers coaching sessions in multiple rural areas and needs to take equipment to each session).

3.6 Your project budget

Your budget should include a clear breakdown of all of the costs of your project and use the budget line descriptions to breakdown each cost further if this is needed. If your budget includes staff costs each staff role must be entered as a separate budget line and in the description, you must include how the cost has been calculated – the rate of pay, number of hours, number of weeks etc.

If your project includes cash and/or in-kind match funding, secured or not secured your budget should show which costs your match funding will be contributing to.

If your project is being supported by volunteers, volunteer time is considered as an in-kind contribution to your project. In the interest of equality, all volunteer time should be valued at the national living wage rate of £12.7 per hour (April 2026).

The value of the cash match funding and in-kind contributions should be identified in both your budget table and the partnership funding sections of the application form.

3.6.1 Do I need to include VAT in my project costs?

You need to include any non-recoverable VAT relating to your request in your budget. If you are unsure if your organisation is eligible to reclaim all or a proportion of the VAT you will pay on this project you should consult with HM Revenue and Customs to clarify. Please note, we are unable to provide tax advice.

3.7 Match funding

3.7.1 Do you require partnership funding (known as match contributions)?

Match contributions are not a requirement for applications to BLEF, although we do encourage applicants to include match contributions where possible. In some circumstances, projects that have match funding may be prioritised.

We are comfortable being the main contributor to projects that meet the Fund criteria. CEF & BLEF grants can therefore be used as match funding against grant applications to other funders for contributions to the same project. Double Funding, i.e. the same project is funded twice by the same public funding source, is not allowed. If partnership funding is not secured at the time an application is submitted, your application will need to include details of your plans on how you will secure the match funding required to deliver the project.

Although partnership funding does not have to be confirmed at time of submission, it does need to be in place before an award can be paid to you if you are successful. We would therefore encourage you to get as much of your partnership funding in place before applying as this will make your project more viable. If large amounts are outstanding at the point of decision, then we may decide to reject the project or delay our decision until those amounts have been confirmed.

3.7.2 What type of match contributions will you consider?

Applicants to BLEF are encouraged to secure some level of match funding for their project and evidence their match funding in their applications. Outlined below is guidance on match funding and there is no specific percentage match requirement.

Potential sources of match contributions (partnership funding) include both cash and non-cash (also known as in-kind).

Cash contributions can include funding from public organisations such as local authorities, grants from trusts and foundations or contributions from your own organisation. We will need to see formal documentation to support your

in-kind partner funding, for example, an invoice for professional services showing the reduced rates.

In kind contributions take the form of goods and services provided free of charge, where you would normally have to pay for them.

The value of the contributions in-kind should be identified separately and it is important that they are included in both the project costs and partnership funding sections of the application form. Volunteer time is considered as an in-kind contribution. In the interest of equality, all volunteer time should be valued at the national living wage (£12.71 per hour, April 2026).

Any professional service or labour provider must be acknowledged by a recognised and reputable association or trader scheme.

The following table explains in more detail which In Kind contributions we deem eligible towards your project;

Category	Eligible	Ineligible
Voluntary effort	This is usually labour which is committed or received as an in-kind value that would otherwise be paid from the project budget. It must genuinely constitute added value, not something that would be undertaken anyway. Health and safety legislation determines that many elements of construction must be carried out by suitably qualified people to reduce the risk of accidents on site and to ensure that the finished work is carried out in accordance with statutory requirements such as building regulations. Work in-kind involving specialist trades such as electrics, plumbing, and heating must be undertaken by an authorised contractor with appropriate certification and professional indemnity. We may ask for evidence of this certification if you are successful.	Activities or tasks that would be done anyway such as general maintenance
Services / Materials In-kind	Independently validated voluntary labour, professional fees or donations of materials. For example, the provision of professional services, such as architect, construction management, or legal services; or materials such as bricks, tiles and sanitary ware. These services may be offered either free of charge or at significantly reduced rates, perhaps by a member of your organisation or partnership.	Services or materials not independently validated or directly linked to the project

Partnership Funding in the Form of Land	Donation of freehold land or property from a genuine third party, provided that it constitutes added value through the transfer of ownership and control. Land must be given freehold, and value needs to be independently and professionally verified and reflect any existing planning consent or restrictions.	Value of any land, facilities, equipment or other assets already owned by an organisation that is based on potential development permission - 'Hope value'
---	---	--

3.8 Additional information for over £100K applications.

Applications for over £100,000 will be accepted for capital projects only.

Please note, the intention has and will always be to seek to support a wider variety of lower value awards (up to £100,000) for greater social and economic impact from the budget available, rather than focussing on a high number of large awards (£100,001 - £250,000). Funding availability along with the duration of the remaining construction programme will be taken into consideration when determining how many requests for funding over £100,000 will be granted throughout the programme.

When developing your project, consider how many business beneficiaries from disrupted business communities there will be and how much you are requesting in funding. If your project will benefit businesses and the local economy in areas that are not disrupted, please note that we would expect that the primary benefit of the project is for businesses in disrupted local economies and that the applicant will secure proportionate match funding for businesses in areas not disrupted by construction.

Due to the higher value of these grants, a limited number of awards will be made and only the strongest, most impactful projects will be funded for local economic centres nearest to the construction route.

Please speak to Groundwork UK if you are considering submitting an over £100K application.

SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT OF YOUR APPLICATION

4.1 How can I ensure I submit a good quality application?

Your project's outcomes will have to match the BLEF criteria. Your application will need to demonstrate how your project will benefit businesses in disrupted local economic centres and identify what the outputs/outcomes of your project will be by the end of your BLEF project.

It is important that you provide the information requested for each question in the application form and that your project demonstrates value for money. Your delivery and your project budget should be sufficiently detailed.

4.2 What criteria will my application be assessed against?

Initially, we will check that your organisation and proposed project meet the eligibility criteria as set out in this document.

We will then assess eligible applications against the criteria below. If you are unclear about any of the assessment criteria please contact Groundwork UK.

- **Need** - Why is your project needed by the disrupted business community? How have disrupted local businesses been involved in the project's development e.g. through consultation? What support does the project have from the local community, other businesses and where appropriate other bodies (for example the local authority, chamber of commerce, LEP etc)? Has sufficient information been included on the consultation undertaken.
- **Planning** - How have you planned your activity to be successful? The level of detail you need to provide will vary depending on the complexity of the activity you are planning. We want to gain a full picture of what will happen and have assurance that everything has been planned thoroughly. Examples of things for a revenue project include, who will take part, when and where will sessions take place, how long will sessions last? For a capital project, examples include - who will oversee the project, how long it will take, is planning permission required/in place? Additionally, who uses the current or new facility and how frequently. For all projects, how will any risks in delivering your project and the intended outcomes be managed? How will you monitor the project and evaluate its success?
- **Disruption** - The application needs to demonstrate how the project addresses disruption from construction of HS2. How will local economic activity be maintained or enhanced through the project? What will be the proposed outputs/outcomes of your project?
 - Effects which have been recognised within Environmental Statements, but which have not been addressed through formal mitigation. All applications must be able to evidence this type of disruption.
 - Perceived disruption not identified within the Environmental Statements - this could include a range of community and local economy effects, and anything unforeseen which may emerge through the course of the construction period.

Funds are prioritised for projects that are closest to the route and therefore the most disrupted by construction. Projects must primarily benefit disrupted business communities. The maximum distance we will consider is 5km from the construction route, however the location must still be a sufficiently disrupted location. Please note, not all locations are sufficiently disrupted up to 5km.

It is important that you read the Environmental Statement(s) that cover the project area(s) and use the information contained within these to evidence the level of disruption in your application. Links to the HS2 Environmental Statements and subsequent Additional Provisions can be found by visiting the following websites:

- HS2 London to the West Midlands Environmental Statement;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>
- HS2 London to the West Midlands Additional Provisions;
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/additional-provisions-for-the-high-speed-rail-london-to-west-midlands-bill>

Additional information on what construction work is happening in your area can be found on the HS2 local community webpages <https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/local-community-webpages/> There is also an interactive map which shows what current and upcoming works are being carried which can be found here <https://www.hs2.org.uk/in-your-area/map/#7/52.4530/-1.4880/filter=hs2-stations,hs2-network>

Please speak to Groundwork UK or HS2 Ltd if you have any difficulties in navigating these documents.

Your project should be targeting and primarily benefitting disrupted businesses and disrupted local economic centres. If your project will also benefit businesses or economies who are not disrupted by the construction of HS2, please note that the percentage of funding from BLEF towards your project total should be proportional to the percentage of businesses beneficiaries experiencing disruption.

- **Sustainability/Legacy** - How will the project be sustainable or leave a sustainable legacy? If a capital project, will sufficient revenue be generated to keep the facility running and well-maintained for years to come (e.g. setting up a long term replacement fund) and who will be responsible for its long term operation and maintenance? If it is a revenue project, how will it continue post any investment? Is the project innovative and can it be replicated?

In addition, all projects need to demonstrate how they contribute to the HS2 legacy. By legacy, we mean we are aiming to develop and extend the positive impact of the investments so that they contribute to a meaningful legacy from HS2 for local people, communities and businesses.

We will award funding to organisations that have made a formal application for a grant, that fulfil the requirements of the relevant Fund and which have the necessary systems in place to administer a grant. All funding applications are subject to a formal appraisal before being presented for a recommendation. Before any funding is distributed, we carefully and thoroughly assess the public benefits of the proposed project activities.

Groundwork UK will undertake the assessment of bids against the published criteria and will be responsible for making awards up to £100,000. For decisions on grant awards of £100,001 up to £250,000, Groundwork UK will assess the applications and present these to the Strategic Panel, the Funds Independent Chair and the HS2 Funds Manager.

The Strategic Panel will make recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport, on whether an application should be approved. The final decision will be made by a senior civil servant in the Department for Transport with delegated authority from the Secretary of State.

The distribution and achievements of CEF and BLEF are reported to relevant stakeholders, including HS2 Ltd and Department for Transport and via an independent annual report in the public domain.

4.3 Do you have any priorities within the assessment process?

Yes. If the organisation and project meet the formal requirements for this funding programme, priority will be given to projects that are based within 1 km (0.62 miles) of the high speed rail line. In some circumstances, projects that have match funding may also be prioritised.

In addition, it is also important that all communities along the line of route receive their fair share of funding. Areas and communities which have received a below average level of funding from CEF & BLEF to date will now be actively prioritised. This could mean that applications from areas which have already received a high level of funding will no longer be prioritised, though still considered. Therefore, a project may not be approved for funding on the basis that the area in which it will be based already has a higher than average number of projects approved.

4.4 What is the process for applying to BLEF?

For BLEF £10,000 - £100,000 projects, it is a two stage process with applicants completing an online eligibility checker before submitting an application through the online portal.

For BLEF £100,001 - £250,000 projects the process will be split into three stages. The first stage will be for applicants to complete an online eligibility checker. The next stage will be to submit a Stage One application form which will be reviewed to ensure the project is of demonstrable impact and meets the Funds criteria. For applications that are approved through this stage, the final stage is to submit a Stage Two application through the online portal. If a Stage One application is approved, you will have up to six months to submit a Stage Two application. Please note, passing Stage One and being accepted to submit a Stage Two application does not guarantee that funding will be approved towards your project.

If you do not pass the online eligibility checker or are not encouraged through Stage One, you will not be able to submit a Stage Two application.

See section 1.5 for further information on decision timescales.

Further information about the application process including copies of the downloadable application forms are available on the following website – <https://hs2funds.org.uk/>. The website also includes a link to the eligibility checker and online application portal.

4.5 Can we provide additional supporting information with our application?

Yes. You can provide additional documents by email but these should be kept to a minimum. Additional documents must be supplementary information only and not provided as a response to questions or be essential for the application. Please discuss this with Groundwork UK before submitting any additional documents.

Please do not include links in your application form to other documents or websites.

SECTION 5: APPLICATION DECISION

5.1 When will we know the outcome of our application?

Once you have submitted your application and we are happy that it is complete, it will be assessed and put forward at the next available decision point. We will notify you in writing once the outcome has been confirmed. Decision timescales can be found in section 1.5.

If for any reason it will take longer to notify you of a decision, we will let you know and give the reasons why.

5.2 What happens if our application is successful?

If your application is successful, you will be given a conditional award which will need to be accepted within 30 days. You will need to accept your award offer in your online grant account and will need the following information to do this:

- Your organisation's bank details.
- Your bank signatories contact details.
- A copy of a bank statement from within the last 3 months which must have the same organisation name as your governance document and accounts. This must be a bank statement showing the address it is sent to and not a transaction report without an address.

Additional time is given after the 30 days to provide any additional information requested in conditions. All conditions must be met before you can start to claim any funds, but Groundwork UK will provide support to help you through the process.

If your project is a capital project or it includes purchasing a service at least three competitive tenders/quotes for the work must be obtained. You will be sent a Quotes/Tender Form to complete and return to us by email along with the quotes

you have received before any work can commence. These will need to be approved by Groundwork UK before any payments are made.

Groundwork UK will also be responsible for monitoring the delivery of your project. You will therefore be asked to submit regular progress reports on your project to confirm what has been delivered and achieved through the funding.

5.3 How grant payments are made

Claims are made through your online grant account. Claim forms will be made available when all of your conditions have been met and any additional information requested has been provided i.e. a Quotes/Tender Form.

- Capital projects – payments are made when invoices are received by your organisation from your contractors. Copies of invoices will need to be uploaded as part of a claim form. Your claim will also request details of the capital work undertaken to date.
- Revenue projects – an upfront payment for the first six months of your project will be made. At the end of this six month period evidence of the costs you have incurred and the work undertaken will need to be provided and uploaded as part of a claim form. Once reviewed and signed off by Groundwork UK a payment will be made for the next six month period. Payments will be made using this process throughout the grant period.

5.4 What happens if our application is unsuccessful?

If your application is unsuccessful we will write to you and let you know what your options are with regards to either seeking advice from Groundwork UK on your application with a view to resubmitting in future or explaining why on this occasion we are unable to take your application any further.

We aim to provide constructive feedback to all unsuccessful applicants in order to support them to re-apply and/or seek funding from other sources. There is no guarantee of funding if an applicant re-applies, however, there are instances of successful re-applications that have fully taken on board our feedback.

There may be specific circumstances where it is more appropriate to defer your application, and we will write and let you know what this means for you.

5.5 Is there any further help available to us?

Groundwork UK will lead on the promotion of the Funds and can provide support to applicants, but this will be in the form of advice on the criteria and not a financial contribution. If you have any queries regarding the Funds please contact Groundwork UK by email HS2funds@groundwork.org.uk and they can arrange a telephone call with you to discuss your project idea and the criteria of the Funds.

Groundwork UK will also attend pre-arranged, ad hoc public events aimed at promoting the Funds specifically, to provide an overview of the Funds and to share

the publicly available information on them. They will not however attend one to one meetings or provide development support to individual applicants. If you wish to arrange an open, public meeting or event, please contact Groundwork UK at HS2funds@groundwork.org.uk

General application guidance in line with publicly available information will be given by Groundwork UK by phone and email and at public meetings and events.

Updates on the Funds will be issued through the website <https://hs2funds.org.uk/> and through Groundwork UK's existing communication channels. Updates on the Funds will also be included in the regular HS2 Community Update newsletter which is issued to local line of route residents along the line of the route, they are also available on the Gov.uk website.

Additional BLEF programme guidance has been created with examples of the types of activities that can be funded through BLEF. This guidance can be found here <https://hs2funds.org.uk/home/business-local-economy-fund/business-and-local-economy-fund-guidance/>

BUSINESS & LOCAL ECONOMY FUND - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

1. When will the funding be available and for how long?

HS2 (London to the West Midlands) funding was launched following Royal Assent, in February 2017 and opened for applications to both CEF and BLEF from 8th March 2017. Funding will be available for bids during the construction period and for the first year of operation of HS2 services. The programme operates on a rolling basis and has no formal deadlines. The timing of any committed investment may however need to be linked to the timing of the construction programme and therefore some applications may be paused or deferred depending on the annual funding allocations available. Priority will be given to the geographical areas experiencing the highest disruption from the construction of HS2, areas that have so far not received any funds at all or received very limited funds from HS2 Ltd, and high quality bids that meet the Fund criteria.

2. What is the definition of Public Benefit?

In the context of the first question on the eligibility check and section 2 of the BLEF guidance document, we define organisations as being established for Public Benefit if they are set up for the following purposes:

- The prevention or relief of poverty;
- The advancement of education;
- The advancement of health or the saving of lives;

- The advancement of citizenship or community development, which includes: rural or urban regeneration; and the promotion of civic responsibility, volunteering, the voluntary sector or the effectiveness or efficiency of charities;
- The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science;
- The advancement of amateur sport;
- The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation, or the promotion of religious or racial harmony, or equality and diversity;
- The advancement of environmental protection or improvement;
- The relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

3. What is your definition of the line of route?

The line of route relates to the physical rail line being built for HS2 as defined in the public domain by HS2 Ltd. This includes tunnels and viaducts where the line goes under or over ground. Any reference to the line of route in terms of metres, miles or kilometres or closeness to it therefore includes either side, above or below.

4. Is the full £40 million allocated to the Community and Environment Fund?

The funding of £40 million has been allocated towards the Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and the Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF) combined. There is no fixed allocation for each Fund.

5. Why is £10 million unallocated to a specific geographical region?

This £10 million is part of the total £40 million available for the Funds and although not allocated to a specific geographical area in the same way as the remaining £30 million, it will be allocated through the same application process and in line with the same published guidance and criteria. It will fund projects that benefit disrupted communities in more than one of the geographical areas (i.e. Greater London, Central and West Midlands) or in other geographical areas that are demonstrably disrupted by construction of HS2. Having this unallocated £10 million is to allow for flexibility, for example, where there are communities which are considered 'off-route,' but are nonetheless affected by the High Speed Rail Bill. Any application needs to be able to demonstrate the level of disruption from the construction of HS2 on the community that will benefit from their project. Funds are targeted at communities most affected by the construction of the railway.

6. Can BLEF funding be used for a road safety project?

Projects which include enhancements to roads or highways for the purposes of road safety or the maintenance/upkeep of existing public access are considered ineligible under this funding programme.

Examples of works which are ineligible under this scheme include;

- Installation of speed cameras or vehicle activated signs
- Installation of speed bumps or other speed reduction measures such as speed tables, speed cushions, priority narrowing or chicanes

- Junction improvements or changes to road layouts
- Maintenance/upkeep of pavements, public rights of way or public footpaths
- Pedestrian crossings

If such works are a priority for road safety in your area then they should be funded by your local highways authority through their normal budgets or through HS2 Road Safety Fund (RSF) monies which have been allocated to each Local Authority along the line of the route. RSF monies can be used towards traffic calming measures, safer pedestrian crossings or safer junctions for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers. It is for each Local Authority to decide how to spend its allocation, so you may wish to contact your authority to find out what their plans are for using their government allocation of the RSF.

In light of this alternative HS2 funding stream targeted specifically at road safety, we do not consider it appropriate to also fund such schemes through CEF & BLEF. If you are considering applying for funding to the CEF & BLEF programme and your project includes road safety related elements that are not covered in the above list, please contact Groundwork UK to discuss your project before applying.

7. Can BLEF funding be used for public realm improvement projects?

Information in FAQ 6 on road safety projects is not intended to exclude enhancements to the public realm.

BLEF will consider quality funding applications for projects that improve the public realm in a disrupted economic centre. A local economic centre is defined as a number of businesses (within a reasonably short distance of each other) with economic interests that trade and plan to continue to trade on the level of a village, town, city centre. In relation to BLEF, the public realm is defined as any publicly owned street, pathway, publicly accessible open space and public and civic building and facility that is located in a disrupted economic centre and serves that economic centre.

If you are considering applying for funding to the BLEF programme and your project includes public realm improvement works, please contact Groundwork UK to discuss your project before applying.

8. Is land eligible as partnership funding?

To be eligible, a donation of freehold land or property must be from a genuine third party, provided that it constitutes added value through the transfer of ownership and control. Land must be given freehold, and the value needs to be independently and professionally verified and reflect any existing planning consent or restrictions. It must also relate directly to the project for which you are seeking funding.

The value of any land, facilities, equipment or other assets already owned by an organisation or that is based on potential development permission (e.g. hope value) or that doesn't relate to the project for which you are seeking funding is not eligible.

9. Is crowdfunding an eligible source of partnership funding?

Crowdfunding could be an eligible source of partnership funding and will be reviewed by Groundwork UK on a case by case basis. For crowdfunding to be considered eligible, the motive for investing should not be purely for profit/financial gain. Instead, the investment should be in the form of community/collective social investment/donations or community share offer where it aims to provide a community benefit and any payback to members or potential investors (if any) would be minimal and/or focused on a social dividend.

Documents in relation to community shares need to clearly state that the shares are withdrawable and cannot be sold, traded or transferred between members, unlike shares in a typical company and that we would expect this social investment behaviour for CEF and BLEF grantees, demonstrating that the share offer is not primarily for private gain and therefore not trade-able.

If crowdfunding is a potential source of match funding for your project, please contact Groundwork UK to discuss before submitting an application.

10. How will the funding be managed to ensure a fair spread of investment along the line of route?

To ensure a fair spread of investment along the HS2 route, we will keep track of applications received/grants approved and undertake targeted promotion of the Funds in priority locations if required. Please be assured that rigorous management of the funding available will ensure that money is available throughout the construction, and there will be no advantages in submitting early or disadvantages of submitting applications later during the construction period. There will also be considered management of the regional funding allocations to ensure that all areas receive their fair share in accordance with the level of disruption they may experience.

11. How will the Funds be governed and managed?

The governance and management arrangements for the Fund have been developed following consultation with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and environmental NGOs. Through this consultation, selecting an independent organisation to manage the Fund was identified as an important element in achieving objectivity and impartiality in the assessment and decision making process.

The management of the Funds has been outsourced to an independent Grant Management Body, Groundwork UK, who were selected through an open competitive tender process.

CEF & BLEF is a national stand-alone HS2 funding stream that aligns to other HS2 and/or DfT national schemes for the HS2 project, such as the Woodland Fund, Road Safety Fund, geographical Additional Mitigation/enhancement funds and the Community Investment Programme. Therefore, the only alignment CEF & BLEF has with other HS2 and DfT schemes is to ensure coordination and to avoid duplication of funding.

Groundwork UK will lead on the promotion of the Fund, and will provide advice and guidance to applicants and potential applicants on the Funds criteria. They will undertake the assessment of applications against the published criteria and will be responsible for making awards of £100,000 or less. For decisions on grant awards of £100,001 up to £250,000, Groundwork UK will assess the applications and present these to the Strategic Panel, the Funds Independent Chair and the HS2 Funds Manager. Groundwork UK will also be responsible for overseeing the payment of grants and monitoring the progress of successful projects.

The Strategic Panel will make recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport, on whether an application should be approved. The final decision will be made by a senior civil servant in the Department for Transport with delegated authority from the Secretary of State.

12. What is the Grant Management Body's role?

Groundwork UK is an independent and impartial non-governmental organisation, separately registered and governed to HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport. Funds distributed by the body will aim to ensure the greatest public benefit for communities and economic benefit for the business community.

13. Why can I no longer apply for over £250,000?

Since the launch of the Funds in 2017 there has been a commitment to a continuous learning approach to improve the delivery of the Funds. The Funds will no longer accept CEF Strategic or large BLEF applications for more than £250,000 to ensure the funding is available over the extended construction period and will seek to prioritise lower value awards for greater social impact from the budget available.

14. Is BLEF compensation for the impacts of the construction of HS2?

The aim of BLEF is to add benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation to support communities along the route that are demonstrably disrupted by the construction of HS2 from London to the West Midlands. The Funds are not therefore classed as compensation packages for HS2.

BLEF is not a compensation scheme for individuals or businesses.

For details of the existing compensation schemes please see FAQ 19.

15. Why are broadband projects ineligible for funding?

Projects to fund broadband connection/access are not eligible for funding through the CEF funding programme. There are two reasons for this;

- The UK Government has already committed to provide funding through Building Digital UK (BDUK) which is helping to bring fast and reliable broadband and mobile coverage to hard-to-reach places across the UK - transforming people's lives.

- State Aid rules - Funding broadband access/connection would be against State Aid and UK Subsidy Control Bill/Act 2022 rules. State Aid rules cover the Broadband connection/access market and CEF funding cannot therefore be used to provide funding for any projects that would contravene these rules.

16. What other HS2 funding and support is available?

Road Safety Fund: On 23rd November 2017, the Transport Secretary confirmed an allocation of £30 million to improve road and cycle safety in towns and villages along the HS2 route between London and the West Midlands. This funding has been allocated to 16 Local Authorities along the line of route with the aim of improving road and cycle safety. Authorities can use the funding for measures such as traffic calming, safer pedestrian crossings or safer junctions for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers. Potential projects focused on road and cycle safety should therefore be discussed first with your Local Authority. Please also refer to FAQ 6, 7 and 8.

Woodland Fund: On the 9th November 2017, the Transport Secretary confirmed that £5 million will be invested in woodlands through the spine of England, from London to the West Midlands. As part of the construction of Britain's new high speed railway, HS2 Ltd is creating a network of new wildlife habitats along the route. This includes the planting of millions of new trees and shrubs along the route. In addition to this extensive tree planting programme, the Woodland Fund has been established to help local landowners create new native, broadleaf woodlands and restore existing ancient woodland sites. The Woodland Fund is being managed by the Forestry Commission on behalf of HS2 Ltd. It is encouraging applications from landowners located up to 25 miles from the line of route.

Further information on the Woodland Fund can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hs2-woodland-fund>

Potential projects focused on woodland creation or restoration should therefore be discussed first with the Forestry Commission as the Woodland Fund should be investigated before applying for CEF & BLEF funding.

17. My home will be disrupted by HS2, can I apply for money to the Fund?

This Fund is only available for community and environmental projects and individuals are not eligible to apply. For more information on HS2 compensation schemes, please visit the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2/overview>