

Community First

Guidance on setting up a Community First Panel

What is a Community First Panel?

Each eligible ward will need to have a Community First Panel, made up of 4-8 local people who will work with their community to produce a Community First Plan and recommend projects/activities to be funded in their ward. This document sets out what a Community First Panel will do and how you can set one up in your ward.

Being a panel member is a voluntary activity and no individual can be paid for their work on the panel.

Who can set up a Community First Panel?

Anyone who is enthusiastic about improving their neighbourhood can set up a Community First Panel as long as they meet the basic criteria below. Existing partnership groups or networks operating within the ward can also register to run the Community First Panels.

Ideally, membership of the panel will be a representative sample of the local community, including the public, the public sector (local councils), private sector (from the business community) and voluntary sector (local charities, community groups or social enterprises). Each Community First Panel will also need to identify a Panel Partner. The Panel Partner should be an existing organisation, (it could be a local registered charity or voluntary organisation) who will hold a small amount of funds on behalf of the panel and offer support to the panel to ensure that it is accountable and transparent in carrying out its responsibilities. The Panel Partner will also be a member of the Community First Panel.

What criteria do we need to meet?

The Community First Panel must:

- Consist of a minimum of 4 people and a maximum of 8 people
- Be made up of people who live in the ward or be an existing group/organisation based or working within in the ward
- Have members who are 18 years and over
- Be willing to take on Community First Panel responsibilities (see what these are below)
- Agree a set of group rules, called a Terms of Reference, which set out how your Community First Panel will operate
- Consist of members who have neither been convicted of fraud, been declared bankrupt, nor held senior posts within organisations that have gone into administration.

What will the Community First Panel do and what responsibilities will it have?

The Community First Panel is expected to:

- Set up a unique email address
- Create a simple website to be updated regularly with the Community First Panel's activity
- Create a Community First Plan. The Community First Plan will set out what you will do to improve your area. The panel will draw up a list of local priorities for funding which will later develop into the Community First Plan. The Community First Plan should include the views of as many local people as possible, not just members of the CommunityFirst Panel. The idea is that the Community First Panel will find projects/activities that compliment the Community First Plan.
- CDF will not dictate the planning method that the Community First Panel should use, but we will provide broad guidance on the scope. The Government wants to encourage a focus on local assets and opportunities, as well as on issues and priorities. To facilitate the planning, each panel will be able to use a portion of their grant pot to fund the development of the plan. Methods that might be most

appropriate include 'Asset Based Community Development' and 'Appreciative Inquiry'.

- Identify groups/projects that you feel would benefit your community and fit in with your overall Community First Plan, using local contacts, Community Organisers and networks to encourage local people and groups to come forward with project ideas
- Agree to fund only those activities and projects that benefit their ward.
- Represent the views and wishes of people in the ward.
- Promote the Endowment Match Challenge (EMC) to local people, businesses, local councillors and organisations.

What is the Endowment Match Challenge (EMC)?

The Endowment Match Challenge is a way of raising money that can be used in the ward once the Community First programme has come to an end in March 2015. For every £2 raised for the ward, the government will match it with £1. The Community First Panel will be encouraged to work with their local Community Foundations who will be working to raise this money.

For more information on the EMC, click [here](#).

How long will the Community First Panel need to exist for?

The Community First Panel needs to exist until the end of the programme, which is March 2015. Panel members can change over the period, but you must notify CDF if the main contact person changes.

What support will be given to the Community First Panel?

The Community First Panel members will be eligible to claim certain expenses for attending panel meetings. Up to 3% of the ward allocation is eligible to be claimed as expenses by panel members. Of that 3%, 10% may be claimed by the Panel Partners as expenses.

CDF will also offer telephone and email helplines to support panel members during the assessment process. Further support is expected to be provided to local panels by Asda, our corporate partner on the programme. More details will be provided on this in due course.

How can we recruit people on the Community First Panel?

You can ask people who live in the ward, neighbours or representatives from businesses and community groups based in the ward. You can recruit anyone, as long as they:

- live in the ward,
- are enthusiastic about being involved,
- are aged over 18, and neither have any convictions for fraud, been previously declared bankrupt, nor held senior posts within organisations that have gone into administration.

What happens if more than one panel registers with CDF?

There can only be one Community First Panel in each ward. Once we have confirmed registration of a panel for a particular ward, we will not take any more requests for setting up a panel in that ward. We will inform groups when more than one panel proposal has been submitted for a ward and encourage them to work together to set up a single panel.

How will the Community First Panel assess and award grant applications?

Once you have set up a Community First Panel we will expect you to work together with the local community in your ward, to identify projects that will benefit your area. You will then inform CDF of your recommendations, demonstrating the need for the project/s and its benefit to your ward. If CDF are satisfied with your recommendations then we will release funding to your recommended groups. CDF will be providing more detailed guidance to panels once the panel registration process is complete.

How much money will the Community First Panel be responsible for awarding during the life time of the programme?

This depends on each ward. The minimum will be £16,955, per ward over four years.

What is the minimum and maximum grant the Community First Panel can award each project to be funded?

£250 is the minimum and £2,500 is the maximum amount in cash that can be awarded to groups for a period of one year. Groups can re-apply each year.

How many people can sit on a panel?

A panel should be made up of a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 people. This is a small group that can easily meet and make decisions.

Do we need a name for our Community First Panel?

Yes, you should have a name for your Community First Panel, to make it easier to identify you. For example, you might use Abbey Ward Community First Panel if your ward is called Abbey.

Use of electronic communications

In order to register as a panel you will need to set up a new unique email address that defines your ward and town/city and only use this correspondence address in your communication with us and when using our online grants application system. For example, if your ward is Abbey in London, the email address format you would use would be AbbeyWard.London@hotmail.com. You can of course use any email provider, provided you used the correct prefix.

Who is the Community Development Foundation (CDF)?

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) is a charity and a social enterprise that is passionate about helping communities. CDF are experts in developing and delivering projects and programmes that create lasting change in communities, using research to find out what works and use that to improve local solutions.

What relationship will the Community First Panel have with CDF?

CDF will liaise with the panel on a regular basis in order to be informed of your progress. We will make the final decisions on proposals to form a panel and on panel recommendations for funding.

On a quarterly basis, CDF will inform the Community First Panel of how much money they have given out, how much they have left and how much has been raised through the Endowment Match Challenge.

CDF will also work with the Government to coordinate visits to Community First Panels to see what projects the local community are engaged in. CDF will also use your web site to monitor your activities, and will expect to see photographs and accounts of progress on local priorities, assets and opportunities.

It is vital for local accountability and for the accountability of using public funds that the making and use of the grants is transparent.

What skills/qualities will members of the Community First Panel need?

- The main contact person of the panel will need to complete an online form and send it to CDF. Therefore, they need to be comfortable using a computer and the internet.
- All members of the panel should be interested in improving their local community.

How can I set up a Community First Panel?

1. Visit the Community First page and enter your postcode in the Neighbourhood Match Fund postcode finder to check that your ward is eligible for Community First funding.
2. Make sure you meet the criteria for the Community First Panel and that you understand the responsibilities you will have.
3. Complete the online form. Use the following link to access our online system:

https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_1362?SA=SNA&FID=35005.

You will first be taken to a registration page, and from there to the online form. Once you have registered, you will be sent a confirmation email. You can save your online form and return to it later.

Use the link in your registration confirmation email to get back to your saved form.

