

Power Up London

Application Guidance

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Accessibility

If this document is formatted in a way that is not accessible to you, please email csv@bigissueinvest.com, and we will share this information in a more appropriate format.

If you need help to complete the application, please email csv@bigissueinvest.com for support. For example, you may need help if you have dyslexia, neurodiversity and/or a visual impairment.

Pre-application support

Please see the [Power Up London website](#) for details of webinars and other support which will help you understand the application questions and our priorities.

Guidance and webinars

Please read this Application Guidance carefully and in full.

You can watch the Q&A session for cohort 1 [here](#). Check BII website for updates on further sessions.

Drafting your application

Please note we can only accept applications submitted through our [online form](#).

You can [download PDF copies of the Application Questions](#) to help you prepare your application offline. We strongly advise that you do this, however the online application form, will allow you to save your progress and resume at a later point.

Helpdesk

If you have specific queries about the applicant criteria, our priorities, the application form, or the application process, do email our helpdesk at csv@bigissueinvest.com.

We aim to get back to you within 24 hours, but at busy times we may take a little longer.

Inclusion

We particularly welcome applications from impact-first initiatives and organisations that are led by people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, women, disabled people, people who are LGBTQIA+, people who experience social disadvantages, and/or with lived experience of the issue they are seeking to address.

Data protection

We are committed to protecting your personal information and acting in line with your rights under data protections laws. Our privacy notice is [available here](#).

Introduction

What is Power Up London?

Power Up London is an accelerator programme for London-based, early-stage socially impactful initiatives and organisations that are addressing social and/or environmental issues by providing services to underrepresented communities.

The programme is delivered by Big Issue Invest with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda to invest in communities and support local businesses.

The aim of the programme is to enable early-stage social enterprises to build structures to ensure they can start generating traded income early on, thereby increasing their resilience and financial sustainability in the long term.

Power Up London will deliver accelerator support and grant funding to two cohorts between November 2023 and March 2025.

Each cohort will provide up to 20 participants with a fully funded package of intensive non-financial assistance valued at £10,000, that includes a mix of business support, training workshops and networking opportunities delivered weekly over four months.

Participants will also benefit from introductions to other Social Leaders in the cohort, mentors, and investors, along with the possibility to access up to £22,000 in grant funding for their organisation on successful completion of the programme.

Grantees will have six months to spend their grant funding, which can be used to provide cashflow to launch new products or services, take existing products or services to new markets, or safeguarding or creating new jobs in their local community.

What is the UK Shared prosperity Fund?

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>.

The Power Up London experience

Power Up London participants will have access to a mix of fully funded support activities, with weekly online and in-person touchpoints over four months, including:

Workshops:

Seven sessions covering the essential elements of balancing impact creation with financial sustainability, aimed at providing space for Social Leaders to develop their own skills and plans for the future of their organisations.

Mock Boards:

Social Leaders can opt in to present their progress to a mock Board, developing their understanding of governance in practice, along with their presentation and communication skills and building up their confidence.

Peer support:

Six facilitated informal sessions for Social Leaders to meet, learn from and collaborate with each other within a structured but agenda-less environment, with the goal of enabling the development of a network of impact-first organisations that can support each other after Power Up London.

Mentoring:

Social Leaders will be matched with an independent Mentor, who will provide four hours of mentoring across the duration of the programme. Participants will benefit from access to additional expertise and guidance in their own development as a social leader.

Business support:

Social Leaders will have access to one-to-one sessions with a business adviser specialised in supporting social enterprises within Greater London, who will guide participants in applying the learning from the accelerator activities into their own organisation, as well as advising them in practical topics and signposting them to other local networks and opportunities.

Showcase:

A celebration at the end of the accelerator, where Social Leaders will have the opportunity to talk about their organisation with representatives from government, local support organisations, social investors, and other impact-first organisations.

Participants will attend up to three hours per week of scheduled activities and invest two more weekly hours to independently work on advancing their plans for the development of their organisation. To successfully complete the programme, participants will be expected to engage in at least 80% of the scheduled activities.

Eligibility criteria

We are looking for early-stage impact-first initiatives and organisations that wish to develop or grow their traded income and can clearly communicate how Power Up London will help them become financially sustainable and grow their impact.

Please check that you can answer yes to all the following criteria:

Are you based in and impacting Greater London?

Your initiative or organisation must be based in Greater London and the majority of the people and/or organisations you support through your impact-focused activities must live and/or be based in Greater London.

Are you an informal team, charity, or have a social impact-first company structure?

We welcome applications from all kinds of social entrepreneurs, including individuals, charities, and other impact-first companies, however, please keep in mind that:

- We cannot fund sole traders, unincorporated associations or trusts, limited liability partnerships, nor organisations that can distribute most of their profits to private shareholders as dividends. Please read the rest of this page for more details.
- If you are an individual or represent an unincorporated trust or association you are eligible for the accelerator, but please note that you will need to register your initiative as a company or a charity (so called 'incorporation') to access grant funding at the end of our Power Up London accelerator programme. Our team will support you in becoming incorporated.
- Charitable companies, charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), charitable trusts or associations, community interest companies (CIC), and community benefit societies (BenCom/CBS/Registered Society) are the most common legal structures for social impact-first organisations.

Do you have a social purpose, a profit cap, and an asset lock?

If your organisation is a company limited by guarantee (CLG), a company limited by shares (CLS), a co-operative society, or other registered society, you will only be eligible if within its governing document, it has:

- a clear social purpose, such as an Objects or Social Purpose clause, and
- a restriction on distribution of profits, to the extent that at least 51% of surpluses are reinvested for its social purpose, and
- an 'asset lock', which is a restriction on the distribution of assets.

If you are not incorporated yet, this will also be a requirement to access grant funding at the end of the Power Up London accelerator.

Have you been registered for less than 3 years?

Your organisation must be brand new or have been incorporated and have been registered with Companies House, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) or the Charity Commission for less than 5 years as of 22 March 2024 if you are applying for Cohort 2.

Is your annual income less than £500,000?

If you are trading, your organisation's annual income must be below £500,000.

This includes income from grants and donations, as well as traded income from the sale of services or products to individuals, companies, NHS trusts, local authorities, and other customers.

If you are a trading arm of a charity, this figure will be for your organisation.

Please note that loans, including COVID-19 related loans, do not count as income.

Trading organisations will be asked to upload a full set of statutory accounts (e.g., company or charity accounts) or a set of management accounts if you don't yet have a full set of statutory accounts.

If you haven't produced annual accounts, you will need to submit an overview of the initiative or organisation's income and expenditure, as well as assets and liabilities.

Are you looking to generate new or grow existing trading income activities?

As with any accelerator, you must have a service, product, or area in mind which you will focus on developing during Power Up London.

Whatever your focus is, it must be clearly aligned with ensuring the future financial sustainability of your organisation by generating income from trading.

By "trading income" or "income from trading" we mean either sales of goods and services or the delivery of contracts, to individuals, companies, NHS trusts, local authorities, and other customers.

Our priorities

We will assess all applications against a set of priorities. We are seeking to support impact-first initiatives and organisations which:

Reach the most marginalised communities and promote inclusion

We will prioritise initiatives and organisations which are working with people from one or more of the following communities in Greater London:

- People from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic
- Disabled people
- Women
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- People with lived experience of a social challenge
- People experiencing socio-economic disadvantages

Are led by people with lived experience

We will prioritise initiatives and organisations which:

- Are led by people from the communities listed in the point above, or
- Are led by people with direct lived experience of the issues they are seeking to support.

Create social or environmental impact

We will prioritise initiatives and organisations which:

- Organisations that have an existing social impact track record.
- Organisations that exist for the primary purpose of increasing environmental sustainability.
- Initiatives that can demonstrate the potential to generate positive social and/or environmental impact.
- Initiatives and organisations looking to improve their work on environmental issues.

Intend to become financially sustainable and grow

- Are in the early stages of development and would benefit from help to build structures to achieve financial sustainability and growth.
- Have a plan for growing and developing new products and services to diversify their revenue streams, particularly income from trading.
- Intend to safeguard existing jobs or hire new staff members within the next 6 months.

We are committed to ensuring all applications are considered fairly against these agreed eligibility criteria and priorities. However, places and funding are limited, and we may not be able to support all applicants that fit these priorities.

Application and assessment

The application process

How to apply

You must apply online by filling in the [online application form on our website](#).

All applications must be submitted online using the online application form. We cannot accept submissions in other forms.

We advise you to use the [PDF version of the Application Questions](#) to prepare your application offline first. The online form will allow you to save your progress and resume later.

When you apply, please complete all the required information, and attach all the required documents. If you don't, we may not be able to progress your application.

When to apply

We will be open for accelerator applications on the following dates:

- **Cohort 1:** From Thursday 28th September to Wednesday 8th November 2023.
- **Cohort 2:** From Wednesday 7th February to Friday 22nd March 2024.

Please note that you can watch the recording of [the Q&A session](#) for Cohort 1.

We strongly advise you to submit your application early to ensure you meet the application deadline.

Assessment and decision making

Assessment process

Your submitted application will be screened to ensure it is complete.

If your application **arrives incomplete or with documents missing**, we will contact you. You must respond to this email and submit the missing information within 2 days, or we may reject your application as incomplete. Please check your email inbox and junk folder regularly after submitting to avoid delays.

Screened applications will then be assessed by Big Issue Invest's Internal Investment Committee, against the criteria and priorities published in this guidance.

The assessors may contact you by email or phone if they require further information. This doesn't mean your application is more or less likely to be successful.

If your application is successful

We will contact you by Friday 5th of April to offer you a place on the Power Up London Accelerator and provide a detailed schedule of the programme.

We will also ask you to complete one extra form telling us about your **Mentoring needs**, so that we can match you with a suitable Mentor for the duration of the programme.

The accelerator starts on Monday 15th April with an Online Induction Session, where you will have the opportunity to meet the other social leaders in your accelerator cohort and hear more about the Programme. Between Tuesday and Thursday, you be introduced to and arrange your first online meeting with your Mentor. On Friday, you will meet your cohort in Central London for your first in-person workshop.

On your second week, you will meet your cohort in Central London for your first in-person peer-learning session and arrange your first appointment with your Social Business Adviser.

If your application isn't successful

If your application is not successful, we will contact you to let you know.

We are expecting Power Up London to be oversubscribed, and sadly we do not have the capacity to offer individual feedback for this programme.

We will be carrying out an evaluation of the impact and reach of this fund. We may ask you to participate, even if you are not successful, so that we can learn and improve.

Feedback and complaints

We would love to hear your thoughts about what was helpful and where you would suggest changes to our application process.

If you have any comments or complaints about the application process or how your application has been handled, please contact us on csv@bigissueinvest.com, including the name of your organisation.

If you wish to make a formal complaint, please make this clear on your email. Please note we can only deal with complaints regarding the application process within six weeks of any decision being made.

Frequently asked questions

Are there additional eligibility criteria for grants?

Power Up London participants who have successfully finished the accelerator program will be able to apply for a grant of up to £22,000, provided they meet the following additional eligibility criteria:

Be a registered or incorporated impact-first organisation

Whilst individuals, informal teams, and unincorporated organisations are eligible to participate in the accelerator, you will need to have formally registered as an impact-first company or charity to access grant funding at the end of the accelerator program.

This may be as a charitable company, charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), charitable trust or association, community interest company (CIC), or community benefit society (BenCom/CBS/Registered Society).

It may also be a company limited by guarantee (CLG), a company limited by shares (CLS), a co-operative society, or other registered society, if within its governing document it has:

- a clear social purpose, and
- a restriction on distribution of profits, to the extent that at least 51% of surpluses are reinvested for its social purpose, and
- an asset lock.

Please see our [general eligibility criteria](#) for more details on social purpose and asset lock.

Be an active organisation

Your organisation must not be dormant, be under liquidation, or be facing insolvency proceedings.

Have a dual authority bank account in the name of the organisation

You must have a bank account in the name of the impact-first organisation that you represent. This bank account must have a 'dual authority', which means that your bank will require the approval of at least two unrelated users from your organisation to authorise payments.

You do not need to have this when applying to the accelerator, but it must be in place in advance of receiving a grant.

Will I be asked to submit another application for the grant?

As a Power Up London participant, we will be able to re-use some information from your accelerator application. However, since our accelerator is a development opportunity, the

circumstances of participating initiatives and organisation's might change during the programme, and some of their original data might need updating by the end of it.

Because of this, at the end of the accelerator we will ask that you review and update some of the information we have on file. We will also ask you to provide some new information that will enable us to check your organisations eligibility and suitability for the grant at that point in time, including [Subsidy Control checks](#). However, this will not require a full new application.

What can the grant be spent on?

The Power Up London grants must be spent on activities that are clearly aligned with ensuring the future financial sustainability of your organisation, particularly by generating income from trading. Within this framework, we can fund:

Eligible expenditure:

- Staff salaries
- Project activities
- Running costs
- Items of equipment to adapt services
- Organisational development
- Training and support for staff and volunteers
- Contributions to fixed costs
- Investments in systems
- External business support or consultancy

Similarly, we cannot fund:

Ineligible expenditure:

- Activities that make profits for private gain, e.g. That are used to pay dividends to shareholders.
- Religious activities. Please note that we can fund religious organisations if the project benefits the wider community and does not include religious content.
- Political or campaigning activities.
- Purchases of buildings or land, permanent or temporary structures, costs of building alterations or refurbishments, whether or not they require planning permission.
- Purchases of motor vehicles.
- Things you have spent money on in the past and are looking to claim for now.
- Loan repayments, including Covid-related loans.
- Onward grants to other organisations.
- Costs that are covered by other funding sources.

Please keep in mind that grantees you will have six months to spend the funding awarded through Power Up London.

What kind of evidence or reports will I need to submit?

On your accelerator application form, you will be asked what outcomes and/or outputs you hope to achieve throughout the accelerator and funding available. These should be specific, realistic, and measurable.

If you are awarded a grant, we will ask you to report back to us on how well you have met these outcomes and what issues you have faced on the way.

We will also ask you to submit evidence of spending the grant on eligible costs within the approved timeframes.

What about Subsidy Control rules?

A new post-Brexit subsidy regulation framework came into force on 4 January 2023 to replace EU State Aid rules. Underpinned by the [Subsidy Control Act 2022](#) ("the Act"), the new Subsidy Control rules limit the amount of government financial support a business can receive.

Power Up London grants will be paid under the Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption, which is found under Section 36 of the Act. This exemption allows enterprises to receive up to £315,000 of government subsidy within a rolling period of three financial years (consisting of the elapsed part of the current financial year, and the two previous ones).

As part of your application for a grant, we will ask you to complete a written declaration confirming that your organisation has not exceeded the MFA limits.

Where do I find more information about applying for the grant?

Additional information about the grant application process, timelines and evidence requirements will be provided to Power Up London participants over the course of the accelerator.