



Closing out and moving on: Essential guidance for partnerships and LTOs

The Big Local programme will close in March 2026. In response to this, our 'closing out and moving on' approach has been designed to:

- remove the administrative burden on Big Local partnerships in the final stages of the Big Local programme
- free up partnerships' time and resource to focus on closing out with confidence.

About this guidance

This guidance has been developed to support Big Local partnerships and locally trusted organisations (LTOs) to complete the closure of Big Local in their area. It will also be relevant to others involved in the programme.

It is essential reading that includes:

- the requirements to close Big Local in an area
- details of considerations, preparations and actions for closing out successfully
- how an area can keep connected to the wider Big Local programme and Local Trust after they have closed out, up to March 2026.

This guidance will be reviewed and updated from time to time. This version was updated in August 2024 to reflect a revised and more flexible approach to supporting areas to close.

Closing out

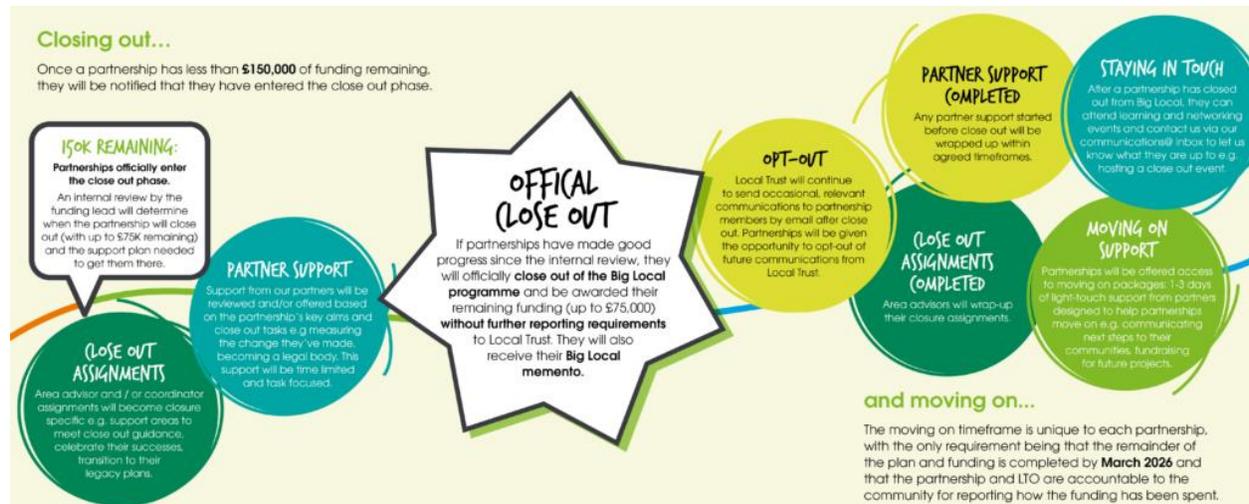
As delivery of an area's final plan reaches completion, the Big Local programme will need to be 'closed' at a local level. This includes completing the related administration and reporting to Local Trust on the Big Local grant in your particular Big Local area.

Big Local partnerships and LTOs will need to complete the administration of the grant, including spending all funding and completing all activities, before the programme ends and before we can confirm an area has closed out.

What is the process for closing out?

- When a Big Local area has less than £150,000 of funding remaining, they will enter the close out phase. At this point, they will begin preparing for close out and receive relevant support to help them close successfully.
- Partnerships can officially close out of the programme with up to £75,000 of Big Local funds remaining. At this point, Local Trust will pay out any remaining payments to the LTO, who will no longer be required to report to Local Trust. Instead, partnerships and LTOs will continue to deliver the remainder of their funding locally, in line with the agreed Big Local plan, with oversight from their LTO.

Local Trust will contact partnerships and LTOs once they enter the close out phase. We will confirm in writing once an area has officially closed out of the Big Local programme.



What are the timelines for closing out?

- Big Local areas should aim to spend all their funds by September 2025. This is to allow time for any delays or to use any underspend.
- The close out process must be completed – and funding must be fully spent – by March 2026. Funding cannot be held beyond March 2026.

What is the criteria for Big Local funding being 'spent'?

'Spent' means Big Local funds are used fully and are not still held by the LTO or any third-party delivery organisation. This means that:

- Local projects and activities will need to be completed and invoices paid before 31 March 2026.
- Grants awarded to third parties need to be delivered and reported on.
- Funds cannot be paid up-front for projects delivered after March 2026 (including leases on buildings).



Preparing for close out

With less than two years remaining for Big Local, it's important that partnerships and LTOs start preparing for close out now, whether they are in the close out phase or not.

This will allow time to:

- deliver your final plan
- manage local relationships
- finalise any plans you have to continue your work after Big Local
- complete close out successfully
- avoid the risk of any funds not being invested in your community by the time the programme ends in March 2026.

To prepare for close out, Big Local partnerships and LTOs should:

- Meet with your area advisor or coordinator to discuss close out, agree an estimated close out date to work towards, and [agree any relevant support](#) from Local Trust to help you get there. The [close out checklist](#) will be an important resource to work through during this time.
- Review all open grants, service level agreements and contracts, and note end dates and termination notice periods.

- Review your remaining funds and make appropriate alternative arrangements for any existing or expected underspends and notify your Local Trust funding lead.

If any major delays, complications or disruptions to the timescale of delivery arise or are anticipated, you should notify your main point of contact at Local Trust as soon as possible.

Key considerations for Big Local partnerships

Partnerships will primarily be supported to close out by their Local Trust funding lead, but you will continue to receive support from your Big Local area advisor or coordinator.

We recommend partnerships consider the following:

Accessing support: Identify and access the support you need through Local Trust's [support partners](#) or via local providers. You can also find out more about the [support we have available to partnerships approaching close out](#). Speak to your area coordinator or advisor if there is other support you would find valuable.

Keeping in touch: Contact your funding lead with any grant related queries, such as how much funding you have left and how to vary or reprofile your budget.

Deciding whether to continue after Big Local: If members of your partnership wish to continue operating for the benefit of the local community after Big Local, using your current structure, the partnership's governing document must be reviewed in advance of this.

Some partnerships may want to formally incorporate as a new legal entity. Partnerships can access [support](#) from Local Trust on setting up legal bodies if you decide this is the best form for your future work.

If this is the case, you will also need to adhere to Local Trust's [use of name and logo guidance](#), including the requirement to cease using the Big Local area's name and logo without prior agreement.

Please note: While Local Trust supports and encourages partnerships who wish to continue their work beyond the end of the Big Local programme, this is not an expectation or a requirement. It is entirely up to the individuals involved to make that decision.

Considering how to manage relationships, communicate and celebrate: It's a good idea to consider and agree on your wider messaging to connections and stakeholders. This could include:

- communicating to local people when close out is expected to happen

- information about plans for your legacy or transition arrangements (if elements of your work will continue beyond 2026)
- the impact Big Local funding has had.

Marking your success: Many partnerships that have closed out of the programme have chosen to hold final community events, to mark the end of Big Local. If you're considering hosting an event to showcase everything you have achieved, you can [find ideas and inspiration](#) in the Big Local support centre.

Key considerations for LTOs

- LTO roles and responsibilities remain the same for the duration of the close out phase and until all Big Local funds are spent.
- Local Trust's terms and conditions of grant will continue to apply to all Big Local funding that LTOs hold, until plan delivery is completed by March 2026.
- After close out (with up to £75,000 being managed locally), LTOs no longer need to report to Local Trust on their spend. They will be accountable to the community for reporting on how funding has been spent, via publications of this information online.

The only requirement after an area closes out is that the remainder of the Big Local plan is completed and all funding is spent by March 2026.

LTO close out requirements at a glance

- The employment position for any staff working to advance the Big Local plan must be appropriately managed.
- Any assets funded by Big Local grant monies must be protected in accordance with Local Trust's [asset guidance](#).
- Data protection legislation (including GDPR requirements) must be complied with.
- All contracts, agreements and grants relating to Big Local must be reviewed and appropriately wound down.
- All obligations, commitments or conditions relating to the partnership's and the LTO's relationship or agreements with Local Trust must have been met (or waived).
- Partnership closure plans, or amendment plans, must have been agreed by the partnership and be in place.
- The partnership and LTO must have provided Local Trust with all evidence and documents required to close out.

A full [close out checklist](#) is available, which outlines the above steps in more detail. An indicative timeline is also set out, however it is important for LTOs to be clear about remaining funds alongside the timeline, and to plan ahead to ensure local obligations and LTO responsibilities can be completed by the time Big Local funding is spent.

LTOs should be in close contact with their Local Trust funding lead to ask any questions about close out or to request support.

How will close out be confirmed?

For a partnership and LTO to close out, Local Trust must have formally confirmed the completion of the administration of the Big Local programme in their area in writing.

Close out does not automatically occur on an anticipated close out date, and only Local Trust can confirm an area is closed out.

What happens after a Big Local area closes out?

If all the requirements detailed in the close out checklist have been met, and there are no outstanding concerns or queries, Local Trust will confirm to the partnership and LTO that the area is officially closed out.

The terms and conditions of the grant will continue to apply. This means that:

- the LTO will no longer be required to report to Local Trust on spend
- the partnership will no longer need to complete the annual partnership review or plan review
- the area will deliver the remainder of their funding, in line with their Big Local plan, with oversight from the LTO and with accountability to the community, until the funding related to the final grant agreement is spent in full.

Once close out is completed, the partnership will no longer be required to meet our partnership criteria (at least eight members, 51%+ residents) and may, for example, wish to elect a small voluntary monitoring group to oversee any final expenditure.

An LTO will continue to be responsible for the funds under the terms and conditions of grant, until the plan has been delivered and funds spent in full, including delivery by third party organisations. The LTO will only cease to be a 'locally trusted organisation' once all funds have been fully spent.

Contributing to Learning from Big Local

Local Trust is recording each Big Local area's story of change and their achievements. This will be shared on a website called Learning from Big Local, which will exist beyond the end of the programme.

Each area's story will sit alongside learning from across the programme, so that others can continue to learn from Big Local and incorporate resident-led approaches in their work. Big Local plans and plan reviews, including any final plan review, will contribute to these area profiles.

Keeping in touch after closing out

Communications from Local Trust

Partnership members may continue to receive occasional, relevant communications from Local Trust by email. We may contact you about:

- learning and networking events
- opportunities to take part in policy events, advocacy opportunities and future Big Local research
- any requests to visit your Big Local area and/or legacy organisation.

Local Trust newsletter

If you've already signed up, we'll continue to send you the Local Trust email newsletter. If you haven't signed up yet but would like to receive these emails, you can join the [mailing list](#).

Opting out

After your area closes out, you can opt-out of all email communications from Local Trust at any time by:

- using our [online form](#)
- emailing communications@localtrust.org.uk

Please note: This means you will receive no further communications from Local Trust.

Other ways to stay in touch

- **Workplace:** Individuals can continue to make use of [Workplace](#) to network with other areas, increase connections and benefit further from peer sharing.
- **Local Insight:** [Local Insight](#) is an online platform that allows users to access open-source data specific to a Big Local area in a simple and visual way. Data is available on themes such as jobs and economy, population, services, and housing. This tool would be of benefit to legacy organisations seeking further funding. Visit [our webpage](#) to find out more about Local Insight.
- **Social media:** Keep connected and informed about news and opportunities from Local Trust on [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Useful links and guidance

The following associated webpages provide more information relevant to closing out:

- [Supporting partnerships to close out and move on from Big Local](#)
- [Close out FAQs](#)
- [Wider networks for support after close out](#)
- [Ideas for communicating your close out](#)
- [Legacy network offers from Local Trust](#)

It is recommended that this guidance is read alongside other guidance:

- [The Big Local plan](#)
- [Grant terms and conditions](#)
- [Managing Big Local funding](#)
- [Using the Big Local name and logo](#)
- [Setting up a new legal body](#) – for partnerships planning to set up a legacy organisation before Big Local funding ends
- [Assets and Big Local](#) – essential for partnerships that have or intend to acquire or invest in large physical assets
- [Workers and Big Local](#) – essential for employing organisations
- [VAT and Big Local](#) - essential for LTOs
- [Plan reviews](#)