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Live Well Spaces of Hope and Connection

Oldham Community Partner Selection Guidance

About this programme

Through **Live Well Spaces of Hope and Connection**, we are looking for two community-led organisations in Oldham that are rooted in and led by Global Majority communities to become long-term community partners in the programme.

#SpacesOfHopeAndConnection

Background

Thanks to National Lottery players, 10GM, on behalf of Greater Manchester Live Well, will receive £16.5 million over four years from The National Lottery Community Fund, the UK's largest community funder.

This investment in **Live Well Spaces of Hope and Connection** will create a network of 100+ inclusive, community-led and owned spaces across Greater Manchester where people can meet, belong and find everyday support.

Through **Live Well Spaces of Hope and Connection**, Action Together are looking for **two community-led organisations in Oldham that are rooted in and led by Global Majority communities** to become long-term community partners in the programme.

Spaces of Hope and Connection recognises that community spaces are much more than buildings. They are places where relationships, networks and local leadership grow, where people feel they belong, access support, connect with others and take action together.

The two selected partners will work closely with Action Together over the life of the programme, combining **investment, organisational development and community organising support**. This is not about finding organisations that already have everything in place. We want to work alongside community organisations with strong local relationships that are ready to develop, strengthen and build greater sustainability and community power.



Who can express an interest?

We would like to hear from your organisation if:

1. **You are a community-led organisation based in and working within Oldham and are a member of Action Together.**

If you are not already a member and you are eligible you can join for free by clicking here.

2. **Your organisation is rooted in and led by people from Global Majority communities.**

For this opportunity, "Global Majority-led" means that people from Global Majority communities have meaningful leadership, decision-making power and influence over the organisation's priorities and work, rather than simply being people who use its services.
We will ask you to tell us briefly how this is reflected in your leadership, governance and relationship with your community.
The programme intentionally prioritises Global Majority-led organisations because communities experiencing racial inequality can face additional barriers to resources, influence and decision-making.

3. **You have strong and trusted relationships with the community or communities you work alongside.**

We are interested in the relationships, trust and connection you have built within your community, not simply the number of people you reach. We want to understand how your organisation is accountable to its community and how local people shape what you do.

4. You already have and operate a community space, and are at a stage of development or transition.

Your organisation should already have an established community space that is used by and connected to the community you serve. We are particularly interested in spaces that are at an important point in their development, or have recently changed, where sustained investment and support could help them move into their next phase and become stronger and more sustainable community anchors.

For example, you might be:

- developing a recently secured lease or taking on greater responsibility for your space;
- looking to expand, improve or make better use of your existing space;
- considering a move to a larger, more suitable or more sustainable space;
- developing your space into a stronger community hub or anchor;
- strengthening the governance, leadership, financial model or organisational capacity needed to sustain your space;
- changing how your space is used so that local people have greater ownership, leadership and influence;
- developing new community activity, organising or social action around the space; or
- working through a significant period of organisational or asset development where additional support could help secure your space's long-term future.

The programme's existing plans specifically recognise issues including leases, asset development, strategic planning, organisational capacity and the sustainability of existing community spaces. **You do not need to own your building**, and you do not need to have completed this development or transition already. However, for this particular opportunity, we are looking for organisations that **already have and operate a community space**, rather than organisations seeking to establish their first community space.

What matters is that you can demonstrate both a **clear development need and an ambition for what the next stage could look like**.

5. You are committed to community leadership, participation and inclusion.

We want to work with organisations where local people have meaningful opportunities to shape what happens, develop their own leadership and influence decisions, particularly people experiencing inequality or exclusion.

This should include an understanding that inequalities can intersect, including race, poverty, gender, disability, age, migration status, faith, language barriers and caring responsibilities.

6. You want to strengthen your organisation as well as your community space.

You don't need to have everything sorted already. Part of the purpose of the programme is to understand what sustained investment and tailored support can achieve alongside organisations at different stages of development.

Support could include areas such as governance, leadership, strategic planning, finance and sustainable income, workforce and volunteering, safeguarding and compliance, partnerships, impact and evidence, and community-space or asset management.

7. You are willing to work in partnership and co-design the support you receive.

There will not be a standard package imposed on the two partners. We want each organisation to identify its priorities with us and help shape the organisational development, specialist support, community organising and wider programme activity it takes part in.

8. You are willing to learn and share learning with others.

Partners will be asked to contribute learning to the wider Spaces of Hope and Connection programme and share relevant learning, approaches, tools and experiences with other community spaces, including through Oldham's Community Centres Forum.

9. You can commit to being an active partner over the longer term.

This is intended to be an intensive partnership rather than a one-off grant. We are therefore looking for organisations willing to invest time in the relationship, organisational development, community organising, learning and wider systems-change activity, with appropriate support from the programme for the next 4 years.

You do not need to be a large or well-established organisation to express an interest

We want to avoid creating a process that unintentionally favours organisations with greater capacity to respond.
Smaller, emerging, volunteer-led organisations are welcome to express an interest, provided you meet the eligibility criteria above.

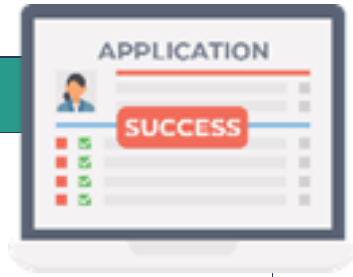
You do not need:

- perfect policies and organisational systems;
- to own your community building;
- to have completed the development or transition of your community space;
- to already have a fully developed strategic or business plan; or
- to be one of the organisations already best known to established networks in Oldham.

Key Dates	
Deadline to express an interest: **Monday 4 January 2027**	An online **Webinar** session will take place at 11am on **4 December 2026** where you will be able to find out more about the Spaces of Hope and Connection Programme and ask questions. You can book a place by clicking here We will stop accepting **expressions of interest** at 12 noon on **Monday 4 January 2027.** Eligibility of expressions of interest will be reviewed during the week commencing **11 January 2027** If an expression of interest is successful, **requests for any further information** needed will be sent out during the week commencing **11 January 2027** It is expected that a final decision will be made in **late January 2027**.



How can I submit an expression of interest?



We want the Expression of Interest process itself to reflect the values of the programme.
Organisations will be able to express their interest through **written, verbal or supported routes**.
We recognise that language, digital access, time, confidence and organisational capacity can create barriers to applying for funding, and we do not want application-writing skills to determine which organisations have the opportunity to become a partner.

- If you wish to submit a **written expression of interest** please ensure that ALL parts of the **expression of interest form** are completed by no later than 12 noon on **Monday 4 January 2027**. You can find the form here
- We have not included word count limits in the form as we want you to be able to tell us about your ideas without having to worry about the amount of words you are using.
- If you wish to express your interest **verbally, send photos or videos** to accompany your submission or would like any other **support**. please contact funding@actiontogether.org.uk and we will discuss the easiest way for you to do this.
- We have thought carefully about the questions in the expression of interest form and only ask for information that we need to know. Please read the questions carefully and only provide the information that we have asked for. Don't be tempted to add lots of other information about your organisation – if we need to know anything else we will contact you.
- If you are using an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tool to help you to write your expression of interest, please be aware that whilst it can be a very useful tool, it often produces generic and inaccurate content. Using AI can be a helpful starting point, but please review content that has been generated using AI to ensure that it reflects your organisation's unique experiences, skills and community and that it is accurate.

What happens after your expression of interest is submitted?

Expressions of interest will be reviewed by a panel during the week commencing **11 January 2027** to consider whether they meet the eligibility requirements.

If you meet the eligibility requirements, the next stage will look at:

- your connection, trust and accountability within your community;
- how people from Global Majority communities lead and influence your organisation;
- community leadership and involvement in decision-making;
- the role your community space currently plays;
- the development or transition point your organisation and space are at, and why now is the right time for this support;
- your ambitions for the next stage of your organisation and community space;
- the potential difference sustained investment and support could make;
- your potential to strengthen community power, leadership, belonging and collective action;
- your commitment to equity, inclusion and addressing intersecting inequalities;
- your willingness to learn, experiment and work collaboratively; and
- your potential to contribute learning that benefits other community spaces and the wider Oldham system.

These themes reflect the programme's emphasis on community trust, leadership, development potential and organisational ambition, and its intention to learn across different communities and stages of organisational development.

Importantly, **we will not simply select the two organisations that already have the strongest infrastructure or can write the strongest applications.** We want to balance existing community strengths and trusted relationships with development needs, ambition and the potential for sustained support to make a meaningful difference. It is expected a final decision will be made a panel in **late January 2027.**

What would be expected if you are selected as a community partner?

Being selected as a Spaces of Hope and Connection community partner will be more than receiving funding. It will be a **long-term partnership**, designed to strengthen your organisation and community space while learning together about what helps community-led spaces, leadership and power to grow.
We recognise that the two partners may be at different stages of development and have different priorities. We will therefore agree the detail with each organisation rather than expecting both partners to follow exactly the same journey. The programme is planned to **end in March 2028**.

If selected, we would expect partners to:

1. Commit to the partnership over the life of the programme

Take an active role in the programme and identify people within your organisation who can build a sustained relationship with the Spaces of Hope and Connection team. This is intended to be a developmental partnership, not a short-term grant or a requirement to deliver a fixed set of activities. The wider programme is expected to adapt as partners learn what works.

2. Co-design a development plan for your organisation and community space

Work with us to understand your organisation's existing strengths, challenges and ambitions and agree the areas where investment and support could make the greatest difference. Depending on your circumstances, this might include governance and trustee development, leadership and strategic planning, finance and sustainable income, workforce and volunteering, safeguarding and compliance, partnership development, impact and evidence, or community-space and asset management. **You would help determine the support that is right for you, rather than having a standard package imposed on you.**

3. Create opportunities for community leadership and organising

Work alongside the programme's community-organising support to create opportunities for people connected to your space to build relationships, develop leadership, organise around issues that matter to them and take collective action. We would particularly want to see people who experience inequalities being supported to participate as **leaders and changemakers, not simply as service users**.

4. Keep your community involved in shaping the work

Create meaningful ways for the people connected to your space to influence its development and the opportunities created through the programme.
This means going beyond consultation. The programme principles emphasise co-creation, participatory decision-making, community ownership and creating real opportunities for people experiencing the sharpest inequalities to lead.

5. Be open to learning, experimenting and adapting

We don't expect partners to already know all the answers. We want organisations that are prepared to test ideas, reflect honestly on what is and isn't working and adapt their approach as they learn. That might mean trying new approaches to community organising, leadership, use of your community space, governance, sustainability or community involvement. **Learning from things that don't work as expected will be just as valuable as learning from things that do**. This reflects the programme's emphasis on experimentation and learning rather than a one-off project model.

6. Contribute to learning and evaluation

Help us understand the difference the partnership is making for your organisation, your community space and the people connected to it. We would work with partners to gather proportionate evidence that could include community feedback, stories of change, participation information, organisational development, network mapping and examples of where community knowledge has influenced decisions. **We don't want monitoring and evaluation to become an additional burden for smaller organisations.** The programme explicitly recognises different forms of evidence, including lived experience and community knowledge, alongside formal reporting.

7. Share learning with other community spaces

Take part in peer learning and share relevant experiences, approaches and resources with the wider network of community spaces in Oldham, including through the Oldham Community Centres Forum. The intention isn't that the investment benefits only two organisations. Learning from the partnerships should help strengthen the wider community-space ecosystem in Oldham. The programme already identifies the Oldham Community Centres Forum, connecting more than 40 community spaces, as an important route for peer learning, resource-sharing and collective problem-solving.

8. Help influence wider systems

Where appropriate, bring your organisation's and community's experience into conversations about how systems could work differently for community-led organisations. This could include issues such as community asset transfer and leases, neighbourhood decision-making,

funding and investment, or how public services work alongside community spaces. The aim isn't for the selected partners to speak on behalf of every community in Oldham. Their experiences will instead provide **practical evidence about what helps or hinders community-led spaces**, alongside the collective insight of the wider Oldham Community Centres Forum.

9. Work openly and collaboratively

Build an honest relationship with us about what's working, where you're struggling and where the programme needs to adapt. We will expect partners to work constructively with the other selected community partner, the wider Oldham Community Centres Forum and relevant Live Well and public-sector partners where this creates useful opportunities for learning, influence and collaboration.

What can the selected partners expect from Action Together?

In return, selected partners can expect:

- **sustained investment and support**, rather than a short-term project relationship;
- a **strengths-based approach** that recognises the expertise, relationships and assets already within their organisation and community;
- a development plan and package of support that is **co-designed around their priorities**;
- access to relevant organisational-development and specialist support;
- support to grow community leadership, organising and influence;
- opportunities for peer learning, connections and collective influence;
- proportionate monitoring, learning and evaluation that values community knowledge and lived experience;
- involvement in decisions about the support and investment connected to their development; and
- a relationship where learning can change the programme itself, rather than organisations simply being expected to deliver against a fixed plan.

If you are unsuccessful

You will be offered further support from one of our community development workers and the funding team would be happy to discuss your expression of interest and give you feedback.

We will not make details of any unnuccessful expressions of interest publicly available.

Contact us



If you need help sending in an expression of interest or becoming a member please contact your Community Development Worker. If you are not sure who that is please email development@actiontogether.org.uk or call 0161 339 2345 and ask to speak to a member of the Oldham Development Team.

If you have any questions about the application process or whether you are eligible to apply please contact funding@actiontogether.org.uk or call 0161 339 2345 and ask to speak to a member of the Oldham Funding Team.

Submitting your expression of interest

Please submit your expression of interest as soon as possible but no later than **12 noon on Monday 4 January 2027.**