

Community Recognition Fund 2024

Scheme Outline



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



A. Introduction and Background

The Community Recognition Fund 2024 ('the Fund') aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities for the entire community in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

The funding is specifically targeted at projects that are located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection Applicants ('new arrivals') including towns identified for the rapid build homes programme. The Fund aims to support the development of facilities that will be used in the future by all members of the community. It is separate in its objectives and scope to any other public funding streams which aim to support the development of public service needs arising from the significant number of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

€50 million is available under the Fund, and this is allocated between each local authority based on the number of new arrivals located there. Applications can be submitted by a local authority to DRCD across three application windows, the last of which will close on 31st January 2025. Projects must be fully delivered by the end of 2026.

B. Grant Allocations and Rates

The Fund is allocated between each local authority based on the number of new arrivals located there, taking into account both the level of new arrivals and the relative level of new arrivals vis a vis overall population in a local authority area. The amount of funding allocated to each local authority under the Fund is set out in Appendix 1.

This funding should not be used as a co-funding source for any other scheme operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development or any other Government Department, nor should this funding be used as a co-funding source for any other project funded under CRF 2023.

C. Engagement with Communities and identifying locations

It is **essential** that the funding proposals submitted by each local authority are developed based on direct engagement with impacted communities and in consultation with elected representatives, the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), the local Community Response Fora and Local Development Companies. Proposals should also be consistent with Local Economic and Community Plans.

The proposal form must also demonstrate that the funding is targeted at, and specifically invested in, those communities, villages and towns where the **highest level** of new arrivals are located and where there is a **clear need for investment** identified. This must be clearly demonstrated in the proposal form, so that funding is allocated to the most appropriate projects in the specific city areas, towns and villages where significant numbers of new arrivals are located – proposals which spread projects throughout a municipal area or city area without clearly linking the funding to the specific location of new arrivals and their level of need will not be approved.

The proposal must also demonstrate that the local authority has considered the distribution of funding under the 2023 Community Recognition Fund as part of the allocation of funding and selection of projects under this second iteration of the Fund i.e. the distribution of funding across both the 2023 and 2024 funds combined should reflect where new arrivals are located.

Proposals which do not display adequate levels of community engagement and appropriate targeting of support will not be approved. The application form has been amended compared to the 2023 Community Recognition Fund to ensure sufficient information is provided in this regard.

D. Eligible Projects

Projects to be funded will be capital in nature, deliver medium-long term benefits for the communities in which they are located, and be capable of being delivered over the course of 2025 and 2026. A minimum spend of 50% of the allocation must be incurred in 2025. Eligible projects will receive funding for capital costs, but not for any ongoing operational or running costs.

The minimum level of funding for an individual project is €50,000 with a maximum of €500,000 applying. Smaller projects cannot be artificially combined to meet the minimum threshold of €50,000 – while the 2023 scheme provided funding for small scale investment in clubs and communities (e.g. for small scale equipment), the focus of the 2024 scheme is on projects of greater scale and impact.

For projects over €200,000 additional information must be provided at application stage giving further details on the needs identified in the location, the engagement and collaboration that resulted in the selection of the location and specific project and the capacity of the community to progress the proposed project in line with the terms and conditions attached to the funding. Please use Appendix 4 for providing an individual detailed business case to support the investment for each project that exceeds €200,000.

The maximum of €500,000 can be exceeded in very exceptional cases based on the provision of a business case from the relevant local authority. The business case must outline the rationale for higher funding due to factors such as substantial local needs, a particularly strong concentration of arrivals in one location, low levels of previous investment in the impacted area and/or other specificities of the area; the local authority should discuss this with DRCD in advance of making a business case

Type of projects eligible for funding are:

- development, enhancement or refurbishment of community or cultural facilities including play areas, walkways, parks, community/sensory gardens, allotments, and recreational areas;
- development, enhancement or refurbishment of local club and sports facilities including facilities such as community swimming pools, changing rooms, toilets, digital aids such as score / information boards etc.;
- enhancement to school/parish facilities which are open to use by all of the community after school hours;
- purchase of equipment for local clubs, festivals, community events and organisations e.g. music, arts or sports equipment;
- transport infrastructure such as the purchase of community vehicles, bus shelters and attendant information boards; (any vehicle funded must be in good condition and not more than 5 years old)
- projects that help address dereliction and/or wider local economic and community development objectives;
- purchase and refurbishment of vacant or derelict buildings for community use where a clear need is identified.
- Purchase of land and associated works for the development of community facilities such as play areas/ MUGAs or town parks/ community gardens, recreational areas etc. **(purchases must only be administered by the local authority).**

It is intended that this list offers considerable flexibility for local authorities to develop proposals that reflect the needs of their own communities and projects that will deliver real medium-long term benefits to those communities. However, in the course of developing their proposals, it is open to local authorities to discuss with the Department potential funding proposals outside the scope of the above list.

Where the maximum funding levels under this scheme may limit the potential to purchase and renovate a targeted building, the local authority may wish to purchase the vacant building under this fund and its' subsequent renovation can form part of an application under another scheme such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Project delivery by community groups

Projects can be delivered directly by the local authority. However, in the interest of ensuring direct community engagement, it is also open to local authorities to deliver these projects via community organisations, in a similar manner to the management of the ORIS and CLÁR programmes. This provision does not apply to the purchase of land and buildings as set out in the final bullet point above.

Where a projects is being delivered via a community organisation, the local authority must satisfy itself that the organisation are fully aware of the terms and conditions associated with the funding. For larger projects, in particular, the local authority should ensure the community organisation has sufficient cash flow to ensure the project is deliverable and that they have capacity to do so. In order to support community organisations with cash flow, interim drawdown requests will be accepted by the Department once all material is submitted by the Local Authority.

E. Application process

Each local authority will submit funding proposals to the Department for approval (see Appendix 2 for the forms to be completed as the funding proposals). Each proposal form consists of an overview document to be submitted in Microsoft Word format and details in respect of each project in separate Microsoft Excel template (see Appendix 3) circulated to each local authority. These proposals will, inter alia, outline the projects to be delivered, the indicative cost for each project broken down by the constituent elements, confirmation that the projects are to be located in the towns, villages and communities most impacted by new arrivals, and the community engagement undertaken.

Projects situated in towns, villages or specific city locations that do not have high levels of new arrivals will not be deemed eligible.

The Department will examine each proposal and will revert to local authorities with any queries. No works should commence in advance of formal funding approval from the Department. All approved funding proposals will be the subject of a funding agreement between the local authority and the Department.

No changes to applications will be accepted after the proposal form is submitted for review by the Department.

F. Claim process

While the costs provided in the funding proposal will be indicative in nature, funding will be drawn down from the Department based on actual costs incurred and appropriate documentation must be retained in this regard.

Where a project is delivered via a community organisation, the local authority must incur the expenditure (i.e. issue payment to the community organisation) before it can claim the funding from the Department.

In order to draw down funding, and particularly to assist community groups manage their cash flow, local authorities can submit interim claims to the Department as required. All claims must be accompanied by invoice lists and Agresso (or equivalent) printouts corresponding to the funding being drawn down. Interim claims must be accompanied by a report outlining what elements of each project have been completed to date.

Drawdown should be submitted using a funding drawdown request claim form which will be provided as part of the funding agreement.

A case study must accompany the final claim and should include photographic evidence to demonstrate the delivery of the completed project as approved under the funding proposal, as amended. The final payment will be contingent on confirmation of project completion including submission of a case study and evidence of appropriate signage.

Should circumstances change over the course of the project delivery and some of the key project elements are no longer deliverable, the local authority should notify the Department and seek prior written approval of any amendments using the appropriate amendment form.

Purchase of Buildings or Lands

For the purchase of buildings or lands, funding can be drawn down by the local authority once evidence can be provided that the building has gone 'sale agreed', contracts have been exchanged and that full funds have been transferred from the local authority for the purchase. If the purchase subsequently does not progress to full closure, all monies must be returned to the Department. To draw down funds, local authorities will need to have:

- i. An independent assessors' report confirming the value of the building
- ii. Building Inspection Report/ Building Survey
- iii. Proof that the sale has been legally agreed
- iv. Proof of transfer of the monies from the local authority

G. Timeline for Delivery

The key dates for the funding proposal and delivery are:

Expressions of Interests should be submitted by 4.00 p.m. on Monday 16th December 2024.

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| Interim claim of expenditure incurred in 2025 | October 2025 |
| Final Claims | October 2026 |

H. Procurement & Governance

National Procurement Guidelines and DPENDR [Circular 13/2014](#) this circular must be adhered to in respect of each project funded under the funding proposal, and confirmation of this will form part the Department's control regime for the Fund.

I. Existing Schemes

The funding should not be used to fund or co-fund existing financial commitments from any Government Scheme already approved for delivery by the local authority. However, funding can be used to deliver projects that are complementary to existing projects or to fund a different phase of an existing project. In the context of these types of projects, it is important that appropriate documentation is provided at claim stage to clearly delineate each discreet project showing clear lines of funding/payment etc.

J. Publicity

Local authorities will acknowledge the support of the Department and reference '*Our Rural Future*' in all public announcements, scheme documentation and advertising, as appropriate, relating to projects supported under the Fund. Appropriate signage should be erected at the project location and a template is set out in Appendix 6.

In addition, the Department may seek to use the details of the works funded in each local authority in the broader promotion of its policies. Detailed case studies will support this and should be submitted with all final drawdown claims.

The approved project proposals and details of the specific approved projects will be formally announced and published by the Department.

K. Documentation to be Retained

Each local authority must retain sufficient documentation to demonstrate the delivery of completed projects as set out in the funding proposal. This will include retention of the approved funding proposal and any subsequent approved amendments, documentation to demonstrate compliance with DPENDR [Circular 13/2014](#), National Procurement Guidelines, and evidence of any payments made in respect of completed approved projects.

Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained by the local authority and must be accessible by Department for audit purposes at all times, for a period of six years from the date of completion of the projects.

Local authorities will provide any reports and information relating to approved projects as may reasonably be requested by the Department from time to time.

L. Funding Conditions

Non-Compliance with the conditions as outlined herein or in the funding agreement or non-compliance with any additional stipulations agreed during contract negotiations may result in the requirement to refund part or all of the funding awarded by the Department.

All expenditure under the Fund is also subject to the terms of the [Public spending code](#) and [DPENDR Circular 13/2014](#).

All appropriate financial, public procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with, and each local authority will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.

All the requirements set out in this document must be adhered to in order to qualify for the drawdown on funding.

A separate funding agreement will issue following approval of each project proposal.

M. Monitoring of Funding

The Department may carry out appropriate pre or post-payment checks of project payment claims to verify compliance with funding conditions, project delivery and the reality of expenditure where appropriate.

The checks may include an examination of the file maintained in respect of approved projects together with any other relevant documentation identified during the course of the on-the-spot check.

The local authority will make books and accounts available to the Comptroller and Auditor General as required.

N. Queries

Any queries regarding the Fund should be sent to crf@monaghancoco.ie