



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Community Centres Investment Fund

Category 1, 2 and 3

Application Guidelines

Department of Rural and Community
Development

APRIL 2022



All queries can be addressed to CCIF@dracd.gov.ie

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Introduction

The Department of Rural and Community Development are committed to supporting empowered, inclusive and resilient communities and a thriving volunteer culture, and a key action under this strategic goal is to support the enhancement of community facilities in disadvantaged areas.

In addition, The Programme for Government: Our Shared Future commits to the introduction of an annual capital grants programme for the maintenance, improvement and upkeep of community centres.

For the purposes of the fund, a Community Centre can be defined as a building that is community owned and is primarily used for community activity/events/recreation. They are public locations where members of a community tend to gather for group activities, social support, public information, and other purposes.

Overview of the Fund

The Department of Rural and Community Development recognise the vital role that Community Centres play at the heart of each community in bringing people together, engaging with those who may be marginalised or disadvantaged, and building stronger, more coherent communities.

In recent years, the Community Enhancement Programme has provided small grants for community facilities improvements. However, it is now clear that additional funding is required for larger scale investments in Community Centres in order that these vital services remain useable, accessible, safe and continue to meet the needs of the community into the future.

The Community Centres Investment Fund envisions larger scale investments in Community Centres in order to make necessary improvements to better serve the community.

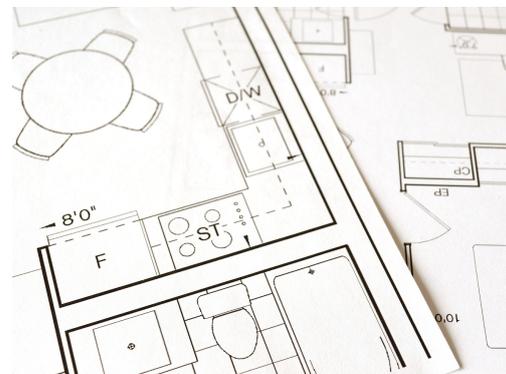
The Community Centres Investment Fund will invest €15 million in capital improvement projects for Community Centres across Ireland. Priority for this programme will be given to:

- Community Centres providing services in a disadvantaged area or to disadvantaged people in the community.
- Projects that have involved and consulted the local community in their development, design and delivery.

Types of activities which can be supported

The following list is non-exhaustive and other activities suggested by grantees are welcome:

- Projects which improve access for all to community facilities
- Projects that bring community facilities in line with documented fire safety regulations
- Improvements to buildings that improve the usability of the facility e.g. kitchen and toilet upgrades
- Improvements that will assist the applicant in providing additional or better services to the community for example additional facilities, or repurposing existing space
- Retrofitting/energy upgrade projects that improve the usability or longevity of the facility and reduce energy bills.
- Essential Maintenance works.



Grants Available

The total budget for the Community Centres Investment Fund is €15 million. This is broken down into three Categories of funding. **Applicants will only be able to submit one application form to the programme.**

CATEGORY 1:

These grants are for a minimum of €10,000 and up to a **maximum of €25,000.**

Approximately €8.52 million has been allocated to grants in this category, which is expected to fund approximately **450 projects** nationally.

No match funding is required for grants in this category

CATEGORY 2:

These grants are for a minimum of €25,001 and up to a **maximum of €100,000.**

Approximately €2.48 million has been allocated to grants in this category which is expected to fund a maximum of **31 projects** (one per local authority area).

Grants in this Category will **require 5%** of the total budget to be contributed as **match funding** from the applicant.

CATEGORY 3:

These grants are for a minimum of €100,001 and up to a **maximum of €300,000.**

Approximately €4 million has been allocated to grants in this category which is expected to fund a maximum of **16 projects** nationally.

Grants in this category will **require 5%** of the total budget to be contributed as **match funding** from the applicant.

Project Timeframes

Category 1, 2 and 3:

The delivery period is 14 months. The delivery period will be between Quarter 4 of 2022 and Quarter 1 of 2024.

All costs must be incurred, and all work must take place during the delivery period to be considered eligible.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

Applications can be from not-for-profit charities, community and voluntary organisations for the purposes of improving Community Centres.

For the purposes of the fund, a Community Centre can be defined as a building that is community owned and is primarily used for community activity/events/recreation. They are public locations where members of a community tend to gather for group activities, social support, public information, and other purposes.

Category 1: Organisations may apply, regardless whether they are legally incorporated or not.

Categories 2 and 3: Organisations must have a legal status in Ireland, i.e. company limited by guarantee or a registered charity.

To be eligible applicants must demonstrate:

- Centre/Facility is utilised by the community in its location.
- Evidence of planning permission (if required)
- Where the building is not owned by the applicant, evidence of a lease/management/rental agreement of at least:
 - **Category 1:** 5 years*
 - **Category 2:** 20 years*
 - **Category 3:** 25 years*
- Where a lease/management/rental agreement is in place, permission from the building owner/landlord.

Category 2 and 3 must additionally demonstrate:

- They have 5% match funding
- The project is “shovel ready” at the time of application i.e. have any required planning permission in place, match funding secured, and be able to provide all of the supporting documents required.

**from the date the project will be completed*



Who is not eligible to apply?

- Community owned enterprise centres/social enterprises
- Community owned childcare facilities
- Statutory Bodies - however such bodies may participate in and support community and voluntary based initiatives in the project or as partners
- Private commercial companies and for-profit organisations, including sole traders
- Training providers
- Sports facilities
- Private Trusts or Foundations
- Private Individuals
- Schools or facilities that primarily provide a statutory education service
- Organisations who cannot provide evidence that the facility is utilised by the community in its location.

Eligible Costs



All costs included for this grant must be:

- Directly related to the project being applied for
- Third party and verifiable by an invoice and receipt for payment, and audit trail showing procurement requirements have been met
- Incurred by the end of the project delivery date (January 31st 2024).

The following is an indicative list of eligible costs. This is not an exhaustive list.

All costs included for this grant must be:

- Costs associated with building/renovation works (e.g. materials for extension, refurbishment, modernisation, flooring, electrical and or plumbing).
- Costs associated with acquisition, installation or replacement of equipment which forms an integral part of a building e.g., kitchen units, worktops, sinks, bathroom fittings etc
- Costs associated with improving the energy efficiency of the building e.g.
 - The use of lower carbon alternatives in construction
 - Deep retrofit to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency (BER rating)
 - Improving the fabric and energy efficiency of existing buildings
 - Utilising renewables where feasible and measures that improve ventilation
- Rental costs of equipment required for the project e.g. diggers, cement, mixers etc.

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- Subcontracted labour costs for registered tradespeople such as builders, plasterers, decorators, plumbers, electricians etc., as necessary for the completion of the project
 - Purchase costs of equipment necessary for the ongoing success of the project following completion e.g. kitchen appliances for a kitchen renovation project, improved lighting, installation of a lift to improve access, etc.
 - Improvements to facilities which are necessary to meet fire safety and building regulations e.g. lining of walls and floors, escape routes, wiring, sockets, electrical switches and distribution boards, gas tanks, gas burning flues, heating systems and appliances, air ventilation/ purification measures
 - Fire safety equipment e.g. fire doors, fire alarm system, protected escape stairways, smoke alarms, and CO2 alarms
 - Upgrade works on electrical, gas and heating appliances to ensure they meet regulations and standards
 - Purchase and installation costs of outdoor lighting
 - Direct costs associated with improving accessibility for those with mobility issues
 - Costs related to the extension of useable space.

Ineligible Costs

Below is a list of ineligible costs. This is not an exhaustive list.

- Costs not directly related to the project
- Indirect costs of the project e.g. community organisation staff time spent working on the project in an administrative capacity
- Organisation core costs, including overheads
- Costs for actions for which more appropriate funding opportunities already exist
- Retrospective costs - activity that has already been undertaken prior to date of project approval
- Costs which are incurred after the end of the contract period
- Purchase of land or buildings – however costs related to works to extend the usable space of existing buildings are eligible
- VAT where applicants are registered for VAT
- Insurance
- General office equipment, including ICT equipment
- Charges such as bank interest costs, fines, financial penalties, and legal dispute costs
- Sponsorship and charitable donations
- Depreciation
- In-kind contributions
- Notional costs e.g. lost opportunity.

Application Process

Applications will only be accepted when submitted through the online portal. Only applications which have been completed and submitted by the closing date will be considered for funding.

Applicants are encouraged to download the sample application form (with tips) and review these guidelines in full in advance of the portal opening for applications.

Registration will be open in May. **Applicants need to register as 'users' on the portal in advance of the application open date** in order to identify and rectify in advance any potential user setup issues.

How to Register for the Online Portal

The online portal must be used to complete the application form. There are a number of steps you will need to take to register before you can access the online application form:

- A member of the Board of Directors (or equivalent) must register for a Primary User Account (PAU) on the online Portal.
- Once they are approved on the system, this person set up other users who will have their own log-ins to edit the form.



Only documents and information uploaded on the online portal will be accepted.

How to Apply

Step 1. Using your username and password provided at registration, access the online application form on the DRCD website.

Step 2. Complete the online application form and upload relevant supporting documents.

Step 3. The PAU must review and submit the form by the deadline.

Some important notes about the online application form:

- Applicants are able to edit, delete and add documents to the portal until they submit their application i.e. your online application form is at the status of “draft”.
- Click 'save' regularly to ensure that you do not lose any of work. Please note that that it does not save automatically. If multiple people wish to work on the document at the same time, we suggest you draft text in a word document first, and only transfer it across once the content is finalised.
- When you select “submit” on the online application form/portal, you will not be able to make any further changes to the application form nor upload any other supporting documents, even if the application deadline date and time has not passed.
- Application forms at the “status” of draft at the deadline will not be considered.
- Email support will be available up to the closing date and time.



All queries can be addressed to CCIF@drccd.gov.ie

Required Documentation

The following documents will be required to be submitted online with your application:



Governing Documents e.g. Memorandum and Articles of Association, Constitution or Trust Deed, List of Board Members/Management Committee Members

Annual Financial Statements OR Income and Expenditure Statement (and Balance Sheet if available) for the most recent financial year

Evidence of planning permission in place (if required)

A quote for any individual budget item costing over €5,000

Where the building is rented, a rental or lease agreement from the landlord for at least:
Category 1: 5 years*
Category 2: 20 years*
Category 3: 25 years*

Supporting evidence for all costs (works and equipment):

- o Category 1: at least 1 quote for works
- o Category 2 and 3: at least 2 quotes for works

Additional Category 2 and 3 Requirements:

Match funding must be in the form of a letter of offer/contract with another funder or the applicants own funds (bank statements). In-kind contributions will not be considered as match funding.

Applications for grants in this category must be “shovel ready” at the time of application i.e. have any required planning permission in place, match funding secured, and be able to provide all of the supporting documents required as outlined below.

**from the date the project will be completed*



Evidence of Planning Permission

Where the project, or any aspect of the project, requires planning permission, applicants are asked to upload one of the following:

- Evidence of the planning permission application i.e. document from your Local Authority Planning Department with the planning reference number OR a copy of the planning application (stamped by the Local Authority Planning Department with the planning reference number).
- A copy of the grant of planning permission. **The planning permission must be current at the time of application.**

Quotation documentation

For Category one applicants, at least one professionally prepared quotation or pre-tender estimate must be uploaded for each cost (above €5,000), including equipment. For applicants applying for Category 2 or 3, there needs to be two quotations for each cost (above €5,000). This can be one or more documents but it must cover everything being applied for.

The following types of documents will be accepted as quotes:

- An estimate prepared by your technical supervisor e.g. engineer, quantity surveyor or architect.
- A quote from a contractor/supplier
- Picture/screenshot from a catalogue or website (for equipment only).

If quotes are not provided for any aspect of the work, only the other parts (with supporting quotes) will be considered.

Tendering

If you are successful, all procurement will need to be in line with [government procurement guidelines](#).

Please be aware that all costs over €25,000 require an e-tender. See www.etenders.gov.ie for more details.



Pre-application Support

Support Events

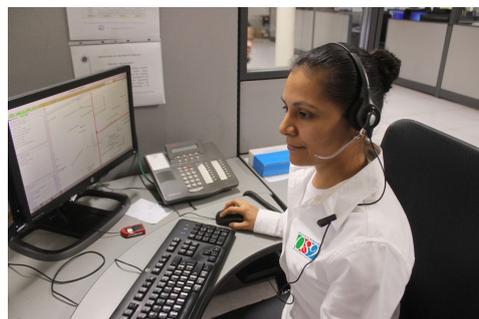
Online information events will be held in May and June 2022.

An online application clinic to demonstrate the application process and portal, and assist with any technical queries, will be held following the opening of the portal for applications.

Additional Guidance

Fund guidance documents are available on DRCD's website [here](#).

Any queries from prospective applicants in relation to the Fund should be addressed to DRCD directly at ccif@drcd.gov.ie



How Applications are Assessed

Each project is assessed under each of the selection criteria to arrive at the overall score of each application.

Selection Criteria

All applications will be considered against the following selection criteria:

- Demonstration of Need, including Deprivation Index weighting (30%)
- Value for Money (30%)
- Achievability and Sustainability (30%)
- Governance (10%)

Please see the details of the selection criteria on the next page.

Selection Criteria	All applicants must demonstrate and outline the following in their proposal:
Demonstration of Need, including Deprivation Index Weighting (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the need for the works/equipment is evidenced including detail of local people involved in the plan and that their views have been considered. • The extent to which the works/ equipment will benefit the community i.e. offer more or new services, or engage more individuals / groups within the community, and in particular those most marginalised/underrepresented groups? • The Pobal Haase Index provides a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area using data compiled from various censuses. The Deprivation Index map is available online here. In assessing this criterion, Pobal will provide a score for each applicant based on the relative index score for the Electoral Area in which the Community Centre is located.
Value for Money (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the budget detailed, complete, and clearly supports the work outlined? • Will the items outlined in the budget clearly contribute to an improved/safer community facility? • Will the project make a difference to all the community, in particular those most marginalised?
Achievability and Viability (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the project will be overseen and risks managed by the board/committee. • The extent to which the project is achievable within the timeframe.
Governance (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the board/committee meet to oversee the functioning of the organisation. • The track record of managing funding, and performance against any current grant agreements with Pobal (where relevant).

Appraisal and Appeals

Appraisal of applications will take place following the portal closure, and **successful grantees will be notified.**

Following any pre-contract checks, contracts will be issued to successful organisations.



Appeals

All unsuccessful applicants, including those deemed ineligible, will have the opportunity to appeal the decision on their application. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with guidelines for this process with their decision. There will be no guarantee that those whose appeals are upheld will receive funding.

How Grants are Paid

We pay grants in stages as your project proceeds by reimbursing your costs depending on whether you are applying for a Category 1 or Category 2 and 3 grant.

We will only reimburse you for works/equipment for which has received formal approval and no reimbursement will be issued for invoices settled with cash.



Category 1 Grants

Payment for these grants will be made in two instalments:

- 90% of the grant is paid upon receipt of the signed grant agreement and all prepayment conditions (if applicable) have been met in full.
- The final 10% of the grant is paid retrospectively on receipt of the final on-line financial return detailing how the grant was actually spent. Only when all the correct information is received with the on-line return is the final payment released.

Category 2 and 3 Grants

Payment for grants in category 2 and 3 will be made in three instalments:

- 60% of the grant awarded will be paid on receipt of the signed grant agreement and compliance with all pre-payment conditions included in the grant agreement.
- 30% of the grant awarded will be paid when the grantee has spent 50% of their first instalment and has submitted an interim expenditure claim.
- 10% of the grant awarded will be paid retrospectively. The amount paid depends on the final verified expenditure, submission of all progress reports and evidence of compliance with all grant agreement conditions.

Reporting

Category 1 Grantees

Grantees will be required to complete an online expenditure report in advance of the final payment.



Category 2 and 3 Grantees

Grantees will be required to complete an interim online expenditure report, and another online expenditure report in advance of the final payment or at latest by Quarter 1 2024.

Narrative Reporting

All grantees will be required to provide evidence of the results achieved by the project in the form of a narrative report upon completion of the project. This report should include information such as:

- Number of individuals using the community centre
- How the project has improved safety and/or accessibility of the facility
- How the project has improved usability/availability of services
- Has the project increased number of individuals/groups engaged within the community, in particular the most marginalised
- What new or additional services/supports are being provided to the community as a result of the project's completion
- Photographs.

Funding Conditions

1. All expenditure will be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/public-spending-code/>
2. All applicants must provide their Tax Reference Number (TRN) and Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN) and ensure compliance with all relevant tax legislation.
3. To be eligible for grant funding the proposed project, as approved by the Department, must be completed in full. Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of any change being implemented.
4. Where an element of a project is not carried out as per the project application, grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
5. All appropriate financial and Government procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with, and grantees must fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.
6. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained and accessible by Department officials, or their designates, for audit purposes at all times and for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
7. Grantees will acknowledge the support of the Department of Rural and Community Development / Government of Ireland in all public announcements, advertising and appropriate signage relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies.
8. Each grantee will provide contact points to the Department to facilitate payments and information requests.

Non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the programme

Submission of false or misleading information to the Department at any stage is treated very seriously. Any organisation that does not comply with the terms and conditions of the Community Centres Investment Fund may be subject to inspection, have their grant withdrawn, be required to repay all or part of a grant.

APPENDIX - Explanation of key terms

Annual Financial Statements (AFS)

Organisations are required to keep proper books of account which give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial affairs. Annual Financial Statements are the financial reports based on a 12-month consecutive time period.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet displays the company's total assets and how the assets are financed, either through either debt or equity.

Income and Expenditure Statement

An income and expenditure statement is a financial document which identifies all forms of income that is received within a given period, while also documenting all payments or expenditures that were related to that same period (usually for a 12 month period).

Quarters

The application outlines that the project must be undertaken between Quarter 4 of 2022 and Quarter 1 of 2024. The standard calendar quarters that make up the year are as follows:

- January, February, and March (Q1)
- April, May, and June (Q2)
- July, August, and September (Q3)
- October, November, and December (Q4)

Managing Project Risks

The application requires information on how the Board/ Committee will manage the project including risks. Risks are issues that may come up during the project which may knock your project off track. The project should describe as many risks as possible, identifying who will be responsible for monitoring (Risk Owner) and what the process is for responding to them, to ensure they do not negatively impact the project (Mitigation Strategy).

For Example:

Risk description: During the renovations, the contractor comes across issues which hadn't been planned for and the project is delayed.

Risk owner: Community Centre Manager

Mitigation Strategy:

- A two month contingency has been built into the planning to allow for any unforeseen delays.
- The manager will meet with the contractor each week to ensure that all agreed timelines are on track and identify any potential issues early so that they can be responded to quickly.

Disadvantaged and Marginalised groups

There are a number of groups in society who face additional, and sometimes unspoken, barriers to equal participation in community and civic life. This can include economic barriers, exclusion through cultural and social norms or inherited biases, and a long history of service deficiencies. People who have been marginalised/disadvantaged can require additional supports to facilitate their equal participation. This can represent:

- Women from disadvantaged communities
- Lone parents
- Travellers
- Roma
- Asylum seekers
- Refugees
- New communities
- Homeless persons
- Marginalised youth
- People with disabilities
- Long term unemployed
- People with experience of the criminal justice system
- LGBTI+
- Other groups specific to the local profile

Gathering the opinions and needs of the community

In the application you are asked how you have identified need for the project. In your answer you are asked to describe how you gathered the opinions and needs of the local community to plan the project.

Examples of how to gather these needs to inform your plan could include, but not limited to:

- Hold a community meeting
- Create a planning group with representatives for all active and inactive members/users

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- Engage people who are not currently using the facility (particularly marginalised/disadvantaged people)
 - Carry out a survey.

Examples of needs and responses may be:

Need: Better access for older people, people with disabilities, those with buggies and those with mobility issues.

Response: Add ramps and railings to all entry and exit points of the building.

Need: More toilets so that people are not queuing in the corridors during breaks and the centre is able to facilitate large numbers of people for events.

Response: A new toilet block built.

Need: A bigger space for more physical activities (drama, Irish dancing etc).

Response: Build a large hall space to facilitate the needs of existing groups and encourage new/ more active groups to set up.



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