

Laois Community Climate Action Fund

Guidelines for Applicants

The Community Climate Action Programme has been developed by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) to support small and large, rural and urban communities to take climate action at a local level.

Under the Community Climate Action Programme, €60m from the Climate Action Fund is being invested in localised community climate action projects and initiatives, and capacity building over the next three years. Laois County Council (LCC) will administer Strands 1 and 1a of this Programme for communities within its areas of operation. Ireland has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 51% by 2030 and becoming a net zero and climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. This guide has been prepared for groups in the operational area of LCC to learn more about the Community Climate Action Fund and it may be subject to change. **Groups are advised to contact the Community Climate Action Officer to discuss the Fund: Karen Moore kmoore@laoiscoco.ie**

The Community Climate Action Programme has been developed under two strands addressing direct climate action. An initial €24 million has been allocated over an 18-month period for Strand 1 - Building Low Carbon Communities, with a focus on direct climate action and, in parallel, Strand 1a - Shared Island Fund, is providing €3 million for the Programme. [Strand 1A enables communities and Local Authorities in the Republic of Ireland to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland.](#)

Projects from both strands must meet the objectives of the Programme as set out in project eligibility below and be completed within 18 months. 100% funding is available for projects. Projects can include a suite of measures, not just one specific action. This fund is an opportunity for groups to take a holistic approach in making their community more sustainable and resilient to our climate changing. The Programme is open to a range of community groups – from those new to climate action to those with more experience.

Strand 1: Building Low Carbon Communities

A total of €465,000 has been allocated to Laois County Council to work in partnership with communities, large and small, rural, and urban, within the borders of Laois to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way.

Projects/initiatives eligible for funding:

The types of projects/initiatives, within communities, which are eligible for funding under the Programme, should seek to demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level by:

- Reducing or supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Increasing the production, or use, of renewable energy
- Improving energy efficiency
- Increasing climate resilience
- Identifying nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience in the State
- Assisting regions in the State (including communities in those regions) and within sectors of the economy impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy
- Involving potentially innovative solutions to address climate change

Funding available under Strand 1:

<i>Small Scale Projects</i>	<i>Medium Scale Projects</i>	<i>Large Scale Projects</i>
Projects Valued at less than €20,000	Projects Valued in the range of €20,000 to €50,000	Projects Valued in the range of €51,000 to €100,000
10% of projects funded will in this bracket	40% of projects funded will in this bracket	50% of projects funded will in this bracket

Strand 1A: Shared Island Community Climate Action

Strand 1 A enables communities and Local Authorities in the Republic of Ireland to propose a cross-border direct climate action project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland. Unlike Strand 1, Local Authorities have not been automatically allocated funding under strand 1A. Laois communities can apply and their project must have a clear North/South cross-border partnership approach and impact.

Eligible Communities, both Strand 1 and Strand 1A

Community groups are required to self-certify that they do not have the funding available to undertake the work without support, **OR** that the support will enable them to undertake more work which they otherwise would not be able to afford. Groups must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

Communities eligible for Strand 1: Building Low Carbon Communities

- Must be a not-for-profit organisation
- Must be in the operational area of Laois County Council
- Must submit a completed application form on or before 11th March 2024 at 4pm.
- Must be registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and /or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available
- The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding.
- Only one application per organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could represent several of the themes as part of a single application (more on fund themes Pg 3).

The following are not eligible to apply:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- National community and environmental organisations
- Schools, third level institutions

Communities eligible for Strand 1A: Shared Island Project

- Must be a not-for-profit organisation. (National community and environmental organisations are eligible to apply under Strand 1A due the scope for all-island projects)
- Republic of Ireland partner must be located in the operational area of Laois County Council
- Must be registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and /or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available
- Must have at least one partner organisation in Northern Ireland. Partner organisations must be either:
 - Not-for-profit organisation
 - Local Authority
 - Local/National community and environmental organisation registered in Northern Ireland

The following types of organisations are not eligible to apply for Strand 1A:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- Schools, third levels institutions etc.
- Financial institutions

Strand 1 and Strand 1A Themes

The community-based projects will take climate action across more than one, preferably several, of the following 5 themes:

- Theme 1: Community Energy
- Theme 2: Sustainable Travel
- Theme 3: Food and waste
- Theme 4: Shopping and recycling
- Theme 5: Local Climate & Environmental Action



Applications should try to incorporate projects that cover as many themes as possible. In developing projects, communities can also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Below is a breakdown of each theme and some suggested projects. These are only examples and for more resources on this please refer to <https://laois.ie/about-the-council/climate-action/community-climate-action-fund/>

Community Energy

Many Irish buildings have very low energy ratings and high running costs, mainly due to heat loss. Heat loss accounts for 10% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. How we build, heat and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We can make our buildings more energy efficient by retrofitting them e.g. insulation, by switching off and using low energy lights/ appliances, and smart controls.

Projects of interest under this theme would reduce the climate impact of buildings in communities by using less energy, utilising renewable energy and avoiding heat loss. Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind)
- Retrofitting community buildings
- Lighting retrofit to LED

Potentially relevant UN SDGs:



Sustainable travel

Transport accounts for approximately 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Changing our means of travel is not simple and is often dictated by previous planning and housing choices, particularly in rural communities. How we travel is one of the main areas where behaviour change can have a rapid and real impact on achieving our climate goals.

Projects of interest under this theme would contribute to a reduction in travel related emissions and examples include, but are not limited to:

- Improving access to cycle/ walkways
- Cycle parking
- Bike fixing station
- Bike library

Potentially relevant UN SDGs:



Food & Waste

Growing, processing and transporting food requires large amounts of energy and materials. It is estimated that one third of the food we grow is wasted and accounts for 10% of global emissions. There is a national commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. While being mindful that different situations such as the culture, religion, health, abilities and tastes can affect the decisions individual people can make; at a systems, community and lifestyle level there are opportunities to connect and engage people in action on food, waste and climate change.

Projects of interest under this theme would reduce food waste and examples include, but are not limited to:

- Community gardens or allotments
- Community fridge or pantry
- Food markets
- Repair hubs
- Community garden composting facilities

Potentially relevant UN SDGs:



Shopping & Recycling

What we buy has a major contribution to emissions in terms of how they are made, transported, used, reused and recycled. If we keep on using resources as we do now, by 2050 we would need the resources of three Earths to satisfy demand. Ireland is moving towards creating a circular economy - making products that last longer, can be repurposed, reused and eventually recycled more easily. One of our climate goals is to increase the amount of waste that is recycled and to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030. As shoppers we have the power to influence. People are changing their shopping habits by buying products that last longer or repurposing items, planning what they will do with things when they are finished using them, recycling as much as possible, actively segregating their waste for collection and using recycling centres and services near to them.

Projects of interest under this theme would increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community and initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling. Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Community repair hubs
- Swap shops
- Toy/Sport reusable kits
- Library of Things
- Water filling stations
- Single use plastics reduction or elimination in the community

Potentially relevant UN SDGs:



Local Climate & Environmental Action

Ireland has an abundance of natural resources, from our bogs and forests to our rivers and oceans. These natural resources need to be protected from climate change, and in return, they will help us by absorbing carbon, reducing the risk of flooding, increasing plants and wildlife (biodiversity), and acting as places for us all to reconnect with nature. Community action can take many forms from simple clean-ups to community schemes, to making plans to adapt to the changes already happening.

Potentially relevant UN SDGs:



Projects of interest under this theme would take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Mini forests
- Forest schools
- Dispersed orchards
- Community gardens
- Roof gardens
- Pollinator projects
- Water harvesting
- Climate resilience projects
- Wetland conservation

Cost and Budgeting

When seeking quotes for projects they must be sought in line with the Office of Government Public Procurement Guidelines and Laois County Councils Procurement Procedures:

- **Goods, supplies or services up to €50, 000 ex VAT**
3 written quotations from suitable candidates must be sought e.g. purchase of bikes for a bike library.
- **Goods, supplies or services over €50,000 ex VAT**
must be advertised on eTenders (unlikely to be relevant for CCAF as that is over €50,000 ex vat for *any one payment to single Supplier* of goods, supplies or services in a project proposal).
- **Capital works up to a value of €100,000 ex VAT**
5 written quotations from suitable candidates must be sought e.g. retrofit community building or installation of solar panels for community building.

Note: **Proof of quotations sought** must be submitted with all applications *and* be kept on file by applicant also.

Note: Quotes submitted must be **valid for at least 12 months**.

Note: Applicant group must ensure costs applied for are reasonable, represent an efficient use of resources and are commensurate with the quality and nature of the activities proposed.

Eligible costs:

Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

- Costs submitted must be for the sole purpose of implementing the project and should not relate to any other purpose.
- Duplicate public funding must not have been received, or will be received, from other sources for the same purpose.
- Costs must be verifiable e.g., by evidence of public procurement, an invoice and receipt for payment.
- Community groups/organisations will be advised if some costs have been deemed ineligible from the outset. This will be taken account of in the grant amount recommended and the amount awarded and included in the grant agreement for the proposed project/initiative.
- Community groups/organisations cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises.
- Up to 100% funding may be provided from the Community Climate Action Fund. Other funding may be leveraged for projects (e.g., with LEADER, Tidy Towns, Town and Village Enhancement funding, etc.) although that is not a requirement of this programme.
- Pre-funding can be provided to community groups/organisations up to a maximum of 25% of the approved allocation in *very limited circumstances* and on a *case-by-case basis*. Pre-funding will only be considered for community groups/organisations where a clear need has been identified and is evidenced.
- Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.

- It is the responsibility of the administrators of/body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme to ensure that using this Programme to co-fund a project does not contradict the rules of that other scheme/programme.

Ineligible costs:

The Community Climate Action programme will not formally fund activities involving*:

- Projects that solely benefit individuals
- Teaching/staffing
- Travel and transport costs except in exceptional circumstances
- Equipment, unless directly associated with the project
- Income generating projects
- Overheads, ongoing running costs
- Insurance
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Redundancy costs
- Penalties/interest/bank interest/bank charges
- Loan repayments
- Retrospective costs i.e., expenditure which has taken place prior to approval date of the project
- Legal fees

**Please note, this list is not exhaustive*

State Aid Requirements:

Public funding is deemed to be ‘State Aid’ where it provides the recipient, whether an enterprise, not-for-profit organisations, or an individual, an economic advantage over others. To comply with State Aid rules, the level of funding provided to a project promoter must not exceed €200,000 - this is known as the De Minimis ceiling. De Minimis regulations sets a limit on how much assistance can be given to organisations. The current limit for a company, or group, irrespective of size or location, is €200,000 during the previous three-year fiscal period. Many groups/ projects under this Programme would not be considered State Aid and therefore will not be subject to the De Minimis ceiling. However, community groups when submitting their application will need to clarify their status and if necessary declare if they have previously received any De Minimis State Aid (e.g. from a state agency, government department, Local Enterprise Office, local authority, LEADER funding etc.)

Application Process:

Interested community groups should contact Laois Community Climate Action Officer to discuss their project ideas. The Community Climate Action Officer is there to offer guidance to groups developing their projects and completing the application form: **Karen Moore - kmoore@laoiscoco.ie**

Applications are submitted through the completion and submission of a signed online application form. No applications will be considered after the deadline.

Application form is accessible until **4:00pm on 11th March 2024** through Laois County Council online application platform, available at: <https://submit.link/1E1> This will bring you to submit.com application portal. You will have to register with this before using the online application.

Note: once registered with submit.com you can click through the form to check out the questions and see what you are asked for and just remember to press "Save" before quitting.

Application form checklist

Documents to upload on the application form:

1. Group governance: If your group is not a member of the Laois PPN you will need to upload governance documents that show your organisational structure, for example, whether it is a legally established or informal organisation, and how decisions are made. Types of documentation include: terms of reference, constitution, official notes (or minutes) of annual general meetings or management meetings, etc. You can confirm your groups membership of Laois PPN (and PPN Registration number needed in form) by contacting 0578665661 or ppn@laoiscoco.ie
2. Project costings section requires proof of quotes sought to be uploaded.
3. Other supporting documentation, e.g. biodiversity reports, energy audits, etc. This is optional on form and only relevant documents should be upload.

Information needed for form:

4. Location of proposed project (Eircode or X Y coordinates)
5. Whether your group can reclaim VAT

Other information requested for application form. Only if your group has these. They are not needed to apply.

6. Tax Reference Number
7. Charitable Status Number
8. Tax Clearance Access Number

Evaluation, Selection and Approval

For a project to be successful and receive funding they need to first pass the evaluation stage, then the selection stage and finally the approval stage.

1. Evaluation: All applications will be evaluated by a committee to ensure they align with the objectives and eligibility of this Programme and will be marked against selection criteria.
2. Selection: Following evaluation, LCC will then select the final projects taking account of the highest scores, geographical distribution of projects, desirability to fund a variety of different projects, across multiple themes and the contribution of the projects to the climate action objectives of LCC.
3. Approval: LCC will submit the selected projects to the Minister of the Environment, Climate and Communications for final approval. Success at the evaluation, and selection stages is not a guarantee of funding. The Minister will decide what projects are ultimately approved and any specific conditions of funding.

Programme Timelines: *(indicative and are subject to slight change)*

Project Milestones	Dates
Online portal closed for applications	11/03/2024
Confirmation of Ministerial approved projects	July – Aug 2024
Contracts in place between Laois County Council and approved Community Groups/Organisations	Aug – Sep 2024
First drawdown of vouched expenditure for projects	Nov 2024
Projects to be completed 18 months after start date	Tbc in Letter of Offer between LCC and Group

Payment and reporting

Successful applications for funding under this Programme will only be paid to the applicant group/organisation's Bank Account. Groups will submit quarterly expenses to LCC including invoices, proof of payments, contracts and a brief update on progress (e.g. any information on progress of the project, conditions of funding, challenges/issues etc.) The Community Climate Action Officer will be developing case studies on projects and so groups will be asked to provide details about their works and experiences.

All payments are subject to:

- Evidence of compliance with the public procurement guidelines. If the grantee does not comply with the public procurement guidelines, financial sanctions may apply e.g. expenditure will be deemed ineligible and will not be reimbursed.
- Evidence of compliance with Community Climate Action Fund Guidelines as laid out in this document.
- Eligibility of the costs as per Community Climate Action Fund Guidelines and Letter of Offer.

Pre-funding / bridge financing

This a reimbursement grant (i.e. groups pay for the works and are refunded quarterly). However, funding is available for groups who would not be in a position to pay for the works and wait to be refunded.

In application form groups will be asked if they require pre-funding. Pre-funding will be given out in instalments e.g. 25% of the total project cost at quarterly periods (which works out over 12 months at a minimum). Only when groups have fully spent their first prefunding instalment (i.e. vouched expenditure has been submitted and approved by LCC) and have met the milestone criteria will the next instalment be released, and so on.

LCC will agree with each individual group their pre-funding instalment amounts and timelines. Pre-funding should only be used for the payment of eligible costs approved by LCC.

Any unused portion of pre-funding that remains unspent at the end of the project must be returned/repaid to LCC immediately. Groups will be liable for unspent funds or ineligible costs.

Data Protection

Information provided by applicants and those who receive funding will be utilised for the purposes of evaluating and administering this Fund, and to facilitate reporting, auditing and any site visits. When evaluating the applications and during the lifetime of the projects, LCC may share information with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. To learn more about how Laois County Council collects and manages your personal data and about your rights as a data subject, please read **Laois County Council Privacy Statement**.

Data submitted to the application platform is processed by **Submit.com**, an Irish company, contracted by Laois County Council to host and process digital applications and submissions. Information you submit is managed in a GDPR compliant environment and is not transferred outside of the E.E.A. (European Economic Area). You can read more in the **Submit.com privacy statement**.

Use of services on this platform Submit.com requires a one-time registration with an active email address to create an account. You are advised to keep your login credentials safe and never to share them with a third party. Laois County Council takes no responsibility for the security of your login information. If you forget your password, you can request to have it reset from the main login screen. Once the account is activated, you can make submissions to any relevant applications hosted on the platform. While logged in, you can access and review all information submitted by you regarding applications made. Draft applications can be deleted by you at any time. Completed applications can only be deleted by the data controller, Laois County Council and we will do so at your request, providing there is no legal or audit implications in doing so. To help you exercise your rights and change/delete information that relates to you we may ask that you verify your identity – for example, through authenticating the email supplied by you on registration.

Any information which you volunteer via this online platform will be treated with the highest standard of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Acts, 1988-2018. Once applications have closed and funding has been awarded data submitted by you, hosted on servers relating to this platform will be removed from submit.com and stored in a secure location on LCC system where LCC data retention arrangements then apply to data. Data transferred from submit.com to internal Laois County Council servers will be treated in accordance with the specific legislation and data retention period relating to the department involved and is detailed in the **Community Climate Action Privacy Notice** (click [here](#) to view).

The sub processors employed in the use of this solution are:

AWS <https://aws.amazon.com/compliance/gdpr-center/>

Tagadab <https://www.tagadab.com/knowledgebase/GDPR-statement>

Mailgun <https://www.mailgun.com/gdpr>

Contact Information

Karen Moore - Community Climate Action Officer

Climate Action Section, Laois County Council

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