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**Community Recognition Fund**

**2024**

**Scheme Outline for Community Groups/Organisations**



# 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.

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. 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

The 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 groups/organisations develop proposals that reflect the needs of their own communities and projects that will deliver real medium-long term benefits to those communities.

# Project delivery by community groups

Where a project 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 will ensure the community organisation has sufficient cash flow to ensure the project is deliverable and that they have capacity to do so.

## D. Application process

Each group/organisation will submit and Expression of Interest to the Local Authority for consideration. In return the Local Authority will submit a funding request to the Department for approval 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 successful group/organisation.

**No changes to applications will be accepted after the EOI form is submitted for review by the Local Authority.**

## E. Claim process

While the costs provided in the Expression of Interest will be indicative in nature, funding will be drawn down from the Local Autjority based on actual costs incurred and appropriate documentation must be retained in this regard.

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.

## F. 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

### H. Timeline for Delivery

**All projects should be fully delivered and funds drawdown by November 13th 2026.**

### G. Procurement & Governance

National Procurement Guidelines and DPENDR [Circular 13/2014](https://assets.gov.ie/22813/0262085893084c6fa88ef11c7f4acd0d.pdf) 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.

### H. 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.

### I. Publicity

Groups/Organisation 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

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.

**J. Queries**

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