Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
Second Call for Applications

Frequently Asked Questions
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1 Overview

1.1 What is the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund?

Project Ireland 2040, launched in February 2018, is the Government’s overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the ensuing ten years, the National Development Plan 2018-2027, and the National Planning Framework which outlines the broader policy principles and priorities in planning for future population and economic growth in Ireland to 2040.

As part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed to providing an additional €1 billion for a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (“the Fund”) over the period 2019 to 2027. The Fund was established to provide investment to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in rural communities and assist in the regeneration of towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas. The Fund is a key instrument in the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and in particular to assist in achieving the National Strategic Outcomes, most particularly Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities.

1.2 What will the Fund support?

The Fund will support coordinated and collaborative projects between Government Departments, State agencies, Local Authorities, other public bodies, communities and, where appropriate, philanthropic funders and/or the private sector, which will have an impact on sustainable economic and social development in rural areas.

Examples of projects which would be prioritised for funding in this regard might include major regeneration projects carried out as part of an agreed regeneration strategy or town plan developed for the town or village concerned or projects which deliver on specific requirements or priorities set out in sectoral, regional or country strategies or plans.

The Fund will prioritise investments of scale which would not otherwise be delivered without the additionality provided by the Fund, and projects that are outside the scope of funding by existing schemes. In this context, projects are likely to be multi-annual and multi-faceted, involving a number of elements or phases as part of a broad strategic plan.
2. Key features of the second call

2.1 What are the Key priorities of the second call?

Under the second call for applications to the Fund, the overarching priority will be to support projects which exhibit the greatest potential for the achievement of stated national, regional and local strategic development and planning objectives and the delivery of significant and sustainable regeneration in rural towns and villages and their hinterlands.

The capital investment supported by the Fund will seek to deliver key outcomes, amongst which are sustainable community and economic development in rural Ireland; the revitalisation and regeneration of towns and villages; the encouragement of entrepreneurship and innovation; the development of key economic growth sectors such as tourism; improved community development and quality of life; the protection of the environment and our heritage assets; and the development of cultural life in rural areas.

The primary focus of the second call for applications under the Fund is on the regeneration of rural towns and villages and their hinterlands. Funding will be channelled towards areas where need is identified as being most acute and regeneration and investment required more urgently.

2.2 What category of applications can apply to the Fund?

This second call for applications under the Fund invites proposals under Category 1 - capital projects which are ready to commence at the date of application.

Category 1 projects are projects which are ready to commence are those which have the necessary consents (e.g. planning, including Part 8, environmental, wildlife archaeological etc.) in place, are at an advanced stage of design, satisfy the requirements of the Public Spending Code\(^4\), and are procurement-ready.

2.3 Can I submit a Category 2 application to this call?

Category 2 proposals are not being sought in this call. There will be a further call for Category 2 proposals in October 2019.

\(^4\)https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/
2.4 What type of projects can apply for this call?

The type of activities that will be supported from the Fund can include:

- Major town and village regeneration projects, carried out in accordance with an agreed town plan or regeneration strategy for the area.
- A range of measures as part of town and village regeneration (identified in an agreed town plan or regeneration strategy for the area). Projects which deliver on multiple objectives, for example, delivering a town centre regeneration project which also contributes to economic, tourism, community or cultural development.
- Projects which take an integrated approach to developing employment opportunities within a town and/or its environs, for example, based around a sectoral strength (e.g. an industry cluster) or a cultural, heritage or environmental asset.
- Infrastructure that enables improved accessibility within, and to, towns and villages, supporting in particular sustainable modes such as walking, cycling, and public transport links.
- Projects that support job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas (e.g. development of Digital Hubs, Enterprise Hubs, Creative Hubs, training facilities).
- Development or expansion of tourism initiatives which generate new areas of economic activity and attract increased visitor numbers to rural areas.

This list is not exhaustive but provides an indication of the type of activities which will be eligible for support. A proposal may include more than one component as part of an overall plan to deliver a strategic objective for a town, village or rural area. In that regard, attention should be drawn to the Key Criteria which proposals will need to demonstrate, most particularly the strategic vision required.

2.5 What type of proposal will not be supported?

Priority is not being accorded to certain project types unless it is clearly shown that the project of this type proposed will significantly contribute to rural regeneration and economic development, based on an agreed wider town plan or regeneration strategy for that town, village or area. These project types include:

- Sports projects, particularly single-use projects;
- Single purpose community developments;
- Utility development infrastructure (water, gas, waste, electricity) projects.
3 Eligibility

3.1 What areas are eligible to apply to the Fund?

Rural towns with a population of over 10,000 people are eligible to apply for funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund which is administered by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

A number of towns with fewer than 10,000 people but with more than 2,500 jobs (2006 baseline) and which function as significant centres of employment may also be eligible for support under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (Gorey, Shannon, Nenagh, Westport, Roscommon, Monaghan, Tuam, Thurles, Dungarvan, New Ross, Ballinasloe, Carrick-on-Shannon and Trim). However, no individual project will be able to avail of both the Urban and Rural Funds.

3.2 Who can submit an application?

For the purposes of compliance with public financial procedures, the lead party to an application must be a State-funded body.

A State-funded body is a body established by central Government or with central Government approval and which receives a portion of its funding from the State; this includes, for example, local authorities, Local Development Companies, semi-State companies and other State agencies.

3.3 How many applications can be submitted per lead applicant?

Each applicant is only permitted to submit a maximum of 3 applications to the call.

3.4 Do all necessary consents and permissions have to in place at the closing date?

The lead party to an application will be required to certify that the project proposed is at the required level of readiness at the time of submission. Any projects which are identified as still requiring planning or other consent(s) following the closing date for applications will not be considered.
3.5 Can a community group put forward a project?

Yes, so long as the lead party for the project is a state-funded body (as outlined in 3.2). As with all other applications, the lead party must be willing to fully endorse and stand over the aims and output of the proposed project and enter into contractual arrangements in relation to its delivery.
4. Support Available from the Fund

4.1 How much will the Fund provide to projects?

As a general rule, the Fund will provide up to 75% of the total project value, with at least 25% to be provided in matching contributions by the applicants. A minimum of 10% of matching contributions must be in cash.

Match funding may be in the form of a combination of wider Exchequer and/or State sector expenditure, Local Authority investment and/or land, community investment, philanthropic contributions, private sector investment (where appropriate), or other asset contributions.

Funds secured from existing Department of Rural and Community Development schemes or programmes are not eligible to be used as matched funding.

Where land or other assets are being put forward as elements of match funding this must be supported by appropriate evidence relating to the value of the land or assets concerned, such as an up-to-date valuation provided by an accredited source.

A higher maximum contribution of 80% from the Fund will be considered where community contributions account for more than 50% of the match-funding.

4.2 Is there a minimum or maximum request for funding?

The minimum request from the Fund for Category 1 projects is €500,000. There is no upper limit, but all proposals must demonstrate detailed project costings and clear value for money.
5. Evaluation Process

5.1 How will a successful project be chosen?

A Project Advisory Board will be established to oversee the assessment of proposals and to advise the Minister for Rural and Community Development on the proposals received. The Advisory Board will be chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development and comprise a number of relevant Government Departments, as well as external experts.

Projects will be assessed using the criteria set out in the Information Booklet. The initial assessment and analysis process will be undertaken by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The outcomes from this process will be considered by the Project Advisory Board and, together with:

- the observations and advice of the members of the Board; and
- a final determination on the extent to which projects align with Project Ireland 2040, the overall objectives of the Fund and the requirement to achieve balanced regional development,

will then form the basis for the preparation of a report by the Department to the Minister on projects to be recommended for funding.

Final decisions on the funding of projects will be made by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, following consideration of the recommendations provided.

5.2 What are the criteria against which the proposals will be judged?

To achieve the objectives of the Fund, proposals should demonstrate:

- The **capacity to deliver** on the objectives of Project Ireland 2040, Local Economic and Community Plans, County Development Plans, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (currently being finalised by the Regional Assemblies), or other local, regional or sectoral development plans/strategies.

- **Collaboration**, involving relevant Government Departments, State agencies, Local Authorities and other bodies as appropriate; and **endorsement** by key stakeholders such as the relevant authority or agency with overall responsibility for that area or sector in which the project is located.
- **Sustainability**, the capacity to deliver lasting benefits which will outweigh the investment made and be in a position to achieve and maintain financial independence.

- **Transformative potential**, the capacity to deliver transformative change for a rural town or village, deliver social and economic benefits for rural communities and act as a catalyst for increased activity in a rural area.

- **Additionality**, how the project could not otherwise have taken place without the Fund and how the Fund is not acting as a substitute for investment which is already provided for under the remit of a Department or agency.

- **Value for Money** – funding a project which will deliver outputs and outcomes which will justify the investment made.

- **Leveraging of funding** from the parties to the application, including philanthropic funders and/or the private sector where appropriate.

- **A significant and sustainable impact** on the social or economic development of rural communities.

### 5.3 What is the Appraisal Scheme for the Fund?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Max. marks available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readiness</strong></td>
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<td>Is the project ready to commence?</td>
<td>Pass/Fail</td>
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*Note: This is a pass/fail requirement which will be judged upon whether the project is ready to enter the procurement phase at the time the application is lodged. Planning and other consents must be in place at the time of application.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Policy objectives</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent to which national, regional and local strategic objectives (Project Ireland 2040, County Development Plans, LECPs, sectoral strategies or plans etc) are met</td>
<td>150(^1)</td>
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*Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement of the extent to which proposals meet national, regional and local objectives and specific requirements or priorities set out in sectoral, regional or county strategies or plans. Marking will also likely be informed by a judgement as to how the outcomes of proposed projects meet such objectives or requirements and the level and quality of evidence provided to support these links.*

\(^1\) Pass mark of 90 (60%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration between promoting parties and level of endorsement of key local and sectoral authorities for proposal</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Note: Marks for collaboration will likely be awarded based on a judgement of the level of added value provided by the collaboration proposed as part of a project e.g. through working across boundaries or joining together to reach shared goals. The judgement of marking will also likely be informed by level of collaboration and support provided by the relevant authority or agency with overall responsibility for the area or sector which a project is located in or aimed at.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity of partners to deliver project as envisaged and to meet Public Spending Code and governance requirements</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement of the strength of the Governance arrangements set out, the track record of the project partners, the project plan set out and the associated timelines and milestones, arrangements for monitoring, project management, financial oversight and compliance with PSC requirements.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Extent to which the proposal can deliver on key policy priorities</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Note: For the purposes of this second call under the Fund, the key policy priorities relate to building the resilience of communities to face up to the challenges posed by Brexit and assisting in the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement as to the extent to which proposals contribute to delivering on these priorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential Impact</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic or social impact on rural areas or communities (e.g. jobs, investment, place-making, etc)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement of the level of innovation of the project, the robustness of the economic or social targets set out, the relevance of outcomes targeted by the project and the completeness of the proposals to measure the achievement of outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformative Potential, particularly in relation to rural towns and villages</td>
<td>200</td>
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Note: Marking will likely be informed based on a judgement of the extent to which the proposal will contribute to balanced regional and local development, the extent to which the proposal will likely deliver transformative change for a rural town and village and result in social and economic benefits for rural communities, particularly where need for such change is identified as most acute, and the extent to which it will act as a catalyst for increased activity and development in a rural town or village once complete.

### Sustainability

Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement of the capacity of the project to deliver lasting impacts which will outweigh the investment made and/or the capacity of the project to achieve financial independence.

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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Pass mark of 60 (60%)</td>
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### Quality of budgetary proposal

Overall quality of budgetary proposal and Value for Money

Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on an overall judgement on the value for money of the project informed by the size and scope of the proposal, its geographic and population reach and its likely impact on people and communities in rural areas, in comparison to the scale of the investment sought. This will also be informed by the robustness of the budgetary proposal and a judgement as to the appropriateness of the costs set out.

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<td>100</td>
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<td>Pass mark of 60 (60%)</td>
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### Additionality

Note: Marks will likely be awarded based on a judgement as to the likelihood of the project proceeding in the absence of the Fund, the extent to which the Fund allows the project to be undertaken on a larger scale or to impact on a wider population, the availability of other funding outlets which the project could avail of, the extent to which investment is relevant to the project is potentially already provided for under the remit of any Department or agency and the extent to which the project has unlocked funding from other partners.

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**TOTAL** 1000
6. Application Process

6.1 What is the timeline for submitting applications?

This call to the Fund opened on the 12th April 2019. Applications can be submitted anytime up to 12pm on the 6th August. Any applications received after this time and date will not be accepted.

6.2 How do I submit an application?

Applications should be submitted electronically on the official Application Form which is available on the website of the Department of Rural and Community Development at https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c5849b-rural-funding/?section=rural-regeneration-and-development

The completed Application Form should be send to rddf@drcd.gov.ie

6.3 Who should sign the Application Form?

The Application Form should be signed at Director of Service level or equivalent. The contact name and details included in Section 1 of the form should be the person who is the main contact point for the Department for any follow up queries or correspondence.

6.4 Can I include supplementary documentation with my application?

Only the Application Form and the documentation requested as part of the application should be submitted. Applicants may include a schedule of supporting documentation for the proposal which may be requested at a later date.

6.5 Will I receive an acknowledgement email from the Department?

A unique identifier will be assigned to each application that is submitted. The applicant will be notified of the Application ID within 5 days of receipt of the completed application form.

6.6 Can I send my application through file transfer?

No, the Application Form and supporting documentation should be sent as attachments to an email.