Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) 2018

FAQ’s

1. Why was this Fund set up?

• Project Ireland 2040, as launched by the Government in February 2018, is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland.

• It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2018 to 2027, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, and the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF).

• The National Development Plan established four new funds, with a combined allocation of €4 billion to 2027.

• The Urban Regeneration and Development fund (URDF) has an overall allocation of €2 billion to 2027 and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has responsibility for implementation of the URDF which has initially €550 million allocated in the NDP to 2022 and €100 million available for expenditure in 2019.

• A first call for proposals under the fund was launched in July 2018 and the deadline for submission of applications was 28 September.

2. What are the Objectives of this Fund?

• The URDF was established to support more compact and sustainable development, through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland’s five cities and other large towns, in line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.

• This is to enable a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and towns and to ensure that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit.
The types of proposals eligible for funding included, but were not limited, to the following:

- Active land management, including the acquisition, planning, design, enabling through servicing, decontamination or otherwise, of areas, sites and buildings;
- Measures to address building vacancy;
- Building refurbishment, redevelopment and/or demolition;
- The development of areas, sites and buildings and the strategic relocation of uses or activities;
- Public amenity, planting, streetscape/public realm, parks, recreational facilities, safety, security and/or crime prevention works;
- Infrastructure related to housing, economic or skills development (including enterprise and tourism), transport and services infrastructure;
- Infrastructure that enables improved accessibility, in particular sustainable modes such as walking and cycling, public transport and multi-modal interchange, but also including roads, bridges and car parking;
- Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, in an urban context.

3. Who assessed these projects?

- A Government Decision of May 2018 required that the assessment of projects under the Fund should involve an advisory board comprised of civil servants and experts from the sector, with final decisions on projects to be approved by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

- The Project Advisory Board for the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund was established in October 2018.

- The Board was tasked with strategic input and advice to the internal assessment process/applications for the Fund and providing high-level guidance on the suitability of proposals for funding to the Department.

- Members of the Board were provided access to relevant documentation relating to applications received for the Fund (to be utilised to the extent members considered necessary) by way of an online portal.

- The URDF PAB met over October/November to review initial recommendations, following which a sub-committee of the management board carried out a further review prior to submission to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.
Informed by the discussions and review of both stages, the Department was tasked with preparing a set of recommendations to the Minister in relation to projects which should be considered for funding in 2019.

4. How were the Projects assessed?

- All submissions for funding (189 in total) were assessed over October/November, following a three stage process and against a 10 point pre-assigned assessment criteria framework.

- An initial appraisal process (IAP) was carried within the DHPLG on all submissions with preliminary recommendations being made to a Project Advisory Board (PAB) who provided high-level input and advice as applicable per category or proposal.

- Following this process, preliminary proposals were presented to a management committee that made the final recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

- There were two categories of submission, Category A for projects that were ready to go and Category B to support the initial development of projects (Master-planning/Feasibility) to ensure a pipeline of projects into the future.

- The fund was over-subscribed in both categories (A & B) on a proportion of over 4 to 1 for the start year of 2019.

5. What were the main reasons for project selection?

Projects that were recommended for approval in principle were due to the following general reasons:

(i) Proposal responded well to the core assessment criteria of Fund (10) or the quality of the proposal was high;

(ii) Appropriate response to NPF considerations (Location/Catalyst Project);

(iii) Quality of the proposal offered leverage in the right location (City/Regional Drivers)

Those projects that were not eligible or recommended were due to the following general reasons:

(i) Proposal did not respond to core assessment criteria of Fund (10) or the quality of the proposal was low;
(ii) Proposal was a routine capital project more related to other capital funding sources available by another Department or Agency;
(iii) Proposals was already commercially viable and would be better supported by Market response;
(iv) Proposal was not in compliance with State Aid or the additionality factor/wider leveraging of project was in question;

There were also those projects, while not recommended due to the above reasons, were considered worthwhile if further enabled or encouraged. This would support a continual pipeline of projects (Category B) that may revert again in 2019 (with support) for re-submission to a subsequent call.

6. **What type of submissions did you receive?**

- Overall submissions differed in scale, complexity and were multi-sectoral in nature with a wide variety of public bodies having applied including Local Authorities, Government Departments, State Agencies and public bodies in collaboration with other sectoral partners.

- Proposals contained a large number of themes and sectoral areas including:
  - Urban Regeneration
  - Public Realm, Enterprise Development
  - Community Facilities
  - Redevelopment of existing/vacant areas
  - Enabling strategic infrastructure to leverage further development
  - Cultural and amenity development.

- The final set of recommendations reflected a good divergence of regional location, mix of typology or project type and quality of proposal.

- It is envisaged that a workshop approach will be developed in advance of the next call in early 2019 to give general feedback and information as applicable and to enable/promote more informed applications in the second round.