



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Government of Ireland Just Transition Fund (JTF) 2020

Information Booklet

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Section 1: Overview

1.1 The Fund

The Just Transition Fund 2020 is a dedicated fund of €11m, financed by Government through an allocation of €6m from an increase in the carbon tax and an additional €5 million committed by ESB. The Fund is administered by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) (hereafter referred to as “The Department”) and is grant funding. Applications can be made by private, public, and community and voluntary organisations. Funding will be allocated through a competitive process which will support projects that contribute most to achieving a just transition to a low carbon, climate resilient economy.

The focus of the Fund in 2020 is on the Wider Midlands region and the first call for proposals is limited to this region. The imminent closure of two ESB peat-fired plants will impact regional and local employment, particularly for Bord na Móna (BnM) employees. The regional economy and local communities will also be significantly affected. The call is open to suitable projects from counties East Galway, Kildare, Laois, Longford, North Tipperary, Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath. The Wider Midlands is the first region in Ireland experiencing a concentrated transition away from carbon intensive activities. This presents significant challenges but also brings important opportunities to respond and adapt, and to create learning for other regions across Ireland on how best to deliver a just transition.

1.2 Policy Alignment

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) aligns with the Government’s policy on just transition as set out in Climate Action Plan, and with the investment objectives of Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan. The Fund reflects recommendations in the Just Transition Commissioner’s First Interim Report to Government, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2020, and it will contribute to the objectives of Future Jobs Ireland. The JTF is one of a number of Government schemes established to facilitate a just transition in the Wider Midlands and will operate in parallel with and seek to complement the Midlands Retrofitting Scheme and the National Parks and Wildlife Service Bogs Rehabilitation Programme.

1.3 Objective and Funding Priorities

The objective of the Just Transition Fund is to fund innovative projects that contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of regions which are most affected by the

transition away from fossil fuels or greenhouse-gas-intensive industrial processes. The 2020 call is directed to the Wider Midlands region as it transitions away from peat as an energy source. See Section 2 for more on the Fund objective and priorities.

1.4 START and MRTT Process

The JTF is operating in parallel with a regional MRTT-START process. START (Secretariat Technical Assistance to Regions in Transition) is an EU technical assistance programme to support regions in transition across Europe. It aims to leave a legacy of enhanced transition-related expertise, capabilities, and capacities in the coal and peat regions that receive support.¹ The Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT) was established in late 2018 and is managed by Offaly County Council. It brings together Local Authorities, social partners and key regional stakeholders, for example IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Educational Training Boards (ETBs) and Regional Skills Fora.

The MRTT and START teams are working together to support just transition in the region. START is assisting the MRTT in developing a prioritised project inventory in the region, focusing on identifying key projects which can facilitate change and on sign-posting organisations to potential future funding opportunities.

A requirement for the Just Transition Fund is that projects must be pre-registered with MRTT – START to ensure a more strategic and localised approach to identifying suitable projects. The closing date for registering with the MRTT – START process was **12th June 2020**. See Section 3 for more information on the MRTT - START process.

¹ The Midlands is one of seven regions selected by the START programme for support through the initiative. More information on START is available [here](#). More information on the Midlands Region and MRTT is available [here](#).

Section 2: Just Transition Fund 2020 Objective and Priorities

2.1 Overview

The Just Transition Fund 2020 is targeted at a wide range of innovative, regional activities in the Wider Midlands which align with the Fund objectives and priorities. Jobs in peat will make way for jobs in renewable energy, bog rehabilitation and other new business opportunities, and the Fund seeks to ensure that workers and the Wider Midlands as a community are fully supported during this transition. The funding will help SMEs to create new economic opportunities, will support the re-skilling of workers and community capacity building, and diversify economic activity in the affected region overall.

The Fund will lead to a wide range of outcomes such as sustainable job creation and new economic opportunities; active inclusion; strengthened cooperation between public, private, and community and voluntary organisations; maximising the region's considerable tourism potential; delivering environmental and climate benefits; community capacity building and resilience; and, putting in place tailored employment and training services to meet regional needs.

2.2 Fund Objective

The objective of the Just Transition Fund 2020 is to fund innovative projects that contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the Wider Midlands region and which have employment and enterprise potential. It will support projects that take a whole-of-Midlands strategic approach and will provide funding in a manner that is complementary with other sources of public funding.

2.3 Fund Priorities

The JTF has three priorities to support this objective and project proposals must support one of the three Fund priorities:

1. **Employment and Enterprise Supports:** To support innovation and investment proposals to generate sustainable employment in green enterprise;
2. **Training Supports:** To retrain and reskill workers to assist local communities and businesses in the Wider Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition;

3. **Community Transitioning Supports:** To support proactive communications with affected communities and other stakeholders in the region, establish best practice sharing networks, and assist in developing local transition plans.

2.4 Priority 1: Employment and Enterprise Supports

The Wider Midlands region is endowed with talented people at all levels who can give leadership and deliver on the energy transition challenges and create employment and enterprise opportunities. The JTF invites proposals which will provide employment and enterprise opportunities to assist local communities and businesses in the Wider Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition. The Midlands has a number of strengths which it can use to leverage employment and enterprise opportunities. Developing these opportunities and increasing the attractiveness of the Midlands as a location to both live and work will generate and sustain employment. Preference will be given to proposals under this priority which can demonstrate a direct link with current/former Bord na Móna and/or ESB workers and/or communities closely connected to the bogs or power stations will score higher.

Project proposals under Priority 1 may include, for example:

- Enterprise supports: Projects which stimulate new enterprises with employment potential and which will support a climate-resilient local economy. Projects may relate to feasibility studies to identify green growth opportunities.
- Infrastructure projects in areas such as tourism, heritage, and leisure/outdoor activities which have an initial and continued job creation element. This may include the development/expansion of regional and local co-working hubs to facilitate remote working, allowing for more people to remain in the region.
- Dialogue and job matching: Projects which support interaction between firms and employees, and firms and State Agencies to encourage improved dialogue and participation, developing tailored job-matching services to connect job seekers or those facing redundancy with green employment opportunities.

2.5 Priority 2: Training Supports

The JTF invites proposals which focus on training, reskilling and skills development for workers which assist local communities and businesses in the Wider Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition. Training and reskilling initiatives which show a direct link with current/former BnM and/or ESB workers or communities closely connected to the bogs or power stations will be scored higher. All training proposals must clearly demonstrate additionality and that they will not duplicate current provision. Training supports must also

clearly demonstrate that local employment demand exists for these skills. Applications for training programmes already provided locally will not be considered e.g. literacy training, IT skills, Safe Pass.

Project proposals under Priority 2 may include, for example:

- Provision of training and upskilling programmes: Specific regional or local training/upskilling projects which facilitate job seekers and/or those in employment to move to alternative sectors in the locality, with a clear evidence base which clearly identifies a skills shortage and skills demand. Projects may leverage existing training provision to create specific, rapid-response training programmes in response to the changing regional skills profile.
- Collaborative actions to support specific projects with education and training agencies in the region. For example, the Regional Skill Fora, ETBs, Institutes of Technology and other local stakeholders, working together to introduce tailored training plans based on the strengths of the region, or conduct skills audits for vulnerable workers.
- Developing intermediary structures and training pipelines as a specific project to support interaction between education and training agencies/firms/employees to identify and design suitable training provision in demand areas (including traineeships, apprenticeships etc.). This could also include working with early school leavers, recent graduates, developing 'returnships' to assist people who have had a break in their career to return to work, and a particular focus on encouraging women to return to the labour force, with a view to increasing labour force participation rates.

2.6 Priority 3: Community Transitioning Supports

Many local communities in the Wider Midlands region are deeply interested in transitioning their local economies away from peat burning and carbon-intensive activities but do not know how best to shape community responses. Projects under Priority 3 should support communication between affected communities and other stakeholders in the region and relevant national institutions. Best practice sharing networks and frameworks and building collaborative and cross-regional connections, are important ways to strengthen community engagement and dialogue in the context of a just transition.

Priority 3 can facilitate the development of local transition plans and proposals, particularly by vulnerable communities, which assist communities/towns/villages to map out how they move to a net zero-carbon future. These can be most effective with the public, private, and community and voluntary sectors working together to undertake transitions early on and on a voluntary basis. Projects that envisage a co-design and participative approach between

local community organisations and at sufficient scale to ensure impact are particularly encouraged. Preference will also be given to projects which show a direct link with current/former BnM and/or ESB workers or communities closely connected to the bogs or power stations.

Project proposals under Priority 3 may include, for example:

- Community dialogue and consultation projects focused on low-carbon transitioning and climate resilience. These projects could include early-stage capacity building initiatives, working with local and community organisations to develop their capacity to respond, and raise awareness of greener, cleaner, healthier communities.
- Developing local transition plans and proposals which identify low-carbon opportunities. Community organisations could partner with relevant local agencies operating in the climate action arena to scope out sustainable energy community models using local community planning methods.
- Specific community-led projects which will contribute to the attainment of Priority 1 or Priority 2 but which are clearly community-driven actions which will deliver community gain and offer local, active inclusion and volunteering opportunities.

Section 3: Overview of Just Transition Fund 2020 Call for Proposals

The Just Transition Fund 2020 call for proposals consists of a four-stage process as set out below.

3.1 Four Stages

3.1.1 Stage 1: Registration of proposals with MRTT-START

Stage 1 of the Just Transition Fund was to register projects with the MRTT - START process. The closing date to register with START was Friday, 12th June and if projects have not pre-registered they are not eligible to submit an application for the 2020 JTF call. Organisations must include their MRTT – START Project Registration ID Number on the JTF Application Form.

3.1.2 Stage 2: JTF call and submit JTF applications

Organisations must submit their JTF application by **4pm Friday 17th July 2020**. Applications must be fully completed and sent by the Lead Applicant to JTF@dccae.gov.ie. On receipt of an application and once it has been initially reviewed, an email will be sent to confirm that the Department has received the Application Form. Applicants who do not receive an acknowledgement email should contact JTF@dccae.gov.ie.

Interested parties will be able to submit queries in relation to the Fund to JTF@dccae.gov.ie. These will be responded to on a fortnightly basis and posted online on the JT Fund webpage. The query responses will issue twice: on 26th June and on 6th July – queries that are received three working days before the query response publication date will be included in that round. All queries must be submitted by 1st July to ensure sufficient time to prepare a response. All queries and responses will be made publically available to ensure all parties can access the same information for transparency and equal treatment.

3.1.3 Stage 3: Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria set out in this Information Booklet, and will be carried out by an Evaluation Team. This will be chaired by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and will include representatives from relevant Government Departments, the MRTT, regional representatives, and may also include State Agency expertise to assess particular projects

in accordance with the selected project priority. If required, the Evaluation Team may contact Lead Applicants for additional information or clarification of particular points, including in relation to state aid applicability and thresholds. The MRTT - START team may share the completed START applications with the JTF Evaluation Team to assist with the evaluation process.

All eligible applications (i.e. those that submit full information and meet the minimum score for those criteria with a minimum score) will be scored and will be ranked on this basis for funding allocation. **It is anticipated that the evaluation process will be completed by mid-August**, subject to the number of funding applications received. The Evaluation Team will make recommendations on the projects to be offered support to the Minister of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, for his approval.

3.1.4 Stage 4: Notification and acceptance of offer

Each Lead Applicant will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible following the completion of the evaluation process. If they have been successful in their application, they will be granted a provisional offer. Successful Lead Applicants will be required to engage in a validation (Request for Information) process with the Department. Successful projects must provide additional documentation/confirmations as outlined in this Information Booklet, and clarifications or further detail on any aspect of the project proposal. Note that the validation process may necessitate meetings between the Department and successful Lead Applicant to discuss projects. Funding awarded is dependent on the required evidences and proofs and clarifications being provided and approved. Once any supplementary information and clarifications have been agreed and approved, a final offer will be made by means of a Letter of Offer and Funding Agreement.

3.2 Supporting Unsuccessful Applications

Where projects are not successful in applying for JT funding, they can be provided with feedback on their application from the Evaluation Team if requested. Lead Applicants may also be referred back to the MRTT - START process to receive assistance in further developing project ideas, capacity building and preparing future project proposals. The MRTT - START process can provide assistance in linking unsuccessful projects with other projects to develop more viable, strategic proposals, and help to identify other funding options. Where an unsuccessful applicant is referred to the MRTT - START process, the JTF application will be shared with the MRTT Secretariat.

3.3 Use of MRTT- START Project Information

As outlined above, pre-registering with MRTT - START was stage 1 in applying for the JTF. In order to leverage the information that has already been provided under the MRTT – START process and to reduce the burden on organisations to provide more information, applicants are given three options to choose from on how they complete the JTF application.

- **Option 1:** Where the level of funding sought is €100,000 or less, the MRTT - START application will be evaluated. The only additional information required from the JTF process is to complete:
 - Section 1: Applicant Details
 - Section 2: Project Overview
 - Section 7: Financial Robustness and Sustainability
 - Section 8: Use of Data and Declaration
- **Option 2:** Where a project is seeking more than €100,000, the applicant can provide supplementary information. For example, applicants, upon considering the evaluation criteria may wish to submit additional information to support their application and can add this information in the relevant section(s) e.g.:
 - Section 3: Project Need and Impact
 - Section 4: Building Regional Strengths
 - Section 5: Partnership and Collaboration.
 - Section 6: Project Plan, Capacity to Deliver and Governance

The sections outlined above for Option 1 also need to be completed. In this case the MRTT – START application and the JTF application will both form part of the evaluation.

- **Option 3:** The applicant fully completes all sections in the JTF Application Form and this alone is used for evaluation. This approach may be used, for example, where in considering the evaluation criteria, applicants wish to re-draft their application in order to better respond to the criteria.

It is important to note that regardless of which option is chosen, the onus is on applicants to ensure high-quality submissions which respond to the evaluation criteria and all applications will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria provided in Section 6.

3.4 Submission of JTF Applications

- Applications must be emailed to JTF@dccae.gov.ie no later than **17th July by 4pm**. Late applications will not be accepted.

- A maximum of three applications may be submitted by any one organisation as Lead Applicant. There is no limit to the number of applications a Local Authority can be a Lead Applicant on, however if a Local Authority is submitting more than three proposals for consideration, it must rank each proposal in order of importance in the Application Form.
- Each project must be submitted using a separate Application Form, however, an individual application may include several linked components.
- Applications must use the provided Application Form – applications using other forms will not be considered. Supplementary material (the Project Plan, Financial Project Plan) can be saved as PDFs or in Word and included as attachments alongside the application form. Only three attachments will be accepted in total: Application Form; Project Plan (if appended separately); Financial Project Plan (if appended separately).
- Applications must be complete, with all requested information provided. If information is missing the Evaluation Team may not contact applicants for this information and may not consider the application.

Section 4: Eligibility

4.1 Which organisations may apply?

- Applications can be made by private, public, and community and voluntary organisations.
- Public bodies, Local Authorities, State Agencies and commercial semi-state bodies are eligible to apply. Government Departments are not eligible to apply.
- Public bodies, such as Local Authorities, Institutes of Technology, Local Enterprise Offices, Education and Training Boards, and other agencies of the State, should be involved in projects with the purpose of benefiting the wider needs of the community and locality/region and projects must be additional to the public body's existing work programme.
- Private enterprises are eligible to apply. Project proposal must clearly demonstrate that they contribute to a public good and will benefit the wider needs of the community and locality/region. Proposed projects must be additional to the private enterprise's existing business and demonstrate a strong job creation component.
- Applications can be made by an individual organisation or by a consortium. Applications from consortia must identify a Lead Applicant.
- The organisation which is identified as the Lead Applicant must be a legal entity. The Lead Applicant will be the entity which will enter into a written agreement with the Department and will be recognised as 'the grantee'. The grantee will have financial and administrative responsibilities for the project. The roles and responsibilities of grantees are set out in Section 5 of [Circular 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds](#).
- Projects must operate in and target at least one of the eight counties which comprise the 'Wider Midlands' region for the purposes of the JTF: East Galway, Kildare, Laois, Longford, North Tipperary, Offaly, Roscommon and Westmeath. Projects may operate at a local, county, cross-county or regional scale.

4.2 What costs are eligible for funding?

- VAT is an eligible cost, except where it is recoverable under national VAT legislation.
- The grant funding for approved projects can provide funding towards capital and current costs.
- Administration costs associated with the proposed project are allowed for in a capital project. These costs must be clearly documented in Section 7 of the Application Form and are only permitted up to a maximum of 10% of the overall project cost.

- Capital costs that are relevant to the fund objective and priorities and which are not listed under “Ineligible for Funding” below. This includes extending, refurbishing, upgrading a derelict/recently vacated premises to support their use in a related activity e.g. green enterprise, community, co-working hub, and may include energy efficiency and renewable energy measures if these are an integral part of the overall project.
- Infrastructure for heritage/tourism/outdoor activities e.g. to construct a portion of a greenway/blueway. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport’s Greenways Strategy sets out the Government’s priorities in relation to the funding of greenways in Ireland and it is not the intention of the JTF to supplement or supplant this strategy by funding larger portions of greenways/blueways i.e. those that are over 10km in length. However, local extensions of existing greenways/blueways, local spurs off those greenways/blueways, and the development of infrastructure to link a town or village to such greenways/blueways may be considered.
- Note that for standard capital assets, the purchase cost of assets is fully eligible if it is essential to the implementation of the project, except where the economic life of the asset falls outside the period of the project. In such cases, only the depreciation costs of the asset is eligible.
- Current costs which are time bound, project specific and required for the successful completion of the project. This involves day-to-day expenditure and may include salary costs, non-pay costs such as materials and administrative overheads as well other commercially procured products and services, and payments for services carried out by professionals (e.g. training etc.) or other business sectors.
- Salary costs for roles which are relevant to the fund priorities and to ensure project delivery e.g. a business development manager to oversee the development of a co-working hub, a just transition development worker, a project manager to oversee project delivery. See Section 5 for more on Personnel Supports.
- Funding can be used to support projects which are at pre-initiation/concept stage and which require funding to carry out feasibility studies or prepare a business test case etc. It can also be used to support the development of applications and plans for larger scale national/EU funding which is linked to the JTF objective and priorities. The maximum funding award for a feasibility project is €100,000.
- Feasibility studies or trialling the development of initiatives such as the proposed National Retrofit “One Stop Shop” model or Climate Demonstration Sites in the Wider Midlands (e.g. the Midlands Energy Hub) and where the funding will be used to

develop local skill sets and awareness raising. In all cases the project must demonstrate significant additionality opportunities.

- Costs associated with developing local community transition plans, perhaps as a precursor to develop capacity to assist in developing future Sustainable Energy Community Energy Masterplans.

4.3 What costs are ineligible for funding?

- The purchase of land or buildings.
- Building of sports grounds, playgrounds and multi-use gaming areas.
- Profits, dividends and/or interest payments on financial instruments.
- Maintenance works on elements of Local Authority infrastructure which form a normal part of the work undertaken as part of general maintenance.
- Income supports for targeted groups and grant payments.
- Large infrastructural projects such as the construction of roads, by-passes or bridges, which are funded by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport or from other public sources.
- A private enterprise's technology/buildings/equipment/operational costs, or product design/development/marketing/testing, and other private sector activities which are supported under the Disruptive Technology Fund.
- Capital costs for the expansion of a private business premises.
- The JTF is not intended to fund the development and/or installation of single renewable technologies, projects or planning/grid connections, e.g. solar farms, wind farms, biogas, biomass. Support for renewable energies and community energy schemes are provided through SEAI or other renewable energy support schemes.
- Applications which include or relate to activities that the Department considers as ineligible or as involving an unacceptable reputational risk. Ineligible activities include activities relating to:
 - The gambling sector, including 'gaming' (as defined in the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956).
 - Adult entertainment.
 - Tobacco products.

Section 5: Terms and Conditions

5.1 Funding Allocations

- Funding allocated through this call is only guaranteed for 2020 (and outstanding instalments in 2021, 2022 and 2023). Beyond this allocation the Department makes no commitments to allocate future just transition funding.
- The information contained in this Information Booklet is provisional and subject to change. The Department reserves the right to amend the Information Booklet and/or the Application Form prior to the closing of the call. Amendments may also be made at any point to the JTF documentation on foot of responses to queries submitted. The onus will be on all interested parties to periodically check for updated documentation.
- There is no commitment to allocate all of the €11m funding available in the 2020 JTF. Following the evaluation process, applications will be ranked and funding will be awarded to the highest scoring applications. However, a project proposal which meets the minimum threshold and which is ranked is not guaranteed to receive funding. The funding may be fully allocated to higher scoring proposals and/or the Department has reserved the right not to fully allocate the funding.
- The minimum amount that may be awarded to a project is €50,000 and the maximum amount is €1,000,000. A cap has been set to ensure a larger spread of projects and a floor has been set to ensure projects are of sufficient scale to generate appropriate impact.
- The amount of funding to be awarded to a successful project may be less than that requested in accordance with the Terms and Conditions and state aid rules.
- There is no restriction set on the proportion of an overall project cost that can be requested through the JTF, subject to state aid rules, match-funding rules and the need to avoid double funding.
- Project funding sought through the JTF may be a proportion of a larger project cost where the remaining funding has already been identified and secured. Organisations must state the total project cost and the project funding being sought through the JTF.
- Where a project involves works on buildings or lands, or the project will be delivered from buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the applicant(s), a minimum five year lease must be in place from date of project completion.

5.2 Match Funding

- All projects must include a minimum of 15% match funding from other sources i.e. the JTF will provide support up to a maximum of 85% of the project costs (subject to state-aid rules). Match funding may be in the form of a combination of other Exchequer-funded schemes and/or State-sector expenditure, Local Authority investment and/or land, EU funding sources, community investment, philanthropic contributions, private-sector investment, or other asset contributions.

5.3 Other Public Funding Sources

- The Fund seeks to complement other sources of public funding and is not intended to duplicate or compete with other supports provided by the Department or other departments/state agencies.
- Proposals must demonstrate clear 'additionality', i.e. the funding is envisaged to enable investment in the Wider Midlands that might not otherwise occur and which would act as a catalyst for further investment in the area directly or indirectly, or that would not otherwise occur within the three year timeframe and thus ensures project acceleration.
- Applicants must indicate in the Application Form if the project has secured state/EU funding. The JTF will not support projects that have received funding from the Project Ireland Funds or other publicly-funded investment programmes for the same project, unless it is clearly demonstrated that the JTF portion of funding will deliver an additional element of the project within the scope of the JTF priorities, or will enable a project to be expanded/scaled up or will deliver another project phase. If the Lead Applicant is successful they will be required to provide evidence of the additional public/EU funding and declare all future Exchequer funding secured for the project.
- The Department reserves the right to check with other Departments/agencies if projects have received funding from other Exchequer funds. This includes, but is not limited to, funding sources including Climate Action Fund, Communities Energy Grant, Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Renewable Energy Support Scheme, Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Support Scheme for Renewable Heat, Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.
- A number of other actions form the Just Transition Plan for the Wider Midlands. These include the Midlands Retrofitting Scheme, NPWS Bog Rehabilitation Programme, a Centre for Climate Change and Just Transition, Study on Energy Hub

on the Midlands, installation of Electric Vehicle charging points etc. Projects which deliver on these actions are not eligible for funding under the JTF. However, separate projects which spin off from these key projects and which can demonstrate 'additionality' may be eligible e.g. a reskilling programme for home retrofitting and home energy auditing.

- The Evaluation Team reserves the right to contact each Lead Applicant upon review of the financial information provided (Section 7) in order to clarify other funding sources and seek additional information.
- A project may be more suitable for other state funding streams or supports (e.g. Enterprise Ireland, IDA, SEAI, LEOs, DRCD, DHPLG). If this is the case, the Lead Applicant may be informed of other support routes and/or referred to the START – MRTT Team.

5.4 State Aid

State aid refers to forms of public assistance, using taxpayer-funded resources, given to undertakings on a discretionary basis, with the potential to distort competition and affect trade between Member States of the European Union. EU state aid rules may apply to the award of funding under the JTF. The level of support provided to any project as part of this call for applications will be limited by European Union state aid rules under the General Block Exemption Regulation No. 651/2014.² State aid will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis from the project applications received. Applicants are advised to refer to the GBER sections below which may apply, and which can act as a framework to develop project proposals and indicate the level of permissible aid intensity. Note that other GBER sections may be applicable.

- Section 1: Regional aid
- Section 2: Aid to SMEs
- Section 4: Aid for research and development and innovation
- Section 5: Training aid
- Section 6: Aid for disadvantaged workers and for workers with disabilities
- Section 7: Aid for environmental protection
- Section 11: Aid for culture and heritage conservation
- Section 13: Aid for local infrastructures

² For more information on State Aid, see Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation EU State Aid Rules [here](#).

5.5 Financial Governance Conditions

- All expenditure funded through the JTF may, where applicable, be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/, and if applicable the [Capital Works Management Framework](#). Any other requirements, in terms of consultation or consent etc., which are particular to the type of project being developed, should also be progressed.
- The need for adherence to all of the requirements will be reflected in the Grant Agreement between the Department and the grantee approved for funding. An outline Department Funding Agreement will be published online prior to the closing date for applications to allow interested parties to review the requirements.
- The Grant Agreement will comply with the requirements set out in DPER [Circular 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds](#). It is a condition of funding that grantees comply with the Statement of Principles for Grantees (Appendix A) in Circular 13/2014.
- Insurance is a condition of the JTF. The Lead Applicant must, for the duration of the project as set out in the Funding Agreement, hold the following types and amounts of insurance and confirm as such in the Application Form: Employers Liability - €12.7m, Public Liability - €6.5m.
- All appropriate financial, public procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with and each grantee will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.
- All appropriate central and/or local Government financial, procurement and accounting rules and regulations will be complied with.
- Any legislative requirements relevant to the project will be adhered to.

5.6 Monitoring, Reporting and Verification

- Each Lead Applicant will provide a contact point to the Department to facilitate timely interaction in the context of payments and information requests.
- Each Lead Applicant will fully account for the sums advanced in a timely manner.
- Projects must be completed in full in order to draw down the final grant amount.
- Projects will be subject to verification/audit by the Department and/or the Local Government Audit Service and/or other auditing services as identified. The Grant Agreement will inform the verification process and will provide for right of inspection of grantee's accounts for the Department and the C&AG.

- Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure must be maintained and accessible for audit purposes at all times and for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
- On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes will take place in the context of assessing the impact of the intervention. The Lead Applicant will be expected to collect appropriate data to facilitate this process on an on-going basis and make this data available to the Department. A final report detailing all elements of expenditure relating to the grant aid will be required upon the completion of the project.
- The Lead Applicant will provide regular progress reports and information as requested by the Department in the Funding Agreement. There will be a requirement to submit case studies to inform wider learning from the pilot JTF process and projects may also be requested to assist with a broader review/evaluation process.

5.7 Project Compliance and Completion

- Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of the change being implemented.
- Where an element of the approved project is not carried out as per the project application, grant funding may be reduced to reflect the amended project.
- It is the responsibility of the party entering into contract with the Department, as appropriate, to meet any shortfall arising out of any project non-compliance. Non-compliance with the rules outlined in the Terms and Conditions, or any additional stipulations set out in the Letter of Offer and Funding Agreement, may result in a requirement to refund part or all of the grant aid awarded.
- Where it is established that a project has not been completed, the Department may request the grantee to repay any funding received on the project.

5.8 Expenditure and Payments

- Projects must be completed within three years of receiving funding and no later than 31st December 2023. Projects that can demonstrate an ability to begin quickly after project approval will be scored higher in the evaluation process.
- Expenditure is only eligible where it is incurred within the start/end dates of the project as per the Letter of Offer. Work must not have already commenced on the project.
- The organisation identified as the Lead Applicant will receive the funding.
- Successful projects will be paid in instalments and, upon signing of the Letter of Offer and Funding Agreement, and initial instalments may be provided through pre-funding.

- Payments from the Fund will be made over the course of the project on the basis of milestones being achieved by the project organisations (up to three phases) and on the basis of submitting vouched expenses. Any individual claim for payment must involve at least 20% of the total project cost. Full details will be included in the Funding Agreement.

5.9 Personnel Supports

- Funding supports for personnel under the JTF will only be for new additional personnel who must have fixed term contracts and be employed directly by the successful applicant to drive the various elements of the project over the period of funding.
- Only key management personnel or key technical personnel charged with the management and delivery of the overall project or specific elements of the proposed project will be eligible for support. The project funding plan must show evidence that personnel numbers are viable and sustainable over the period of funding.
- The person must be appointed within 6 months from the offer date and the post must not continue to be funded from the JTF beyond 31st December 2023.
- Roles for which funding has been approved must be clearly assigned with responsibilities relating to the implementation of the project.
- All employment contracts are with the grantee and no liability and/or commitment exists between the Department and any employees whose posts have been created as a result of the Fund and/or are funded by the JTF.
- The Lead Applicant will be solely responsible for all procedures and processes relating to any recruitment, including any consequences which arise from the termination of any employment related to a project approved by the Department. The Lead Applicant will indemnify the Minister in full against all such legal, contractual or financial consequences.

5.10 Financial Strength

To be eligible to receive JTF grant funding, an Applicant or Grantee (as applicable at the time) must be a going concern and be able to demonstrate to the Department's reasonable satisfaction that the Applicant or Grantee (as applicable) has the financial resources and intent required to complete the project to which its JTF Application relates. Should the Applicant or Grantee at any time no longer be a going concern or have the financial resources and intent to complete the project, this will constitute a 'Default Event', whereby the Department in its sole and absolute discretion may or may not withdraw or rescind any offer, withhold any awarded funding and/or terminate any Funding Agreement.

In submitting its Application Form for JTF funding, the Applicant:

- Warrants and confirms that a Default Event has not occurred and is not subsisting, and/or is unlikely to occur prior to expiry of any Funding Agreement;
- Acknowledges that it is required under these Eligibility requirement and Terms and Conditions, and will be required under any Letter of Offer and/or Funding Agreement, to notify the Department as soon as the Applicant, Offeree or Grantee (as the case may be at the time) becomes aware that a Default Event has is or likely to occur; and
- Acknowledges and accepts that the Department may at any time request financial information to determine whether a Default Event has, or is likely to, occur. This information may include audited financial statements, management accounts, confirmation of bank account balances, tax information, updates on post-balance sheet events and/or other financial information as required.

5.11 Permissions and Other Proofs

Proof of permissions (e.g. of having received planning permission) and match funding and other Exchequer funding secured is not required at the time of application but must be submitted to the Department prior to conclusion of a Funding Agreement. This substantially reduces the amount of additional material that applicants must submit with applications.

5.12 Project Extension

Applicants must indicate the start and end date for the project. Projects must be completed within three years of receiving funding and no later than 31st December 2023. It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that the project is completed and funding drawn down by the final timeline. The Department may decide to grant an extension to a project under exceptional circumstances or force majeure. Any extension request must be submitted in writing to the Department stating the reason for the extension and the new completion/drawdown dates. The Department reserves the right to allow or deny any extension request.

5.13 Procurement Requirement

As this grant involves the spending of public funds, it is essential that good value for money is secured in project delivery. Successful applicants are therefore required to comply with relevant public procurement guidelines where applicable. Guidance on this is available from the Office of Government Procurement (www.OGP.gov.ie; support@OGP.gov.ie).

5.14 False Statements

If, for the purposes of obtaining aid under this Fund, a person or business entity knowingly makes a false or misleading statement or withholds essential information, the person who made such false statements or withheld essential information shall be liable for the full amount of the funds paid on discovery or reasonable suspicion of any circumstances and all further funding will be withheld, and other measures may be taken as set out in the Funding Agreement.

5.15 Information and Publicity

Prospective applicants should note that details of awards, including total grant approved, made under this Fund may be publicly referenced. Successful applicants will also be required to participate in the Department media and marketing activities relating to this Fund and may be requested to provide supporting promotional material e.g. photos, graphics, video footage to support Departmental or Government communications in relation to the Just Transition Fund and wider climate policy. Successful applicants may also be required to participate in the Department media and marketing activities relating to this Fund and must acknowledge funding provided by Government of Ireland/ the Department in all activities related to the project e.g. reports, presentations, promotional material.

5.16 Data Sharing and Confidentiality

All Lead Applicants are required to inform all persons about whom they have provided personal information in the JTF Application Form of the details provided and the purpose for which this is to be used. They must have the consent of the individuals (or other appropriate legal basis) for providing such personal data to the Department for the purposes of this application and participation in the Just Transition Fund. All Lead Applicants must read the Department's [Privacy Statement](#) and [Privacy Notice](#) and consent to the use of data as described therein.

Lead Applicants may be referred back to the MRTT - START process to receive assistance to further developing project ideas, capacity building and preparing future project proposals. All submitted applications may be shared with the MRTT Secretariat. Project information and the relevant contact details may also be shared with other Departments, agencies or the MRTT – START Secretariat to support the on-going just transition process.

As part of the evaluation process, project applications will be given to an Evaluation Team which will include external assessors as well as the Department employees. All external assessors will sign a confidentiality agreement and a conflict of interest declaration.

The Department will not release any information received as part of this application except as set out above and/or as may be required by law, including the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts 2014, the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Section 6: Just Transition Fund Evaluation Criteria

6.1 Overview

- All applications will be assessed using the evaluation criteria below.
- Applicants being considered for support must have attained a minimum of 60% of the score available in three of the five criteria.
- Following the evaluation process, applications will be ranked and funding will be awarded to the highest-scoring applications in that order, once the geographical spread and Fund priority minimum fund allocation has been taken into account. However, a project proposal which meets the minimum threshold and which is ranked is not guaranteed to receive funding. The funding may be fully allocated to higher scoring proposals and/or the Department has reserved the right not to fully allocate the funding.
- The JTF seeks to ensure a geographical spread across the Wider Midlands region. If a sufficient spread of applications are submitted from each of the eligible counties, the evaluation team will seek to ensure that a minimum of 5% of the total allocated spend goes to each of the eight counties.
- The JTF will support a spread of activities across the three Fund priorities: Employment and Enterprise Supports, Training Supports, and Community Transitioning Supports. Lead Applicants are required to indicate the primary project priority on the Application Form and projects will be grouped according to the selected project priority. If a sufficient spread of applications are submitted across the three priority areas, the Evaluation Team will seek to ensure that a minimum of 20% of the total allocated spend goes to each of the three priorities.

6.2 Award Criteria

	Award Criteria	Minimum marks required (60%)	Marks available	Weighting
1	Need and Impact	150	250	25%
2	Building Regional Strengths	-	150	15%
3	Partnership and Collaboration	-	200	20%
4	Project Plan, Capacity to Deliver and Governance	120	200	20%
5	Financial Robustness and Sustainability	120	200	20%
	Total		1000	100%

The table below outlines project applications which will score highly under the criteria. All projects will be assessed using the below criteria to ensure they provide value for money for the Exchequer.

1. Need and Impact – 25%
<p>1a/ The application clearly demonstrates a need for the project and that the project is in line with and will contribute to the Fund’s objective and priorities. It provides an evidence base to support the identified need, offers an innovative response, and a strong case is made that the project would be unlikely to occur without JTF funding (10%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects which show a direct link with current/former BnM and/or ESB workers or communities closely connected to the bogs or power stations will be scored higher. • Projects that have a strong job creation focus will be scored higher. <p>1b/ The application clearly demonstrates the positive impacts and outcomes from the project which are in line with and will contribute to the Fund’s objective and priorities. It provides expected outcomes and outputs in quantitative and qualitative format and provides well informed output data. (10%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that can demonstrate direct positive effects for former and/or current Bord na Móna and ESB employees and communities built around the bogs and the peat power stations will be scored higher.

- Projects that have a strong job creation focus will be scored higher.

Note that the Evaluation Team will take into account the impact of Covid-19 when evaluating future impacts and outcomes which are currently less certain.

1c/ The project clearly shows that the outcomes and impacts it will generate are additional to other supported activities in the locality/region. (5%)

2. Building Regional Strengths – 15%

2a/ The application strongly demonstrates how the project will contribute to regional strategic objectives and aligns with relevant local, regional and national strategies and objectives. (5%)

2b/ The project builds on existing or potential geographical strengths and shows how these can be transitioned to strategic green growth opportunities. The project will leverage and tailor existing public/private infrastructure in the area to create a more targeted response to just transition needs and creating a climate resilient economy. (5%)

2c/ The project can be scaled up over time to operate at a cross-county/regional level, or demonstrates potential to be mainstreamed nationally to support future just transition measures. (5%)

3. Consultation and Collaboration – 20%

3a/ There was pre-consultation and prior stakeholder engagement carried out to assist with preparing and informing the application e.g. with sectoral authorities/agencies, the business community, local community groups and residents, environmental groups etc. (this may have been virtually in light of Covid-19). There is a well-considered commitment to a collaborative approach for the duration of the project. (10%)

- Applications which demonstrate stakeholder engagement with current/former BnM and/or ESB workers or communities closely connected to the bogs or power stations will score higher.

3b/ It is a well-considered consortium application to develop and implement the project, operating at a cross-county/regional level, and this is clearly evident in the project plan etc. (10%)

4. Project Plan, Capacity to Deliver and Governance - 20%

4a/ The Lead Applicant (and partner organisations if applicable) demonstrate a strong

capacity to deliver the project. There are effective governance and project management structures and resources to ensure effective delivery and oversight. A project plan is included which includes timelines and milestones. If a consortium application, it is clearly identified how the organisations will work together. The lead (and partner) applicant(s) have managed a project of similar scale in the previous ten years. (10%)

4b/ It is demonstrated that the project could begin as soon as funding is awarded in 2020. Projects that can demonstrate they are ready to commence immediately will be scored higher. (5%)

4c/ A clear and well considered evaluation plan is in place and there is a commitment to review progress and work with the Department (and other parties) to assist in overall project evaluation. (5%)

5. Financial Robustness and Sustainability - 20%

5a/ The proposal is accompanied by a well-considered financial project plan which provides an accurate breakdown of costs, provides details of match funding and other sources of finance for the project, and identifies financial risks. It is deemed that the project finance proposal is robust and the costs set out are appropriate, and overall the project demonstrates that it provides value for money. There is clear financial oversight and compliance with the Eligibility and Terms and Conditions set out. (10%)

5b/ The project demonstrates that it is financially sustainable and will not rely on JTF in future years once the project is complete e.g. additional revenue generating opportunities have been identified. Where the project is seeking only a proportion of the total project cost, the applicant has secured funding from other sources. There is an ability to scale up the project in the future should additional revenue or funding become available. (10%)