



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

Second Call for Applications

Information Booklet

April 2019



**Rialtas
na hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

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Scheme Outline

1. Background

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.

2. Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

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*.

The Fund is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Initial funding of €315 million has been allocated to the Fund on a phased basis over the period 2019 to 2022. Under the first call for the Fund, which closed in September 2018, a total of 84 projects from across the country were supported, with funding of €86 million allocated from the Fund.

3. Objectives of the Fund

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 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.

Funding will be awarded through a competitive bid process, based on the extent to which applications deliver on the objectives of the Fund and the various requirements and criteria set out as part of this document. The Department, assisted by an independent Project Advisory Board, will consider projects for recommendations for funding to the Minister.

4. Applications Sought

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.

For the purposes of clarity, Category 1 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](#)¹, and are procurement-ready.

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.

Please note that Category 2 proposals are not being sought at this time. Applications under Category 2 - projects which require further development to reach Category 1 readiness – will be invited later in 2019.

5. Support Available

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.

¹ <https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>

A higher maximum contribution of 80% from the Fund will be considered where community contributions account for more than 50% of the match-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. It should be noted that the [Public Spending Code](#) sets out an escalating series of appraisal requirements relating to capital projects with a value above €500,000². Evidence that these requirements have been fully met will be required as part of any application seeking consideration.

The precise level of grant for an individual project will depend on the nature and quality of the proposal. In some cases, the Fund might form the minor part of the total investment, providing a small (subject to the minimum request from the Fund being €500,000) but important element of funding to add value to a larger project which already has substantial funding commitments in place.

In cases where projects are proposed of a type or funding level which could conceivably raise questions relating to [State Aid](#)³, it will be expected that applicants will have carried out their own enquiries with a view to making a case to the Department, as part of their application, that State Aid issues do not arise. The final judgement on such matters will, however, remain the responsibility of the Department.

6. Who can apply?

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

A lead party – i.e. a State-funded body - is only permitted to submit a maximum of 3 applications to this Category 1 call.

² See Part B of the Public Spending Code at <https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/general-provisions/>

³ <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/EU-Internal-Market/EU-State-Aid-Rules/What-is-State-Aid/>

For the purposes of clarity, 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. Community organisations, voluntary groups or other civil society bodies cannot act as the lead party to an application but can partner with a State-funded body, which would be in a position to assume the lead party role.

Proposals under the Fund should demonstrate a collaborative approach between two or more organisations. The purpose of collaboration should not be exclusively to lend financial or general policy support to a project but should denote a full endorsement of the stated rationale, aims and expected outcomes for that particular project. In that regard, it would be of significant benefit, in instances where a project is aimed at delivering benefits in a particular sector or area, to have secured the collaboration and support of the relevant authority or agency with overall responsibility for that area or sector.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the Fund can provide additionality to their existing level of activity and deliver a sustainable impact on rural areas. In that regard, it should be noted that this Fund sets out to complement other funding schemes operated across Government but will not act as a substitute or replacement for them.

7. Eligible Areas

The Fund will focus on all settlements and rural areas with fewer than 10,000 people which are located outside the five city metropolitan areas. Projects that involve collaboration across Local Authority boundaries, as well as within those boundaries, are strongly encouraged, where the participating settlements/areas meet the population criteria.

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

A small number of specified towns with fewer than 10,000 people but with more than 2,500 jobs (2016 baseline) and which function as significant centres of employment may also be eligible for support under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (see Appendix 1). However, no individual project will be able to avail of both the Urban and Rural Funds.

8. Key Criteria

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.

9. Type of Proposals Sought

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.

It should be noted that, in general, new build projects outside towns and villages will not be prioritised for funding, with re-purposing, renovating or building upon vacant or derelict sites within towns and villages preferred.

Proposals which help contribute to the delivery of key policy priorities - which for the purposes of this call 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 - will receive additional weight as part of the assessment process.

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), which could include:
 - Public amenity, public realm, safety and security measures and recreational facilities in towns and villages;
 - Active land management, including the acquisition, planning, design, and enabling (through servicing, decontamination or otherwise), of areas, sites and buildings;
 - Measures to address building vacancy in order to encourage town centre regeneration, including building refurbishment, redevelopment and/or demolition; and

- Measures to address infrastructural deficiencies in relation to services, access, or other infrastructure that may be needed to support town or village regeneration.
- Projects which deliver on multiple objectives are particularly welcome, 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. This may also include improvements to roads, bridges and car parking facilities that encourage footfall in town or villages, subject to subject to an agreed town plan or regeneration strategy for the area.
- Projects that support job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas (e.g. development of Digital Hubs, Enterprise Hubs, Creative Hubs, training facilities). It should be noted that in relation to such projects it will be important that the proposal meets an identified need or deficiency in an area and that any such proposal should meet objectives set out in Local Economic and Community Plans, County Development Plans or Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (when available) or other plans or strategies, such as Local Digital Strategies etc. It should also be noted that priority will be given to proposals which will locate hubs or other facilities directly within towns and villages and which re-purpose or renovate existing sites as part of the proposal.
- 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. It is important to note that 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, subject to an agreed town plan or regeneration strategy for the area.

As part of this call, 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.

10. Project Selection process

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 at Appendix 3. 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.

11. Payment Schedule

Payments from the Fund will be made on a phased basis over the course of the project on the basis of milestones being achieved by the project promoters. Full details will be included in the Funding Agreement signed with the successful applicants.

12. Financial governance and Project reporting requirements

All expenditure incurred will be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at <http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>, and the Capital Works Management Framework, available at <https://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/capital-works-management-framework/>.

In general, the requirements outlined below will apply to all funding approved from the Fund.

1. All appropriate central and/or local Government financial, procurement and accounting rules and regulations will be complied with.
2. Any legislative requirements relevant to the project will be adhered to.
3. Each Lead Applicant will fully account for the sums advanced in a timely manner.
4. All projects will be subject to audit by the Department of Rural and Community Development and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General and/or the Local Government Audit Service. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should 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.
5. On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should 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 of Rural and Community Development.
6. Projects will acknowledge the support of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund in all public announcements and advertising relating to the project and will use relevant Government of Ireland/Project Ireland 2040 branding as set out in the Funding Agreement.

7. The Department of Rural and Community Development and/or the Government of Ireland may highlight the project in the promotion of the Fund or of its wider policies.
8. The Lead Applicant will provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department of Rural and Community Development from time to time.
9. Each Lead Applicant will provide a contact point to the Department to facilitate timely interaction in the context of payments and information requests.
10. A final report detailing all elements of expenditure relating to the grant aid will be required upon project completion.

The current *Funding Agreement and Terms and Conditions* template for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is available at www.drcd.gov.ie. Non-Compliance with the rules outlined above, or any additional stipulations agreed during contract negotiations, may result in a requirement to refund part or all of the grant aid awarded.

13. Timelines

The second call for proposals under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will open on 12th April 2019.

The deadline for the receipt of applications under the second call for proposals is **12 noon on Tuesday, 6th August 2019. 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://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-regeneration-development-fund/>.

All applications will be acknowledged and a unique project identified number assigned. It should be noted that applications must be completed in full before submission. Incomplete applications will be omitted from the process.

It is envisaged that an announcement of approved projects will be made in October 2019, following the assessment process.

It is expected that a call for Category 2 proposals will be announced in October 2019.

A further call under the Fund will take place in Q1 2020.

To contact the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund, or to submit an application, please email: rrdf@drcd.gov.ie.

Appendix 1

14. Towns eligible for URDF or the RRDF

Towns with population of less than 10,000 people and >2,500 jobs (2016) which may be eligible for support from either the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund or the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, but may apply for funding under one scheme only.

- 1 Gorey
- 2 Shannon
- 3 Nenagh
- 4 Westport
- 5 Roscommon
- 6 Monaghan
- 7 Tuam
- 8 Thurles
- 9 Dungarvan
- 10 New Ross
- 11 Ballinasloe
- 12 Carrick-on-Shannon
- 13 Trim

Appendix 2

15. Project Ireland 2040 - National Strategic Outcomes

Project Ireland 2040 involves total investment in infrastructure of almost €116 billion over ten years to 2027. It sets out a comprehensive framework for the future development of Ireland, to enable a prosperous economy marked by equality of opportunity and well-being for our citizens. It seeks to achieve 10 National Strategic Outcomes as follows:

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-Quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

Further details on the National Strategic Outcomes are available at:
<http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040>.

Appendix 3

16. Rural Regeneration and Development Fund - Project Appraisal Scheme

Assessment Criteria	Max. marks available
<i>Readiness</i>	
<p>Is the project ready to commence?</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	Pass/Fail
<i>Policy objectives</i>	
<p>Extent to which national, regional and local strategic objectives (Project Ireland 2040, County Development Plans, LECPs, sectoral strategies or plans etc) are met</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>150ⁱ</p> <p>ⁱ Pass mark of 90 (60%)</p>
<p>Collaboration between promoting parties and level of endorsement of key local and sectoral authorities for proposal</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	100

<p>Capacity of partners to deliver project as envisaged and to meet Public Spending Code and governance requirements</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	100
<p>Extent to which the proposal can deliver on key policy priorities</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	50
Potential Impact	
<p>Economic or social impact on rural areas or communities (e.g. jobs, investment, place-making, etc)</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	100
<p>Transformative Potential, particularly in relation to rural towns and villages</p> <p><i>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</i></p>	200

<i>as a catalyst for increased activity and development in a rural town or village once complete.</i>	
<p>Sustainability</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>100ⁱⁱ</p> <p>ⁱⁱ Pass mark of 60 (60%)</p>
Quality of budgetary proposal	
<p>Overall quality of budgetary proposal and Value for Money</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>100ⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>ⁱⁱⁱ Pass mark of 60 (60%)</p>
<p>Additionality</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>100</p>
TOTAL	1000