

Rural Services

Supporting innovative and integrated service delivery projects

The 'Rural Services' scheme is designed to explore new and innovative ways of delivering services to those living in rural areas of Mid Ulster.

The scheme will provide capital funding to existing community buildings or other facilities to improve and/or expand the range of services which they provide or to support the development of new multi-use community service hubs where no current provision exists.

Who Can Apply?

This Scheme is open to applications from:

- Community Voluntary Sector (including Social Economy Enterprises engaged in non-economic activity)
- Local Council
- Strategic Public Body e.g. Health Authority
- Local Council/Private Partnership (where the Local Council is the grant recipient)
- Local Council / Community Voluntary Sector partnership (where the Local Council is the grant recipient)

Objectives

The objectives of the scheme are to ensure:

- access to services is more evenly balanced and available to rural communities of Mid Ulster
- positive action is taken in the development and retention of service provision in rural areas of Mid Ulster

Indicative Actions

Your 'Community Service Hub' project might, for example:-

- offer outreach solutions to rural service problems through the provision of available space
- promote the innovative use of ICT to overcome service challenges by putting in place the appropriate infrastructure and equipment
- encourage the sharing of premises or equipment by different service providers ensuring that services for rural people are retained or developed
- provide a community based solution to support the relocation of services under threat of closure within a community service hub setting

What's on offer?

Capital support:

The scheme seeks to promote the concept of 'Community Service Hubs' that house a **number** of key services such as those related to health & well-being, education, childcare, information & advice or other services based on evidence of need. To do so, the scheme is designed to encourage better or multiple usage of existing or new community buildings or other facilities where, with modification, could be utilised for wider community benefit in providing access to a wide range of services.

Priority will be given to projects that can demonstrate access to multiple services. Single sports infrastructure projects are NOT eligible.

Two tiers of grant are offered:

- Grants of £50,000 (minimum) up to £150,000 at 75% for increasing access to services by enhancing or improving existing community buildings or other facilities to become community service hubs. This could involve, for example, extensions to house additional services or adaptation and subdivisions of premises.
- Grants of £150,001 up to £250,000 at 75% for increasing access to services by developing or creating new community service hubs where no current provision exists.

Technical support:

The Technical Assistance Fund recognises the need to assist communities to plan for the management and delivery of 'Rural Services' projects.

Grants of up to £5,000 at 75% are on offer for feasibility or technical studies associated with developing a 'Rural Services' project including the development of a service delivery implementation plan. Eligible expenditure includes costs linked to establishing service level agreements or other legally binding service requirements, fees relating to advice on economic sustainability, consultation, architects or engineers services.

A separate application will be required for both capital and technical assistance support.

Please note: The funds available are limited and we do not expect to be able to fund all applications at the maximum amount. Grants of up to £250,000 will be the exception rather than the norm. We anticipate no more than 3 projects of this size will be funded. All projects will be subject to a detailed appraisal process.

Match Funding

This scheme is part funded from EU sources therefore projects assisted **cannot** be matched from any other EU source.

Projects **must** have the **financial support** of the **local Council** (at least 5% of the RDP allocation awarded) and **at least 5%** must be from **community contribution**.

Evidence of match funding must be provided as part of the application process.



In all cases the capacity to deliver and implement the service will be assessed. The provision of space in itself will not constitute a project. The services to be delivered must be identified and capable of delivery once the capital expenditure is complete. A clear plan for implementation will be required as part of the project application process.

Preparing to make your application

Are you investment ready?

All applicants will first have to focus on getting ready to make an application. The following **pre-requisites** have to be in place at the time of making an application:

- **Attendance at a funding workshop** – these will focus on the application process and what's expected from applicants should they receive an offer of grant. Anyone thinking about making an application **must** attend a funding workshop specific to the Scheme they are applying under.
- **A project/business plan** (*not needed for standalone technical assistance applications*)
- **Match Funding** - evidence of match funding being secured for the project must be demonstrated and provided with the application.
- **Planning Permission Approval** - for projects requiring planning permission full approval must be granted and supplied with the application.
- **Quotations** – project costs must be supported with quotations for the equipment / infrastructure being applied for.



Attending a funding workshop specific to the Scheme you are applying under is key. At the funding workshop you will be provided with further information on the process involved in submitting an application when calls open.

YOUR APPLICATION CANNOT BE ASSESSED UNLESS YOU HAVE ATTENDED A FUNDING WORKSHOP!

Eligible Costs for Rural Services

The following costs are eligible for support (list is not exhaustive):

- a) The construction, acquisition, including through leasing, or improvement of immovable property, any sport or leisure related project (including community halls) must comply with DCAL strategy for sport and must be subject to a design review by Sport NI before progressing to assessment stage; (for purchase of buildings see note under 'Eligibility Conditions' below)
- b) The purchase of new machinery and equipment which is an integral part of the finished project, up to the market value of the asset;
- c) General costs linked to the expenditure such as architects, engineers and consultation fees, fees relating to advice on environmental and economic sustainability, including feasibility studies, the acquisition of patent rights and licences, up to a total maximum of 10% of the eligible project grant amount. Feasibility studies are eligible expenditure even if there is no expenditure under points (a) and (b) as long as the activity was capable of being supported;
- d) Intangible investments such as acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks.

Ineligible costs for Rural Services

The following costs are **not** eligible for support under LEADER (list is not exhaustive):

- a) Costs connected with the leasing contract, such as lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges or anything deemed to be a running cost
- b) Investments which are considered by the LAG to have an unacceptable negative effect on the environment (or proposed investment fails to meet environmental regulations)
- c) The purchase of land, including through leasing of property as part of a project
- d) Replacement investments i.e. like for like and maintenance costs for existing buildings, plant or equipment
- e) Investments in new build self-catering accommodation, hotel accommodation, guest houses or hostels or additional bed space in existing ones
- f) Lease-purchase/hire purchase of new machinery and equipment
- g) Purchase and installation of renewable energy technologies
- h) the purchase of cars, vans, motorcycles, bicycles and any other form of personal transport¹ (for whatever purpose)
- i) the purchase of vehicles² for transportation (such as lorries, buses, vans, minibuses or any other kind of vehicle used to transport or move goods or people)
- j) Tractors and Agricultural machinery

¹ Used to transport people for any reason

² Vehicle is something used as an instrument of conveyance. It can include any conveyance used for transporting passengers or things by land water or air.

- k) Expenditure incurred or work commenced/goods purchased before the letter of offer project start date or after the letter of offer project end date
- l) Payments for gifts and donations or personal entertainments (including alcohol)
- m) training i.e. any training currently provided by a statutory body such as colleges, Invest Northern Ireland, Local Enterprise Agencies or other council funded scheme
- n) Reprinting of marketing materials
- o) No aspect of an activity being funded should be party political in intention, use or presentation, or likely to be perceived as discriminatory on grounds of religion, colour, race, gender or disability
- p) Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages
- q) Legal expenses in respect of litigation
- r) Any cost associated with meeting a legislative or statutory requirement for the business
- s) Reclaimable VAT
- t) Feasibility studies for renewable energy
- u) Projects which are not an integral part of the Local Authority Community Plan and not financially supported by the Local Authority with a minimum 5% financial contribution of the DAERA grant towards the project costs.

Eligibility Conditions

Actions must be non-profit taking led by organisations operating within the Community & Voluntary / Third sector or Public sector. Proposals must be coherent with and relate directly to the Council Community Plan and emerging priorities.

Applicants failing to achieve LOO targets and outputs in previous applications to Priority 6 may be debarred from applying until achieved.

Any project involving capital works will have to agree the appropriate legal charge/debenture in favour of the department.

Any project involving the purchase of buildings will have the purchase price of the building capped at 10% of the total eligible project costs.

Type of Support

Support will be provided through grant aid and advance payments may be available for Community, Voluntary and Social Economy Enterprise projects who would not otherwise be able to access the capital to commence implementation of their project:

- Advances are subject to a 100% guarantee provided by a bank or other equivalent financial institution established in the Member State;
- Advances will not exceed 20 % of the total amount of the aid to be granted to a beneficiary for a given operation.

State Aid

All aid under this Scheme will comply with EU rules on State Aid. State aid falling within the following aid categories will be paid in accordance with block exemption Regulation (EU) 651/2014 as follows:

- Aid for culture and heritage conservation will comply with Article 53.
- Aid for sport for multi-functional recreational infrastructure will comply with Article 55.
- Aid to local infrastructure will comply with Article 56.

Alternatively the measure can utilise de minimis Regulation (EU) 1407/2013.

Payments

All grant payments will be made retrospectively by claim and advances will be available. Projects can avail of phased payments with no more than five, these must be linked to tangible outputs on the Letter of Offer schedule of eligible expenditure.

Please note: this information could change as the Programme rolls out

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