

# Community Recognition Fund 2024

## Scheme Guidelines

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## Introduction and Background

The Community Recognition Fund 2024 ('the Fund') aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities for the entire community in recognition of the contribution being made by communities across the country in welcoming and hosting significant numbers of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

The funding is specifically targeted at projects that are located in communities, towns and villages that are hosting the Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and/or International Protection Applicants ('new arrivals') including towns identified for the rapid build homes programme. The Fund aims to support the development of facilities that will be used in the future by all members of the community. It is separate in its objectives and scope to any other public funding streams which aim to support the development of public service needs arising from the significant number of arrivals from Ukraine and other countries.

€50 million is available under the Fund, and this is allocated between each local authority based on the number of new arrivals located there. Applications can be submitted by a local authority to DRCD across three application windows, the last of which will close on 31st January 2025. **Projects must be fully delivered by the end of 2026.**

## Grant Allocations and Rates

Funding is targeted at, and specifically invested in, those communities, villages and towns where the highest level of new arrivals are located and where there is a clear need for investment identified. Projects situated in areas that do not have high levels of new arrivals will not be deemed eligible.

Projects to be funded will be capital in nature, deliver medium-long term benefits for the communities in which they are located, and be capable of being delivered over the course of 2025 and 2026. A minimum spend of 50% of the allocation must be incurred in 2025. Eligible projects will receive funding for capital costs, but not for any ongoing operational or running costs.

The minimum level of funding for an individual project is **€50,000** with a maximum of **€500,000** applying. Smaller projects cannot be artificially combined to meet the minimum threshold of €50,000 – while the 2023 scheme provided funding for small scale investment in clubs and communities (e.g. for small scale equipment), the focus of the 2024 scheme is on projects of greater scale and impact.

The Local Authority must ensure that where rate of aid of less than 100% is sought, the project must be achievable and completed in the timelines given. This funding should not be

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used as a co-funding source for any other scheme operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development or any other Government Department, nor should this funding be used as a co-funding source for any other project funded under CRF 2023.

For projects over €200,000 additional information must be provided at application stage giving further details on the needs identified in the location, the engagement and collaboration that resulted in the selection of the location and specific project and the capacity of the community to progress the proposed project in line with the terms and conditions attached to the funding.

The type of projects eligible for funding are:

- development, enhancement or refurbishment of community or cultural facilities including play areas, walkways, parks, community/sensory gardens, allotments, and recreational areas;
- development, enhancement or refurbishment of local club and sports facilities including facilities such as community swimming pools, changing rooms, toilets, digital aids such as score / information boards etc.;
- enhancement to school/parish facilities which are open to use by all of the community after school hours;
- purchase of equipment for local clubs, festivals, community events and organisations e.g. music, arts or sports equipment;
- transport infrastructure such as the purchase of community vehicles, bus shelters and attendant information boards; (any vehicle funded must be in good condition and not more than 5 years old)
- projects that help address dereliction and/or wider local economic and community development objectives;
- purchase and refurbishment of vacant or derelict buildings for community use where a clear need is identified.
- Purchase of land and associated works for the development of community facilities such as play areas/ MUGAs or town parks/ community gardens, recreational areas etc. **(purchases must only be administered by the local authority).**

Where the maximum funding levels under this scheme may limit the potential to purchase and renovate a targeted building, the local authority may wish to purchase the vacant building under this fund and its' subsequent renovation can form part of an application

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under another scheme such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

### Engagement with Communities and identifying locations

It is **essential** that the funding proposals are developed based on direct engagement with impacted communities. Proposals should also be consistent with Local Economic and Community Plans.

The proposal form must also demonstrate that the funding is targeted at, and specifically invested in, those communities, villages and towns where the **highest level** of new arrivals are located and where there is a **clear need for investment** identified. This must be clearly demonstrated in the proposal form, so that funding is allocated to the most appropriate projects in the specific city areas, towns and villages where significant numbers of new arrivals are located – proposals which spread projects throughout a municipal area or city area without clearly linking the funding to the specific location of new arrivals and their level of need will not be approved.

The proposal must also demonstrate that the local authority has considered the distribution of funding under the 2023 Community Recognition Fund as part of the allocation of funding and selection of projects under this second iteration of the Fund i.e. the distribution of funding across both the 2023 and 2024 funds combined should reflect where new arrivals are located.

Proposals which do not display adequate levels of community engagement and appropriate targeting of support will not be approved.

### Application Process

Interested groups should consider the requirements of the project, possible costs involved and plan their application carefully. The funding will be a competitive process and where numerous applications come from areas that are identified as high need, groups should endeavour to answer all parts of the application form fully. Projects should be specific, timebound, show clear costings and planning throughout, and be achievable within the timeframes involved. The application should also demonstrate the community engagement undertaken. Any planning issues should be clearly identified. Longford County Council will submit funding proposals to the Department for approval. The Department will examine each proposal and will revert to the Local Authority with any queries. No works should commence in advance of formal funding approval from the Department. All approved funding proposals will be the subject of a funding agreement between the local authority

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and the applicant organisation. Projects situated in towns, villages or specific city locations that do not have high levels of new arrivals will not be deemed eligible.

Longford County Council may submit proposals for community infrastructure and will follow the same application and evaluation process as a community applicant.

The deadlines for submission to Longford County Council across three application windows are as follows:

Application window 1	21st May 2024
Application window 2	9th August 2024
Application window 3	TBC

**No changes to application will be accepted after the proposal form is submitted for review by the Department.** The Department may approve projects on a rolling basis or, alternatively, on a collective basis across all local authorities after the closing date for each application window.

### Claim Process

Funding will be drawn down based on actual costs incurred and appropriate documentation must be retained in this regard. In order to assist community groups manage their cash flow, interim claims can be submitted based on the terms of the funding agreement. A case study must accompany the final claim and should include photographic evidence to demonstrate the delivery of the completed project as approved under the funding proposal, as amended. The final payment will be contingent on confirmation of project completion including submission of a case study and evidence of appropriate signage.

Should circumstances change over the course of the project delivery and some of the key project elements are no longer deliverable, the applicant should notify the Local Authority and seek prior written approval of any amendments using the appropriate amendment form.

### Procurement & Governance

National Procurement Guidelines and DPENDR Circular 13/2014 this circular must be adhered to in respect of each project funded under the funding proposal, and confirmation of this will form part the Department's control regime for the Fund.

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### Existing Schemes

The funding should not be used to fund or co-fund existing financial commitments from any Government Scheme already approved for delivery by the local authority. However, funding can be used to deliver projects that are complementary to existing projects or to fund a different phase of an existing project. In the context of these types of projects, it is important that appropriate documentation is provided at claim stage to clearly delineate each discrete project showing clear lines of funding/payment etc.

### Publicity

Successful projects will acknowledge the support of the Department and reference 'Our Rural Future' in all public announcements, scheme documentation and advertising, as appropriate, relating to projects supported under the Fund. Appropriate signage should be erected at the project location and a template will be provided.

In addition, the Department may seek to use the details of the works funded in each local authority in the broader promotion of its policies. Detailed case studies will support this and should be submitted with all final drawdown claims. The approved project proposals and details of the specific approved projects will be formally announced and published by the Department.

### Funding Conditions

Non-Compliance with the conditions as outlined herein or in the funding agreement or non-compliance with any additional stipulations agreed during contract negotiations may result in the requirement to refund part or all of the funding awarded by the Department.

All expenditure under the Fund is also subject to the terms of the [Public spending code](#) and [DPENDR Circular 13/2014](#).

All appropriate financial, public procurement and accounting rules and regulations must be complied with, and each local authority will fully account for the funding received in a timely manner.

All the requirements set out in this document must be adhered to in order to qualify for the drawdown on funding.

A separate funding agreement will issue following approval of each project proposal.

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## Monitoring of Funding

The Local Authority and the Department may carry out appropriate pre or post-payment checks of project payment claims to verify compliance with funding conditions, project delivery and the reality of expenditure where appropriate. The checks may include an examination of the file maintained in respect of approved projects together with any other relevant documentation identified during the course of the on-the-spot check.

## Queries

Any queries regarding the Community Recognition Fund in Longford should be sent to [communityfund@longfordcoco.ie](mailto:communityfund@longfordcoco.ie)