



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



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

Town and Village Renewal Scheme



Accelerated Measure in Response to COVID-19

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2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

**Scheme Outline for the 2020
Accelerated Measure
in response to COVID-19**

Department of Rural and Community Development

27th May 2020

**Closing date for receipt of applications under the
Accelerated Measure:**

Round 1: 3rd July 2020 (max 5 applications)

Round 2: 14th August 2020 (max 5 applications)

2020 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

- Accelerated Measure in Response to COVID-19

1. Introduction

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced in 2016 and is one of a number of measures designed to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland under the Department of Rural & Community Development's "*Rural Development Investment Programme*". The programme is funded under Project Ireland 2040.

In 2020, the Rural Development Investment Programme, including the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, is being tailored to address the emerging challenges associated with COVID-19. For the Town & Village Renewal Scheme this means:

- A focus under the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme on interventions that can respond to the new challenges associated with COVID-19 and support the economic and social recovery of our rural towns and villages;
- The introduction of a new strand of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme for 2020 that focuses on immediate interventions that can be delivered in the short-term to assist towns and villages to adapt to COVID-19.

This Scheme Outline addresses this new Strand which is titled the "Accelerated Measure in Response to COVID-19" hereafter called the Accelerated Measure.

2. 2020 Accelerated Measure

The Accelerated Measure is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered through the Local Authorities.

The objective of the Accelerated Measure is to assist the expedited delivery of projects that address the short-term challenges of increasing footfall in rural villages and towns, and assisting local businesses/communities to adapt to public health requirements, particularly social distancing. The total indicative funding available for this Measure is €5 million.

This Measure will provide Local Authorities with the autonomy to identify and develop their own solutions in consultation with local business interests (e.g. Chambers of Commerce), Town Teams (or similar) and community groups as appropriate.

The projects can be delivered directly by the Local Authority or by a community/business organisation. It is expected that the projects will involve expenditure on supplies and services

of a capital nature and some smaller scale works that can be delivered quickly, rather than the large scale capital works that are typical under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme.

The Accelerated Measure will have two separate application deadline dates to ensure that the funding can be responsive and address evolving needs. This will provide Local Authorities with the opportunity to immediately progress Measures identified by towns and villages at an early stage, while also facilitating other towns and villages that require more time to develop project plans.

Given the likely nature of the projects and the introduction of a simplified application procedure, these projects will be approved and announced by the Department within a short timeframe

In the main, it is anticipated that projects under this Accelerated Measure will be completed by the end of 2020.

3. Categories of Towns

In accordance with the Town & Village Renewal Scheme generally, the Accelerated Measure will target towns and villages with a population of under 10,000 people.

It is expected that there would be a spread of applications from each Local Authority across towns and villages of varying sizes. The assessment and selection of projects by the Department will also be mindful of the need to ensure a sufficient spread amongst towns and villages of varying size.

4. Application, Assessment and Approval Process

Selection of projects under the Accelerated Measure will be by means of a competitive process and final project selection will be made by the Department of Rural and Community Development on the basis of proposals submitted by the Local Authorities.

Applications can be submitted under two separate funding rounds. The final dates for the submission of applications under each round are as follows:

Round 1 application deadline date: 3rd July 2020.

Round 2 application deadline date: 14th August 2020.

The following requirements apply:

- Local Authorities will be limited to a maximum of 5 applications for each application Round – 10 in total across both rounds.
- Local Authorities should provide an indicative prioritisation of projects, bearing in mind that final project selection will be made by the Department.

- Applications should be developed in consultation with community and business interests including Town Teams, Chambers of Commerce (or similar) and community organisations as appropriate.
- Proposals submitted under the Accelerated Measure should have the potential to deliver immediate results or actions.
- Proposals should typically be for supplies or services of a capital nature or for short term works projects rather than the longer term interventions usually funded under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
- Local Authorities are encouraged to develop novel and innovative responses to the new challenges.
- It is a matter for each Local Authority to decide the process for carrying out public consultations, seeking expressions of interest where applicable and identifying potential projects.
- Only one application can be submitted in respect of any individual town/village, including towns that may be under the remit of more than one Local Authority.
- An application cannot be submitted in Round 2 for a town or village that is successful in receiving funding under Round 1.
- A town or village that is awarded funding under the Accelerated Measure is not precluded from applying for funding under the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme in 2020.

5. Project Selection

The Application Form must clearly describe the project to be funded and demonstrate how it will assist the town/village to adapt to the specific challenges posed by COVID-19.

A number of factors will be considered by the Department in selecting projects including the quality of the information supplied in the Application form; the level of innovation; the range, mix, quality and impact of the proposed projects; the prioritisation of projects indicated by the Local Authority; and other relevant considerations.

6. Types of Activities that can be supported

The Accelerated Measure provides Local Authorities with flexibility to design and deliver solutions to the challenges introduced by COVID-19 based on the situation pertaining in their own area. These solutions can be tailored to individual towns/villages or an individual project might provide the same solution for a number of towns/villages. Innovative and novel solutions are encouraged.

The following list is provided as a non-exhaustive indicative list of the types of interventions which might be considered by Local Authorities. The examples are provided as a guide only.

Measures to deal with Social Distancing requirements

- The provision of equipment or carrying out of works to temporarily repurpose or pedestrianise public areas to facilitate on street/outdoors trading and/or to make these areas temporarily weather-proof by the use of marquees, awnings etc.
- Adaptation of heritage/community buildings to accommodate multiple local businesses to sell their products and services, in line with public health guidance pertaining to COVID-19.
- Development of a central online platform for a town or village where consumers can continue to “shop local” by virtually visiting the shops in a town or village through a single website.
- Provision of local centralised drive-through facilities for items purchased online or over the phone.

Measures to encourage increased footfall

- Collectivised branding/marketing of towns or villages through both traditional and social media channels.
- Capital expenditure associated with festivals or smaller-scale events later in the year when public health guidelines allow.
- Painting and improving shop front facades and other minor public realm improvements (seating, planting/landscaping, deep clean of public areas etc.).
- Investment in adapting public areas, footpaths etc. to make them accessible to all ages and all abilities.

7. Types of Activities that will not be supported

- Projects with a completion timeframe of more than 6 months should generally be submitted through the standard Town and Village Renewal Scheme (application deadline date 28th Aug 2020).
- Ongoing Operational Costs – projects should, in the main, be of a capital nature and ongoing operational costs will need to be met from own funds.
- Support for a single private enterprise – projects that collectively assist private enterprises within a town or village are eligible.

8. Grant Level

The total indicative funding available for this Measure is €5 million.

There will be a maximum level of funding of €25,000 per project, with the possibility to increase to €40,000 for a small number of high impact projects (Local Authorities can submit a maximum of 1 high impact project of up to €40,000 each per funding round).

The rate of aid will be a maximum of 90% of project costs. The higher level of aid in 2020 has been introduced in recognition of the challenging environment for raising financial contributions in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

The grant funding for the approved project will be provided from the Department of Rural and Community Development's capital budget.

Given the nature of projects under the Accelerated Measure, it is expected that professional costs and Local Authority administration costs will not be included in project costs in most instances. However, in line with the Town and Village Scheme generally, professional costs and/or Local Authority administration costs associated with the proposed project are permitted up to a maximum of 10% of the overall project costs. These costs must be clearly documented in the application. The level of such costs will be a consideration in the assessment of projects under this measure.

Match funding of 10% must be provided with a minimum 5% cash contribution. Match funding may be provided by the Local Authority and/or the community and/or Philanthropic contributions.

9. Payment Schedule

Funding may be drawn down in one tranche following completion of the project.

10. Funding Conditions for Rural Schemes funded under the Department of Rural and Community Development.

All expenditure registered through the Department's Rural Schemes i.e. Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLÁR, Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) will be subject to the terms of the Public Spending Code which can be found at <http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>.

In addition to this, the requirements outlined below will apply to all funding approved through those schemes. The need for adherence to all of the requirements will be reflected in the contractual agreement between the Department of Rural and Community Development and the grantee approved for funding under the scheme.

1. Projects will be expected to commence and be completed in line with the timelines set out in the relevant Scheme Outline.
2. The Department may de-commit funding allocated to projects under the Scheme where the project is not completed within the time specified, and where the express agreement of the Department to extend the funding arrangement has not been agreed in advance.

3. The grant funding for the approved project will be provided from the Department of Rural and Community Development's capital budget. Administration and/or professional costs associated with the proposed project, where allowed for in the Scheme Outline, should be kept to a minimum. These costs must be clearly documented in the application and are only permitted up to a maximum of 10% of the overall project costs.
4. Where allowed in the relevant Scheme Outline, in-kind contributions, up to the maximum set out in relevant Scheme Outline, can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent on the project.
 - The rate applied should be for remuneration of equivalent work, up to a maximum rate of €14 per hour. The grantee must ensure that the rate per hour applied is properly justified according to the work undertaken.
 - Where Voluntary Labour forms part of a project, the grantee is advised that the requirements of all relevant Health and Safety legislation apply.
 - Project administration e.g. attendance at meetings, preparation of grant application form, funding drawdown claims and management costs are not eligible as voluntary labour.
 - Labour provided by a participant on an RSS/TUS/other exchequer funded scheme are not eligible for use as an in-kind contribution.
 - Voluntary labour must be completed prior to submitting the final drawdown claim to the Department. It may be included in phased payments, provided the work in question has been completed at the time the claim is submitted.
 - Details of all voluntary labour claimed must be maintained on a timesheet (1 timesheet per person) which will be provided by the Department. The timesheet will capture the following details;
 - The name of the person undertaking the work
 - The nature, time, dates of the works, quantity, hours worked and rate per hour,
 - The signature of the person who provided the in-kind work,
 - The timesheet must be signed off by the appointed project co-ordinator over the project.
5. A cash contribution as set out in the relevant Scheme Outline is required. The grantee will be required to provide confirmation that the cash contribution is in place and retain a record of the source of the cash contribution.

6. Projects must be completed in full in order to drawdown the full grant amount. 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. Any changes to the proposed project must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance of the change being implemented.
7. 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.
8. If the project involves works on buildings or lands that are not in the ownership of the grantee, a minimum 5 year lease must be in place from date of project completion.
9. In the case of funding allocated to enterprises or facilities (i.e. community centre, hubs, vehicles under CLÁR etc.), it is a requirement that they must operate as funded for a minimum of 5 years following release of the final stage of funding, otherwise funding may have to be repaid. Where they do not operate as funded this must be advised and agreed with the Department in advance.
10. 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.
11. Full and accurate documentation to support all expenditure should be maintained and accessible by Department officials for audit purposes at all times and for a period of six years from the date of completion of the project.
12. Grantees will acknowledge the support of Project 2040 / Department of Rural and Community Development / Government of Ireland, and any other applicable sources of funding (as identified in the relevant Funding Agreement) in all public announcements, advertising and signage, as appropriate, relating to the project. In addition, the Department may seek to use the project in the broader promotion of its policies.
13. Grantees 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.
14. On-going monitoring and evaluation of the project outputs and outcomes should take place in the context of assessing the impact of the project. Grantees will be expected to collect appropriate data to facilitate this learning on an on-going basis. On request, a brief report (1-2 pages) on the outputs and outcomes of the project funded should be completed and made available to the Department.
15. Each grantee, will provide a contact point/points to the Department to facilitate payment and information requests. The Department should be updated on any changes to contact personnel in a timely manner.

16. A checklist confirming compliance with funding conditions relating to the grant aid will be required upon project completion.

Non-Compliance with the conditions as outlined or any additional stipulations agreed during contract negotiations may result in the requirement to refund part or all of the grant aid awarded.