

Community Climate Action Programme

FAQ Document

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1 Funding queries

Q. If a community group need to apply for a loan (ie. Credit Union loan) does the amount applied for have to include the interest amount that will apply to the loan?

Answer: The interest would not be eligible for Climate Action Fund expenditure. Payment would be made up of proof of eligible expenditure in relation to the project, not for servicing a loan.

Q. Going with the present 100% vouched expenditure model do funds:

- a) get transferred to LAs from the Department and distributed by local authorities to projects?
- b) are funds distributed directly from the Department to communities directly?

Answer: The Department will have a grant agreement with each Local Authority who will in turn, be responsible for administering the fund to relevant, eligible projects in communities.

Q. Regarding the quarterly drawdown – what are the specific rules for communities and what is the expected turnaround time?

Answer: This programme will operate on the basis of a quarterly drawdown request from the Local Authority to the Department. This will need to include all relevant documentation to this request as laid out in the Grant Agreement. The grant agreement will specify a maximum of 30 days. It will be up to the Local Authority to disperse the funds on time. Intermittent drawdowns will not be allowed.

Q. Can CAF funds be leveraged with SEAI grants?

Answer: Yes, provided it would not result in duplicate funding.

Q: Can a large project combine funding from the CAF with alternate Government funding if it is broken down into components?

Answer: The component would have to be assessed individually and stand up on its own merits, exclusive of the alternate funding, against the eligibility criteria, objectives, and themes of the programme. It must also be noted that there cannot be a duplication of funds. It must be clearly demonstrated that the individual component(s) can be advanced in fulfilment of the objectives of the Community Climate Action Programme without being subject to or compromised by the delivery of the larger project.

2 Organisation/Project Eligibility

Q. Are schools eligible to apply under strand 1, if they are publicly run?

Answer: No, schools cannot apply under strand 1. Schools are subject to other funding sources as for example the Climate Action Fund will be providing Climate Action Fund funding towards Solar PV via the Department of Education and other funding streams available for schools including the Green Schools Programme, which is run in partnership with Local Authorities.

Q: Are Naíonras/preschools eligible to apply?

Answer: Naíonras and preschools are not eligible to apply.

Q: Are the following groups eligible to apply (assuming they have Articles of Associations/ constitutions, hold AGM and have minutes etc.):

- **Housing Associations (e.g. estates or apartment blocks)**

Answer: They would have to be satisfied that they have met the community organisation eligibility criteria. Residents associations would be eligible provided the project was targeting shared, public areas within the estate for the benefit of the wider community.

- **Social Enterprises.**

Answer: Yes, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

Local authorities must ensure due diligence is carried out on the eligibility of the applicants to the programme confirming that they are:

- A not-for profit organisation
- Located within the administrative area of the local authority to which they are applying.
- Registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and /or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available.

It is advisable to communicate this clearly and effectively in any communication materials to promote the programme.

Q. Are Partnerships/consortiums eligible under Strand 1? For example, more than one community is involved in the project.

Answer: Partnership is permitted, but they must be in the jurisdiction of the Local Authority, with the exception of strand 1a. No duplication should be allowed, this would not allow them to multiply their funding. There would have to be a lead partner identified.

Q. If land/ property/ other assets are provided for the project by a public or private body what are the rules for its inclusion regarding the future (leasing etc.)?

Answer: As per the Grant agreement, where a project will be delivered from a site/building(s)/floor space that are not in the ownership of the Local Authority, it must be in the ownership of the partner organisation of the Local Authority or either party must have a minimum five years lease or agreement in place from date of project completion, making it available to the community.

Q. Is store rent and set up an eligible expense?

Answer: No, renting/leasing is not an eligible expense. The Community Climate Action Programme is not intended to be a startup fund. Any space should be made available to the public for at least five years.

Q: Are Sustainable Energy Communities eligible to apply?

Answer: If they meet the not-for-profit community base criteria and/or other eligibility criteria.

Q. Are Credit Unions eligible to apply under strand 1 for funding?

Answer: No, financial institutions are not eligible for funding under this programme, unless they are acting as a supporting partner in a project.

Q. Does a not-for-profit community organisation have to be registered with a PPN?

Answer: No, they can also be connected with other collectives, such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and/or be a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available. They must have connections with the community/connected to another group.

The Local Authority must ensure that all documentary evidence is gathered and assessed to satisfy the terms of the eligibility criteria of the programme.

Q. The nature of climate action and breadth of community interests means that projects can vary significantly in importance, scale, nature and extent. How can the programme be optimised for maximum effect and impact?

Answer: The programme will attract a significant range of projects under each of the themes and also funding tiers. Notwithstanding the initial process of adjudicating the eligibility of the applicant(s) the task by the evaluation team is to assess each project on its own merits and in combination with other projects likely to in pursuit of the programme objective which is to;

'shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets'

This means that projects should work achieve reasonable emission reductions/energy efficiency improvements, work to empower and build capacity within local communities on climate action and through that maximise the community gain as broadly as possible. The Evaluators must ensure insofar as is practical that there is variety in projects, under each of the funding tiers, to achieve the programme objective.

Q. Would an application to replace halogen flood lighting with LED at a local community sports club be eligible?

Answer: Each project will be assessed on its own merits and in the context of the delivery of objectives of the programme, as per question above. It is a competitive fund and local authorities have a limited allocation. If there is a more appropriate funding mechanism that could be leveraged that should be explored for example, sports capital grants. Duplication of funding is not allowed.

Q. Is the purchase and leasing of land permitted?

Answer: It could not be the entirety of the project; the Department would require there be a minimum of a 5 year lease on the land. The project would have to demonstrate how it meets the objective and criteria of the CCAP. Purchase or lease of land alone could not do this.

Q Would branches of a national not-for-profit community organisation be eligible to apply?

Answer: If multiple branches want to apply in order to access the funding, they would have to be financially independent of each other. Only one application per organisation is accepted so each branch would have to be independent enough to be considered their own not-for-profit community-based organisation.

3. Eligible Costs

Q. What are eligible costs ?

Eligible costs:

All costs included for this grant must:

- Be for the sole purpose of implementing the project and shall not be used for any other purpose.
- Not duplicate public funding received from other sources for the same purpose.
- Must be verifiable e.g. supported by evidence of compliance with public procurement in Ireland, an invoice and receipt of payment.
- Be reasonable in their nature and amount i.e. not excessive and it what would be incurred by a prudent person in the conduct of delivering a project of this nature.
- Be considered necessary for the delivery of the project.
- Up to 100% funding may be provided from the Climate Action Fund. Other funding may be leveraged for projects (e.g. with LEADER, Tidy Towns, Town and Village Enhancement funding, etc.). However, the CAF/Shared Island funded component must be able to stand on its own merits and be independent of the other funding. Duplication of funding is not permitted.
- Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.

Costs should be considered on a case-by-case basis. As it is impossible to ensure that all costs are included in this list above. This is a new and innovative programme, some costs will be considered based on the nature of the application and justification and rationale provided by the applicant.

Non-Eligible Projects and Activities

The Community Climate Action Fund will not formally fund activities involving:

- Projects that solely benefit an individual
- Teaching/staffing
- Travel and transport costs except in exceptional circumstances
- Equipment, unless directly associated with the project
- Income generating projects
- Overheads, ongoing running costs
- Insurance
- Accommodation and subsistence

- Redundancy costs
- Penalties/Interest/Bank Interest/Charges
- Loan repayments
- Retrospective costs i.e. expenditure which has taken place prior to approval date of the project
- Costs for which more appropriate funding opportunities already exist are ineligible, where it is clear that Community Climate Action Programme funding is a substitute for other public funding which is currently available
- Notional costs e.g. the room hire within the applicant's own premises
- Legal Fees

This list is not exhaustive.

Note:

- Applicant organisations nor their partners cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises i.e. items such as the use of a photocopier or use of their own rooms for meetings.

Q. Can communities get reimbursed for assessments done during the application period (if they are chosen) for example energy audits?

Answer: No, funding is only available for costs incurred after project selection.

4 Questions on EOI Forms and Advertising

Q. Regarding the EOI forms and the amounts (€) entered is this excluding Vat or Including Vat figure?

Answer: Acknowledging that the VAT may be quite expensive for these groups all costs submitted as part of the application process should be inclusive of VAT. However, some groups may be able to reclaim VAT. These groups should submit expenses exclusive of VAT.

Q. How will sterling conversions for strand 1a be dealt with?

Answer: Quotes must be provided in Euros and the group must absorb the sterling conversion rate if there is one.

Q: Does the project have to be completed in its entirety within an 18-month period?

Answer: Yes, the project has 18 months to complete but projects may complete earlier than 18 months.

Q: Are physical inspections on the site of projects required?

Answer: Local Authorities will allow for these in their contracts or memorandum of understanding with the partners. The grant agreement requires that site visits should be allowed.