

Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme 2015

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Overview

This programme is funded under the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Tackling Poverty and Social Isolation Framework. The key aim of this Framework is to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within rural communities across Northern Ireland. More information on the Framework is provided at Annex 3.

For the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, County Down Rural Community Network is delivering this Programme on behalf of the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development.

Key objectives

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme 2015 has been designed to:

- Help rural community-led, voluntary groups to address local issues of **access poverty, financial poverty** and **social isolation**; and
- Improve the lives of rural communities, and in particular the wellbeing of isolated individuals.

County Down Rural Community Network
Ballymote Centre
40 Killough Road
Downpatrick
BT30 6PY
Tel 028 4461 2311
Email: info@countydownrcn.com

The Grant Scheme

Micro Capital grants of between £200 and £1,500 are available to rural community-led, voluntary organisations for projects tackling issues of local poverty and / or social isolation.

Projects must focus on one of the following three themes:

- Modernisation (of premises / assets)
- Information Communication Technology
- Health and Wellbeing

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme can provide up to 85% of the total cost of your project, up to a maximum grant of £1,500. Match funding for your 15% must be in the form of a 'cash' contribution. Labour or 'in-kind' contributions will not be accepted. In order to ensure that as many groups as possible get the opportunity to benefit from this Programme, groups will be allowed a maximum of one award in any 12 month period.

What can be funded?

Grant aid can only be used to meet costs associated with capital equipment, the improvement of a capital asset and / or the extension of the useable life of a capital asset. Eligible items **must** clearly relate to the key themes of (i) Modernisation, (ii) ICT or (iii) Health & Wellbeing. As this is a capital programme, the following types of activity **cannot** be funded.

Examples of Ineligible Activity	
General maintenance	Running costs & Consumables
Training	Staff / Volunteer expenses
Clothing, Uniforms	Hospitality, Food, Drink
Motorised vehicles	Feasibility Studies / Reports
Labour costs not directly associated with purchased Capital works / items	

This list is not exhaustive and if you are in doubt about the eligibility of your project, please contact County Down Rural Community Network before applying.

Who can apply?

You **can** apply for a Micro Capital grant if:

- ✓ you are a not-for-profit community / voluntary organisation;
- ✓ your organisation is based in a rural area. A definition of rural is detailed at Annex 1;
- ✓ you have a formal Constitution or governing documents;
- ✓ you have a minimum of three people on your management committee
- ✓ you have a bank or building society account in the name of your group, which requires at least two signatures on each cheque or withdrawal;
- ✓ you can enclose your most recent Annual Accounts or financial statement. These must be signed as approved as detailed in your Constitution;
- ✓ you need a capital grant of between £200 and £1,500 for a specific poverty or social isolation project and can provide two written quotes for each item to be purchased;
- ✓ you can spend and claim the grant **within four months** of receiving your offer;
- ✓ you are appropriately insured.

What cannot be funded?

We **cannot** fund the following:

- × Individuals, Sole traders and / or Commercial trading companies;
- × Companies that exist to distribute a profit;
- × Statutory Authorities or organisations governed by Statutory Authorities;
- × Appeals or charities set up to support statutory bodies;
- × Organisations with an annual turnover in excess of £80,000 (not including exceptional, non-business / grant income);
- × Costs already incurred – an application cannot be made for capital items that have already been ordered or received before the award of a Letter of Offer;
- × Grant cannot be used to match another funder's project;
- × Projects where the value of match funding is greater than the value of grant;
- × Second-hand equipment.

Eligibility

Your application will be considered against the Eligibility Criteria for the Programme (see Annex 2 for the list of criteria). Only the information contained within your application will be used during this process and no additional information other than that provided with your application will be considered.

As this Programme is funded as part of DARD's Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Framework, you must also demonstrate within your application how your project will contribute to reducing rural poverty and / or social isolation within your local community. Please refer to Annex 3.

Please note

1. In the event of over-subscription, County Down Rural Community Network reserves the right to use random selection to award grants.
2. You **must not start** your project until you attend a **mandatory 'Letter of Offer Workshop'** and have agreed to the terms and conditions of the grant. We intend to inform applicants if their application has been successful within two weeks of the closing date. If your application is successful, we will contact you with details for the Letter of Offer Workshop in your region.
3. Your project must be completed and your grant claimed **within four months** from the date of your award. **NO extensions** will be given.
4. You must incur the initial cost of your purchases and then claim your grant once your project is completed. **NO advance payments** will be provided.
5. Following completion, you must provide evidence of your purchase (photographic evidence, serial number(s), etc.). Your project may be selected by DARD for a verification check to ensure your grant aid is being used for the purposes intended.

How to apply

This programme is open for applications from **Monday 13 April 2015** until **12 noon** on **Friday 22 May 2015**.

Download the Application Form and Guidance Notes from County Down Rural Community Network's web address at www.countydownruralcommunitynetwork.com or request an Application Pack by calling County Down Rural Community Network on 02844 612311 or email County Down Rural Community Network to: info@countydownrcn.com

Please return your completed application form, with electronic attachments (e.g. scanned copies of constitution, quotes etc.) by email to: info@countydownrcn.com

Alternatively, if you are unable to submit your form online, the completed application form and supporting information should be returned in a sealed envelope, clearly marked **Grant Aid Application** to us at the address shown below.

The following documents *must* be included with your application:

- A copy of your group's Constitution / governing documents
- A copy of your group's most recent Bank / Building Society statement (within last 3 months)
- A copy of your most recent audited accounts or financial statement (for minimum 12 month period)
- A copy of at least two written, like-for-like, quotations for every item that you wish to purchase as part of your project. Procurement requirements are outlined at Annex 1
- A copy of your current insurance certificate(s)
- A copy of your lease or proof of ownership (for projects involving work to your building)

The onus to ensure that your application is received before the closing date rests solely with the applicant. Therefore please ensure that you leave sufficient time to submit your application on-line or use sufficient postage to ensure delivery by the closing date.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL LATE OR INCOMPLETE
APPLICATIONS BE ACCEPTED.**

If you would like more information about the Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme 2015 or have a specific query, please contact:

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Annex 1**Rural Location**

Applications will only be accepted for projects that are based in a rural area of Northern Ireland.

For the purposes of the Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme 2015, rural Northern Ireland means all those areas outside the statutory development limits of those towns with a population in excess of 4,500 inhabitants plus the areas of Strathfoyle, Newbuildings, and Culmore in Derry/Londonderry Urban Area (OUA) and Milltown, Helens Bay, Crawfordsburn, and Groomsport in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA).

If you are in any doubt about whether your group is located in a rural area, please contact County Down Rural Community Network before submitting your application.

Procurement

Estimated values	Action & Minimum Number	Comments
<p>Up to £3,000 (maximum total project cost under RMCGP 2015)</p>	<p>2 price-checks / quotations per item</p>	<p>Fax or e-mail confirmation, evidence of internet searches / prices is required.</p> <p>“like-for-like” quotations must be sought.</p> <p>Documented evidence of the price-checks must be retained.</p>

Annex 2**Eligibility Criteria Checklist**

Primary Eligibility Criteria	
1.	Is the application form sufficiently completed, signed and appropriately authorised? All supporting documentation must be provided.
2.	Is (i) the applicant's status and (ii) proposed project eligible according to the checklist of secondary criteria?
3.	Does the project address an issue of local poverty and / or social isolation, in line with the key objectives of the Rural Micro Capital Grant Programme 2015?
4.	The project has not commenced.
5.	Can the project be completed and grant claimed within four months?

Secondary Eligibility Criteria	
	Applicant is a not-for-profit community / voluntary organisation.
	Applicant is based in a Rural area.
	Applicant has provided copy of their Constitution / Governing documents.
	Constitution confirms that at least two signatories are required for cheques / withdrawals.
	Constitution confirms that the Management Committee must have a minimum of three people.

Applicant has provided a Bank / Building Society statement (less than 3 months old) bearing the applicant organisations name.
Applicant has provided recent Annual Accounts or financial statement.
Grant requested is between £200 - £1500 and at least two quotes have been provided for each item to be purchased.
Applicant is providing a minimum of 15% match funding and the value of match funding is not greater than the grant.
Applicant has an annual turnover less than £80,000 (not including exceptional, non-business / grant income)

Applicants must meet all Primary and Secondary eligibility criteria in order to proceed to selection phase.

Please remember – you must supply all relevant documentation with your application e.g. recent Bank or Building Society Statement, evidence of Insurance, quotes, copy of your lease / proof of ownership for projects involving work to your premises.

Annex 3

Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework

The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework outlines the priority areas for Government to target and mitigate against issues of rural poverty and social isolation. It also sets out an action plan of activities that DARD will lead on to help address rural poverty and isolation that includes supporting vulnerable communities, developing and introducing new initiatives and reacting to emerging needs.

The priorities of the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework are to address issues of:

Access Poverty

- Access to statutory services,
- Advice on welfare benefits, health & social care, education & training and public transport.

Financial Poverty

- Ensuring vulnerable rural dwellers can maximize their income, maximize benefit uptake in rural areas,
- Tackle fuel poverty issues and address the additional costs people face by living in rural areas.

Social Isolation

- Addressing different types of isolation experienced by different vulnerable groups, for example by using community development approaches,
- Supporting those organisations that work in rural areas to help those suffering from stress or mental health issues.