

# Mayo's Community Climate Action Programme Briefing Note and Guidelines for Applicants

Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action

The Community Climate Action Programme has been developed by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) to support small and large, rural and urban communities to take climate action at a local level. Under the Community Climate Action Programme, €60m from the Climate Action Fund is being invested in localised community climate action projects and initiatives, and capacity building over the next three years. Mayo County Council (MCC) will administer strand 1 and 1a of this Programme for communities within its areas of operation.

Ireland has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 51% by 2030 and becoming a net zero and climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. For Ireland and Mayo to make this transition, we need to work together to address how we power our buildings, work, travel, consume goods and services, and manage our waste.

This guide has been prepared for groups in the operational area of Mayo County Council to learn more about the Community Climate Action Programme and it may be subject to change. Groups are advised to contact the Community Climate Action Officer to discuss the Programme.

## 1. Objectives of the Community Climate Action Programme

The overall objective of this Programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with their local authorities, to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.

## 2. Overview of Strand 1 and Strand 1a

### Strand 1 - Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

MCC have been given an allocation of €609,000 for projects under strand 1. Under this strand communities will carry out projects that have a direct climate action impact. A number of projects will be selected from across the county which demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level in Mayo.

### Strand 1a – Shared Island Community Climate Action

This strand enables communities to carry out a cross-border direct climate action project in partnership with a community/ organisation in Northern Ireland. Unlike Strand 1, Local Authorities have not been automatically allocated funding under strand 1a. Mayo communities can apply and their project must have a clear North/South basis, with a cross-border partnership approach and impact.

Projects from both strands must meet the objectives of the Programme as set out in project eligibility below and be completed within 18 months. 100% funding is available for projects. Projects can include a suite of measures, not just one specific action.

This Programme is an opportunity for groups to take a holistic approach in making their community less carbon intensive and more sustainable for the future. The Programme is open to a range of community groups – from those new to climate action to those with more experience.

### 3. Eligible Communities

Community groups are required to self-certify that they do not have the funding available to undertake the work without support, **OR** alternatively that the support will enable them to undertake more work which they otherwise would not be able to afford. Groups must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

#### Communities eligible for strand 1

To be eligible to apply under strand 1, community organisations must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation
- be located in the operational area of Mayo County Council
- be registered with the 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

The following types of organisations are **not** eligible to apply for strand 1:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- Schools, third levels institutions etc.
- National community and environmental organisations
- Financial institutions

#### Communities eligible for strand 1a (Shared Island Project)

To be eligible to apply under strand 1a, organisations must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation. National community and environmental organisations are eligible to apply under strand 1a due the scope for all-island projects
- be located in the operational area of Mayo County Council
- be 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
- have at least one partner organisation in Northern Ireland. Partner organisations must be either a:
  - not-for-profit organisation
  - Local Authority
  - local/ national community and environmental organisation registered in Northern Ireland

The following types of organisations are **not** eligible to apply for strand 1a:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- Schools, third levels institutions etc.
- Financial institutions

## 4. Eligible Projects

### Projects must:

- meet the overall objective “to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.”
- address one or more of the five Programme themes and national climate action targets, as set out below.
- comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, and Fire Codes etc., if applicable.

### Five Programme themes

Projects will address the following themes:

- Theme 1: Community Energy
- Theme 2: Travel
- Theme 3: Food and waste
- Theme 4: Shopping and recycling
- Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action

Projects can address one, all or some of the five themes. However, communities should try to incorporate as many themes as possible. Below is a breakdown of each theme and some suggested projects. These are only examples and communities are encouraged to be as innovative as possible with their projects.

Groups should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

### National Climate Action Targets

Apart from the Programme themes, projects should seek to demonstrate the following delivery of national climate action at a local level for strand 1 and on a cross-border basis on the island of Ireland for strand 1a:

- a) Reducing or supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- b) Increasing the production, or use, of renewable energy
- c) Improving energy efficiency
- d) Increasing climate resilience
- e) Identifying nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of, greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience in the State

- f) Assisting regions in the State (including communities in those regions) and within sectors of the economy impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy
- g) Involving potentially innovative solutions to address the above asks.

### Theme 1: Community and Energy

Many Irish buildings have very low energy ratings and high running costs, mainly due to heat loss. How we build, heat and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Heat loss accounts for 10% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We can make our buildings more energy efficient by retrofitting them (e.g. insulation), switching off and using low energy lights/ appliances, and using smart controls.

Projects of interest under this theme would reduce the climate impact of buildings in communities by using less energy, utilising renewable energy and avoiding heat loss.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind)
- retrofitting community buildings
- LED community lighting
- community EV charging point(s)

### Theme 2: Travel

Transport accounts for approximately 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Changing our means of travel is not simple and is often dictated by previous planning and housing choices, particularly in rural communities. How we travel is one of the main areas where behaviour change can have a rapid and real impact on achieving our climate goals.

Projects of interest under this theme would contribute to a reduction in travel related emissions.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- reduction in carbon footprint in services
- improving access to cycle/ walkways
- cycle parking
- community EV charging point(s)

### Theme 3: Food & Waste

Growing, processing and transporting food requires large amounts of energy and materials. It is estimated that one third of the food we grow is wasted and accounts for 10% of global emissions. There is a national commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030.

While being mindful that different situations such as the culture, religion, health, abilities and tastes can affect the decisions individual people can make; at a systems, community and lifestyle level there are opportunities to connect and engage people in action on food, waste and climate change.

Projects of interest under this theme would reduce food waste.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- community gardens
- allotments
- food markets
- repair hubs
- community composting facilities
- community fridge

#### Theme 4: Shopping and Recycling

What we buy has a major contribution to emissions in terms of how they are made, transported, used, reused and recycled. If we keep on using resources as we do now, by 2050 we would need the resources of three Earths to satisfy demand. Ireland is moving towards creating a circular economy - making products that last longer, can be repurposed, reused and eventually recycled more easily. One of our climate goals is to increase the amount of waste that is recycled and to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030.

As shoppers we have the power to influence. People are changing their shopping habits by buying products that last longer or repurposing items, planning what they will do with things when they are finished using them, recycling as much as possible, actively segregating their waste for collection and using recycling centres and services near to them.

Projects of interest under this theme would increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community and initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- community repair hubs
- swap shops
- toy/ sport reusable kits
- water filling stations
- single use plastics elimination in the community

#### Theme 5: Local climate and Environmental Action

Ireland has an abundance of natural resources, from our bogs and forests to our rivers and oceans. These natural resources need to be protected from climate change, and in return, they will help us by absorbing carbon, reducing the risk of flooding, increasing plants and wildlife (biodiversity), and acting as places for us all to reconnect with nature.

Community action can take many forms from simple clean-ups to community schemes, to making plans to adapt to the changes already happening.

Projects of interest under this theme would take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- mini forests
- forest schools
- dispersed orchards
- community gardens
- roof gardens
- pollinator projects
- water harvesting
- climate resilience projects
- wetland conservation

### Project locations

It is essential that projects be available to the community, where applicable. If the group do not own the land/ building(s)/ floor space then they must have a minimum of a five years lease or agreement in place from date of project completion. Groups may be asked to provide proof of ownership, lease or access agreements.

### Additional note for projects eligible under strand 1a

While projects seeking funding under strand 1a should address the same five themes and targets as strand 1 projects, there are also specific areas that may be particularly suited to a cross border approach. In recognition of the integration of climate and biodiversity action policies, these could include - valuing networks for nature; sustainable farming; just transition; peatland restoration; renewable energy; flood forecasting; or coastal erosion.

## 5. Funding/ Grant Sizes

Funding is available for 100% of the project costs. There are three project sizes:

- Small projects (Up to €20,000) - 10% of projects selected will be small scale
- Medium projects (€20,000 – €50,000) - 40% of projects selected will be medium scale
- Large projects (€51,000 - €100,000) - 50% of projects selected will be large scale

### Eligible Costs

The Programme will cover principally capital costs. Below is a guide to the eligible and ineligible costs for projects. Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

| Eligible Costs  | Non-Eligible Costs  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the sole purpose of implementing the project, be necessary and shall not be used for any other purpose</li> <li>• Verifiable and reasonable</li> <li>• No duplicate public funding</li> <li>• Other funding may be leveraged for the project, but the Community Climate Action Programme funding component must be able to stand on its own merits and be independent of the other funding</li> <li>• Funding must comply with State Aid requirements</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects that solely benefit an individual or income generating projects</li> <li>• Training, staff costs etc.</li> <li>• Equipment, unless directly associated with the project</li> <li>• Overheads, operating, travel, transport, subsistence, notional, legal, insurance or banking, loan costs etc.</li> <li>• Costs incurred before the Letter of Offer is issued</li> <li>• Costs where more appropriate funding opportunities already exist</li> </ul> |

VAT is considered eligible for grant payment in cases where it cannot be reclaimed. For groups who cannot reclaim VAT, all their costs should be inclusive of VAT. If a group is able to reclaim VAT then their expenses should be exclusive of VAT. Documentation may be sought by MCC confirming the VAT status of the group, i.e. a recent letter, or letters, from the Revenue Commission confirming the VAT status. Every group will be required in their application form to declare their VAT status.

The Community Climate Action Officer will be able to advise what costs are eligible when groups are planning their projects.

## 6. How to apply

Interested community groups should contact Mayo's Community Climate Action Officer to discuss their project ideas. The Community Climate Action Officer is there to offer guidance to groups developing their projects and completing the application form.

### Application form:

To apply groups must complete the application form. The application window will be open from Friday 1st December to Friday 23rd February (4pm).

Groups can apply via the online application form which can be found at <https://mayo.consult.ie> or at the direct links below:

[STRAND 1 Form](#)  
[STRAND 1A Form](#)

You can save the form as you go, so you do not need to complete and submit the application in one sitting. You will also be able to upload all relevant documentation.

No applications will be considered after the deadline. Only one application per organisation may be submitted, but groups can submit applications under both strand 1 and 1a, if the projects are different.

Documents to submit with the application form:

- Governance Documents for the organisation e.g. terms of reference, constitution, AGM minutes etc. (If not a member of the PPN)
- Costings breakdown i.e. written proof of quotes
- Any relevant supporting documentation, e.g. biodiversity reports, energy audits etc. This is not compulsory and only relevant documents should be submitted.

### Cost and budgeting

As part of the application community groups will need to prepare a budget detailing everything that they will need to pay for during the project. To ensure an application represents value for money, three written quotes must be sought and must be submitted with the application. Communities must also consider green procurement where possible. MCC must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their proposal.

Where three quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, this requirement may be waived, and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. Groups should consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting their application if this situation arises.

When drawing up costs it is advised to include a contingency to address any unforeseen changes to costs or inflation. This would be especially important for bigger projects.

For strand 1a projects, all quotes must be provided in Euros and the relevant community group must absorb the sterling conversion rate, if there is one.

When getting quotes from suppliers, groups should try to ensure that quotes will be valid for when they are carrying out the work, otherwise procurement may need to be repeated if groups are awarded funding. Please note that successful applicants will need to follow public procurement guidelines and depending on the type of work and cost, may need to get further quotes. The Community Climate Action Officer can advise groups on this.

### State Aid and De Minimis

Public funding is deemed to be 'State Aid' where it provides the recipient, whether an enterprise, not-for-profit organisation, or an individual, an economic advantage over others. To comply with State Aid rules, the level of funding provided to a project promoter must not exceed €200,000 - this is known as the De Minimis ceiling. De Minimis regulations sets a limit on how much assistance can be given to organisations. The current limit for a company, or group, irrespective of size or location, is €200,000 during the previous three-year fiscal period.

Many groups/ projects under this Programme would not be considered State Aid and therefore will not be subject to the De Minimis ceiling. However, community groups when submitting their application will need to clarify their status and if necessary declare if they have previously received any De Minimis State Aid (e.g. from a state agency, government department, Local Enterprise Office, local authority, LEADER funding etc.). The Community Climate Action Officer will be able to assist groups on this requirement.



## 7. Evaluation, Selection and Approval

For a project to be successful and receive funding they need to first pass the evaluation stage, then the selection stage and finally the approval stage.

### 1. Evaluation:

All applications will be evaluated by an evaluation committee to ensure they align with the objectives and eligibility of this Programme and will be marked against the selection criteria below. Applications must meet a minimum score of 50% or above and meet the minimum scores, to be considered for selection by MCC.

### 2. Selection:

Following evaluation, MCC will then select the final projects taking account of the highest scores and:

- the geographical distribution of projects
- the desirability to fund a variety of different projects and across multiple themes
- the contribution of the projects to the climate action objectives of MCC

### 3. Approval:

MCC will submit the selected projects to the Minister of the Environment, Climate and Communications for final approval. Success at the evaluation, and selection stages is not a guarantee of funding. The Minister will decide what projects are ultimately approved and any specific conditions of funding.

### Evaluation criteria

To ensure projects are selected in a transparent and fair manner, applications will be first evaluated on the following criteria. The maximum score is 100. Applications must meet a minimum score of 50% or above and meet the minimum score required under selected criteria to be considered for a project partnership with MCC.

| Selection criterion for <u>strand 1</u> | Weighting   |
|---|-------------|
| Relevance and impact                    | 30%         |
| Innovation and scalability              | 20%         |
| Value for money                         | 20%         |
| Achievability                           | 10%         |
| Partnership approach                    | 10%         |
| Governance arrangements                 | 10%         |
|   | <b>100%</b> |

| Selection criterion <u>strand 1a</u> | Weighting   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Shared Island relevance and impact   | 30%         |
| Innovation and scalability           | 20%         |
| Value for money                      | 20%         |
| Achievability                        | 10%         |
| Cross-border partnership approach    | 10%         |
| Governance arrangements              | 10%         |
|                                      | <b>100%</b> |

### Additional note on the evaluation of small-scale projects

Small projects will be evaluated under the same criteria listed above however consideration will be given to the smaller scale of the project. Projects should still be relevant and demonstrate impact. Thought should be given to the potential for replication by other communities, but they do not need to be innovative or scalable.

## Relevance and Impact

The project meets the objective of strand 1 to shape and build a low carbon community and can clearly demonstrate the impact of the project in contributing to Ireland's climate and energy targets.

### Know which ones apply to your project

#### Programme themes:

1. Community & Energy
2. Travel
3. Food & Waste
4. Shopping & Recycling
5. Local Climate & Environmental Action

#### Climate Action:

- Reducing emissions
- Increasing renewables/ energy efficiency
- Increasing/protecting biodiversity
- Creating local climate resilience
- Reducing waste/ Circular Economy
- Just Transition

Who will see the benefit of this project? Directly and indirectly.



## Innovation & Scalability

The project contains practical innovation/(s) and/or approaches. It has the potential to be scaled up or replicated in other communities, post funding. The project has a lasting impact.

Innovations may be:

- clever ways that you have solved problems, or
- ways that you make your project especially effective for your location (e.g. rural, urban etc.) or type of organisation

### Replication and scalability:

Many communities can learn from each other and projects carried out by one group could be scaled up and replicated in another community.

Consider who you can learn from and who can learn from what you will do.

## Value for money/ costings

The costs applied for are reasonable, represent an efficient use of resources and are commensurate with the quality and nature of the activities proposed. Realistic, specific and relevant outputs and outcomes are identified, which are commensurate with the level of investment

- Get three quotes for your application. If you can't get them (e.g. only one supplier in the market etc.) then check-in with the Community Climate Action Officer before the deadline.
- This is not necessarily lowest cost, but the best balance between costs and the results achieved.
- We need to know how your project will get good value for tax payers money
- Consider the investment vs impact.  
How much is your project costing versus the climate impact?
- Include a contingency in your budget (especially for bigger projects)
- When getting quotes from suppliers, groups should try to ensure that quotes will be valid for when they are carrying out the work (where possible)
- For strand 1a projects, all quotes must be provided in Euros and the relevant community group must absorb the sterling conversion rate, if there is one.
- Those who receive funding will need to follow public procurement guidelines
- VAT can be included for groups who cannot reclaim VAT

## Achievability

The organisation/partnership has the appropriate expertise to deliver the proposed project. The proposal is clear and coherent and is deliverable within the timeframe. Key milestones are specified with an explanation of how these will be monitored

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- The proposal is clear and coherent and is deliverable within the timeframe.
- Key milestones are specified with an explanation of how these will be monitored

## Partnerships

Any Partner/Consortium roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined with partnership agreements in place (where applicable). The proposal demonstrates how all key stakeholders will be involved in the planning and implementation of the proposal.

- Not compulsory but marks available for Strand 1. Compulsory for Strand 1a – Northern Irish Project.
- Potential to engage wider community
- Engage subject matter expertise
- Increase impact
- Competitive programme so it could be an option for two groups to join together (one will have to nominate themselves to be the lead group)

## Governance arrangements

Any necessary governance and financial management systems, controls and processes are in place to meet the requirements of the Programme.

- Where applicable, evidence of tax compliance and registration with relevant bodies is supplied.
- Details of track record in managing other state funding.
- Clear governance structure in place generally within the group.
- Management for the project clearly outlined.

## 8. What to expect if your application is successful

Following the Minister's approval, MCC will issue a Letter of Offer to the successful communities setting out the terms and conditions. Groups are responsible for carrying out their projects and will have 18 months from the Letter of Offer to complete their projects.

MCC reserves the right to withdraw from a project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period.

If an applicant is awarded a lower funding allocation from what was initially sought, the applicant may submit a revised programme of works to the satisfaction of MCC.

In signing their funding agreements, each community will agree to the following:

- Compliance with the [Climate Action Fund Financial Guidelines](#).
- Compliance with [Circular: 13/2014](#), from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Compliance with [Public Procurement guidelines](#) in relation to the purchase of all goods and services.
- Agree to retain all documentation for 7 years.
- The provision of data and information on the actions funded as may be requested by DECC and/or the local authority.
- The maintenance of separate accounting records for its projects.
- The funding is subject to audit by DECC.
- Vouched receipts, photographs of completed works (where appropriate), and other documentation as necessary may be sought by MCC and DECC.
- Site Visits: The Department and/or MCC may carry out unannounced site visits to verify compliance with Programme terms and conditions.
- The contribution of the 'Government of Ireland, and "Department of the Environment, Climate Action and Communications" must be acknowledged in publicity, promotions and signage, and other relevant matters as appropriate.

### Procurement during the project

Those who are approved for funding in the Programme, will need to comply with [Public Procurement guidelines](#) in relation to the purchase of all goods/services when actually carrying out the project.

### Additional Procurement note for Small Scale Projects

Small scale projects may fall under the procurement thresholds. Where that happens, groups will be asked to apply a three-quote minimum rule to ensure value for money. There is no requirement to choose the cheapest option. Where three quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, the requirement for three quotes per item may be waived.

## Payment and reporting

Successful applications for funding under this Programme will only be paid to the applicant group/organisation's Bank Account. Groups will submit quarterly expenses to MCC including invoices, proof of payments, contracts and a brief update on progress (e.g. any information on progress of the project, conditions of funding, challenges/issues etc.)

All payments are subject to:

- Evidence of compliance with the public procurement guidelines. If the grantee does not comply with the public procurement guidelines, financial sanctions may apply e.g. expenditure will be deemed ineligible and will not be reimbursed.
- Evidence of compliance with Climate Action Fund Guidelines.
- Eligibility of the costs as per the guidelines for the Programme and Letter of Offer.

## Pre-funding

This is a reimbursement grant (i.e. groups pay for the works and are refunded quarterly) however funding is available for groups who would not be in a position to pay for the works and wait to be refunded. Groups will be asked when applying if they require pre-funding/ bridge financing.

Pre-funding will be given out in instalments (e.g. 25% of the total project cost) at set times over the lifetime of the project (e.g. quarterly). Only when groups have fully spent their first pre-funding instalment (i.e. vouched expenditure has been submitted and approved by MCC) and have met the milestone criteria will the next instalment be released, and so on. MCC will agree with each individual group their pre-funding instalment amounts and timelines. Pre-funding should only be used for the payment of eligible costs approved by MCC. Any unused portion of pre-funding that remains unspent at the end of the project must be returned/repaid to MCC immediately. Groups will be liable for unspent funds or ineligible costs.

## 9. Data Protection

Information provided by applicants and those who receive funding will be utilised for the purposes of evaluating and administering this Programme, and to facilitate reporting, auditing and any site visits. When evaluating the applications and during the lifetime of the projects, MCC may share information with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

## 10. Important Dates

| Application period              | Friday 1st December to Friday 23rd February (4:00pm) |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Evaluation and selection by MCC | Q1 - Q2 2024 (end of February to April 2024)         |
| Approval by DECC                | Q2- Q3 2024 (April to July 2024)                     |
| Results announced               | Q3 2024 (July - September 2024)                      |

## 11. Contact Information

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