



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

Information note for LCDCs regarding the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Local Enhancement Programme 2026

3 December 2025

1 Introduction

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) 2026 will provide capital funding to support community groups across Ireland.

The funding will support groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas to carry out necessary repairs and improvements to their facilities, purchase equipment such as tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment etc.

This funding will help communities, community groups and committees, allowing them to continue to provide valuable services to the people in their area, and in the process strengthen the bonds that tie communities together. The fund also aims to support local strategic priorities through linkages with Local Economic Community Plans (LECPs).

Applications must be submitted to the relevant LCDC by 27 February 2026.

2 Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the closing date?

A. In previous years the local authority was given autonomy to set the closing date for submission of applications but this year the Department is setting it to be 27 February 2026.

Q. When should approved allocations be submitted to the Department?

A. The Returns document must be returned to the Department by 3 April 2026. It is intended that Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, will announce details of successful applicants in Quarter 2 2026.

Q. Is there a deadline for when the grant has to be drawn down by the grant recipient?

A. Yes. The grant should be drawn down by 31 December 2026.

Q. Do unspent funds have to be returned?

A. Yes. Any monies that are not drawn down by 31 December 2026 should be returned to the Department in January 2027.

Q. What is the Local Enhancement Programme grant targeted at?

A. This funding is about giving a helping hand to our communities, local groups and clubs. These grants will help support groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas, with necessary repairs and small capital works/improvements to their facilities, the purchase of equipment and non-pay running costs.

Q. What types of projects are eligible to avail of the fund?

A. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to; necessary repairs and improvements to facilities, purchase of equipment e.g., tables and chairs, tools and signage, laptops and printers, lawnmowers, canopies and training equipment.

Such investments may also include, but are not limited to; improved access for persons with a disability; enhancing community participation for disadvantaged and marginalised groups, and; improving energy efficiency of community facilities to reduce ongoing costs. The scheme is designed to ensure local priorities are identified and met, so as to improve and enhance community facilities for all.

Q. How should the funding source (i.e. the Department) be acknowledged by LCDC/LAs when publicising the Local Enhancement Programme?

A. The Department request LCDCs to conduct a major awareness/advertisement campaign regarding this fund by using all avenues currently available to them like their own webpage, PPN, social media e.g. Facebook. This is particularly important to ensure as many groups as possible are aware of the funding, and have the opportunity to apply for it.

To assist with ensuring continued funding of the Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) each year by the Exchequer, it is important that the source of the funding (i.e. the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht) is acknowledged when LCDCs advertise the LEP and make announcements regarding successful applicants. The DRCDG, Our Rural Future and Government of Ireland logos must be displayed on all communications. No other logos are permitted.

Please include the following text when advertising the LEP (e.g. on LCDC/LA website) and when making announcements regarding successful applicants:

The Local Enhancement Programme 2026 is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht. Please see the following link to the press release announcing the Local Enhancement Programme 2026 at national level, by the Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, and the Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Jerry Buttimer TD:

Q. Is there a requirement to ring-fence some of the grant for smaller projects?

A. In general, the Department requests that LCDCs ring-fence 30% of its funding for grants of €1,000 or less. This is guidance only, and the LCDC can adjust this depending on the needs in its area.

Q. Who decides the projects that are approved for funding?

A. The LCDC is expected to make this decision, with consultation with the Municipal Districts if it is considered appropriate.

The funding is aimed at addressing disadvantage in each area's LECP. The Department would encourage LCDCs to cross-reference the location of the facility (or the area that it serves) with the HP Deprivation Index, when considering whether the grant application would address disadvantage in its area. This can be accessed via the Pobal website on www.pobal.ie.

Q. Are the LAs/LCDCs allowed to make minor changes to the documentation or apply additional clarifying criteria to the Local Enhancement Programme?

A. Yes. While the Department has made documents available for LCDCs (i.e. the application form and guidance notes) the Department has no issue with the LAs/LCDCs making minor changes as long as they are in keeping with the ethos of the Programme and meet any audit, monitoring or evaluation requirements.

Note: The Department understands that the LCDC is best placed to identify where support is most needed in its area. It is important that each LCDC has leeway to make minor adjustments to cater for the needs in its area, as identified in its LECP.

Q. Is there a definitive list of what is or is not eligible?

A. No. Examples of eligibility and ineligibility have been given to provide guidance on the ethos of the Programme but a "one size fits all" approach would impose limitations where flexibility is required.

Q. Can the LCDC adapt the Guidelines and the application form to include a list of what is or is not eligible?

A. Yes. The Department has no issue with the LAs/LCDCs amending the application form to include a list of eligible and ineligible projects as long as they are in keeping with the ethos of the Programme and meet any audit, monitoring or evaluation requirements.

Example - Following on from an area identified in the LECP, an LCDC could have an action point to make physical improvements in their administrative area for the elderly e.g. bespoke benches or outdoor gyms. There might be no other suitable funding source available to achieve this priority action. The LCDC could issue a call for applications tailored to projects falling into that one category. The Department has no issue with this approach.

Q. Can a facility such as a church or school apply for funding under the Local Enhancement Programme?

A. Yes, but only in certain capacities. For example, if the church/school applied for funding for a facility which any member of the public could attend, (not just specific religions or school attendees), then this might be considered in the same light as a community group/organisation project.

Q. By what date must invoices/receipts be submitted to the LA/LCDC as proof of expenditure?

A. This is a matter for each LCDC. Please note that as outlined in the answer to the previous question, any monies that are not drawn down from the LA/LCDC by 31 December 2026 should be refunded to the Department in January 2027.

Q. Do all projects have to submit receipts/photos etc.?

A. Yes. This is to ensure accountability in the groups/organisations and this documentation will be needed for the audit process.

Q. What should the local authority request before issuing payment to the group/organisation?

A. The LCDC must only issue funding upon receipt of invoices, receipts and any other required proof of expenditure from the group/organisation which confirms that the work has been completed and the equipment has been bought.

Q. Is it permissible to apply for funding for projects that were completed or equipment that was purchased prior to the Department announcing successful projects under LEP 2026?

A. No. Costs incurred prior to the Department announcing the list of successful projects are not eligible for payment under the Programme. This includes works that were completed or equipment that was bought where the invoice date pre-dates DRCDG's announcement of successful projects.

Q. Is the funding provided under the Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) eligible as co-funding or match funding for other schemes or programmes e.g. LEADER?

A. Yes. The LEP is 100% exchequer funded and can be used in conjunction with other grants. It is the responsibility of the grant applicant to ensure that using this Programme to co-fund a project does not contradict the rules of the other scheme/programme. Please ensure that applicants consult with the administrators or body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme in this regard.

Q. If approving an application, does the LCDC have to award the full level of funding requested for the project?

A. Each application received should state a specific amount of funding required. The LCDC may need to award a lesser amount of funding. This will depend on, among other factors, the number of applications received and their consistency with the LECP.

Q. If approved funding isn't accepted, can it be allocated as top up funding to other approved projects?

A. Yes, this is a matter for the LCDC to decide on a case-by-case basis.

Q. Will the Department be issuing a letter of acceptance template?

A. No, this is the responsibility of the LCDC. Each LCDC may have added criteria to their programme therefore it is more appropriate that the LCDC devise their own template.

Q. What information will be required by the Department on projects funded?

A. The Department will publish a list of projects funded under the Local Enhancement Programme on its website. The following information from the Application Form and Returns document will be required from the LCDC:

- Name of Organisation*
- Location* – either town or village (e.g. Tullamore, Lismore, Tusk)
- Grant amount approved*
- Project category – this should be the text of the box(es) that is ticked at the top of Section 2 of the Application Form.
- Purpose of the grant – this is the text that is entered in the corresponding section on Page 6 of the Application Form which is limited to a maximum of 10 words.
- Eircodes as detailed on the application form

Those marked * will be published on the Department's website. Other information may be requested from time to time to answer PQs or Representations.

The Department will also require progress reports (from the LCDC) from time to time.

Q. Who decides on Contract Extensions?

A. It is a matter for the LCDC to consider a request from the promoter asking for retrospective continuance/extension of their expired contracts. The promoter will need to make the request in writing regarding retrospective extension, and specify the required new contract extension expiry date.

Should the LCDC accept the request, an LCDC Authorised Officer can extend a completion date by up to six months on foot of a written request from the project promoter. An addendum containing details of the request and approval, signed by both parties, should be added to the original contract and copied to the project hard file, for audit trail purposes. Further contract extension requests, will need to be sent to the Department for consideration.

The LCDC must continue to monitor and review the progress of all projects on a regular basis and engage with project promoters, as appropriate.

Q. Requests for change of scope?

A. Any changes to projects should be notified to and agreed with the Department in advance of works taking place, and the Appendix 1 is the appropriate method for this. Appendix 1 form should be completed and returned to LEP@drcdg.gov.ie.

Please note:

- An explicit acceptance of the grant and its associated terms and conditions should be requested and received after the Letter of Offer issues.
- The Department should be notified of any material deviations from recommended limits.
- Relevant documentation (including letters of offer and the website, where appropriate) should note that the funding for this programme comes from the Department.
- The Department requests LCDCs to conduct a major awareness/advertisement campaign regarding this fund by using all avenues currently available to them like their own webpage, PPN, and social media e.g. Facebook. The DRCDG, Our Rural Future and Government of Ireland logos must be displayed on all communications. No other logos are permitted.
- We would ask that you submit your list of approved projects (on the Returns document provided) to the Department by 27/03/2026 in order for us to issue a press release.
- The LA/LCDC is not permitted to notify any of the approved groups until the Department confirms an announcement is made and press release has issued.

All queries relating to the Local Enhancement Programme should be sent to LEP@drcdg.gov.ie