

Galway County Council's Guidelines for Local Enhancement Programme 2026

1 Applicant Guidelines

What is the LEP 2026?

The Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) 2026 provides capital funding to support community groups across Ireland, especially those in disadvantaged areas. Funding is aimed at repairs, improvements, and equipment for community facilities, helping groups continue valuable services and strengthen local communities.

2 Who Can Apply?

- Any not-for-profit community or voluntary group.
 - Commercial organisations and individuals are **not** eligible for funding.
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2.1 What Projects Are Eligible?

Eligible Projects Include:

- Maintenance or refurbishment of community centres
- Projects that improve access for persons with disabilities (e.g., ramps, accessible toilets)
- Development of youth clubs or facilities
- Energy efficiency upgrades (e.g., insulation, LED lighting) / capital works to increase biodiversity or reduce carbon footprint
- Supply and installation of a changeover switch in designated Community Support Centres
- Purchase of a generator for a Community Support Centre
- Purchase of equipment (tables, chairs, tools, signage, laptops, printers, canopies, training equipment)
- Cleaning equipment

- Maintenance of premises (painting, repairs)

Note: VAT will only be paid if included in the application amount. No further VAT requests will be accepted.

2.2 What Projects Are NOT Eligible?

Ineligible Projects Include:

- Development of sports / recreation facilities
 - Improvements to town parks and common areas and spaces
 - Community amenities e.g. parks / playgrounds
 - CCTV equipment
 - Public realm improvements
 - Streetscaping
 - Development of play/recreation spaces
 - Any project not in keeping with the ethos of the programme
 - Costs incurred before the Department announces successful projects
 - Current costs (e.g., programming, training, day to day running costs)
 - Employment costs
 - Legal fees
 - Project management fees
 - Purchase of land or buildings
 - Feasibility studies
 - Private or commercial operations
 - Costs already paid for by another funder or department
 - Projects for private benefit or restricted access (e.g., facilities not open to the public)
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Special Notes on Wiring Upgrades and Generators

- Supply and installation of a changeover switch by a qualified and registered electrician in a designated Community Support Centre are eligible if they are part

of necessary improvements to community facilities; contribute to energy efficiency and/or resilience; and a Community Support Centre Expression of Interest has been successfully submitted (<https://forms.office.com/e/Lrk5J59vb3>)

- Purchase of a generator is eligible if it is justified for community benefit (e.g., to ensure continuity of services during power outages); the facility serves the wider community; and a Community Support Centre Expression of Interest has been successfully submitted (<https://forms.office.com/e/Lrk5J59vb3>).
 - All such projects must comply with statutory permissions, safety standards, and be in keeping with the ethos of the programme.
 - Quotations for supply and installation of changeover switches must be supplied from a RECI certified electrician
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3 How to Apply

- Complete the official application form in full.
 - Submit all supporting documentation (quotes, evidence of need, etc.).
 - Applications must be submitted online via the online portal Submit: <https://galwaycoco.submit.com/>
 - The closing date is 12 noon on **Monday, 23rd February 2026**
 - For queries, contact your Community Department by email: communitygrants@galwaycoco.ie
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3.1 Key Conditions

- You cannot apply for funding on projects / equipment bought prior to the local authority notifying you that you have been successful.
- Funding is 100% exchequer funded; match-funding is not required.
- Grant funding will not be paid in advance of purchase. (Applicants must incur the costs of project / equipment and then submit proof of purchase.)
- Local Community Development Committee (LCDCs) may ring-fence 30% of funding for small grants (€1,000 or less).
- All projects must provide receipts, invoices, and photos as proof of expenditure.

- The LCDC may award less than the amount requested, depending on demand and available funds.
 - All funded projects must acknowledge the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht in publicity and signage.
 - Evidence of Public Liability Insurance Cover (€6.5m) must be submitted, and the applicant must provide proof of indemnity to Galway County Council against any claims arising.
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3.2 Further Information

- Full guidelines and FAQs are available from Galway County Council website page: [Local Enhancement Programme \(LEP\) | Galway County Council](#)
 - For any queries please email: **communitygrants@galwaycoco.ie**
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3.3 LEP 2026 Application Checklist

Before you apply, ensure you have:

- Confirmed your group is a not-for-profit community or voluntary organisation
- Identified a project that fits the eligible categories
- Checked that you have successfully completed a Community Support Centre Expression of Interest if applying for wiring upgrades and / or generators.
- Checked that your project does not fall under ineligible categories
- Identified that the funding sought serves the wider community at large
- Gathered quotes for all proposed expenditure
- Prepared supporting documentation (evidence of need, statutory permissions if required)
- Completed the official application form in full
- Included VAT in your application amount (if applicable)
- Prepared to provide receipts, invoices, and photos as proof of expenditure
- Planned to acknowledge the Department in publicity / signage
- Checked the submission deadline (**Monday 23rd February 2026**)
- Contacted your Community Department in Galway County Council for any queries or clarifications (**communitygrants@galwaycoco.ie**)

Tip: Early preparation and clear documentation will help your application succeed. If in doubt, reach out to your Community Department in Galway County Council for advice before submitting.

4 Requirements of the Programme

The following conditions apply to all projects. Depending on the nature of the project (and the group applying), there may be further requirements that must be met. The Local Authority's LCDC will advise groups/organisations of these requirements when their application is approved for funding.

4.1 Tax Requirements

- The applicant group/organisation does not have to be registered for tax purposes.
- Any applicant group/organisation that is registered for tax purposes must be tax compliant. In line with revised tax clearance procedures, which came into effect in January 2016, the Tax Clearance Access Number and Tax Reference number must be submitted for verification purposes.

4.2 Statutory Consents

Applicants must ensure that all necessary statutory permissions or consents have been obtained before any works commence. This includes, but is not confined to, planning permission.

4.3 Insurance

Written evidence of a valid insurance policy may be requested by the LCDC, where relevant, during the applications review process.

4.4 Acknowledgment of funding

Due to the value of some of these grants, it would not be cost-effective to require signage acknowledging the Department, Local Authority or LCDC. Other suitable acknowledgements will suffice e.g. on a group/organisation's website or social media

platforms. Where signage is developed it must acknowledge the contribution of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

4.5 Match-funding

This is not a requirement under this programme.

The Programme is 100% exchequer funded. Applicants are free to leverage other funding/match funding for projects although that is not a requirement of this programme.

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 you consult with the administrators or body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme in this regard.

5 Selection Criteria

The LCDC will evaluate applications to ensure that they are eligible for funding and that they are targeted at addressing disadvantage as identified in its LECP. Projects must be in keeping with the ethos of the programme, which is to provide funding to communities across Ireland to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas.

Projects may also be judged having regard to how they:

- Support local groups and clubs, which serve their communities;
- Increase the number of people that can be supported by the group, including through accessibility improvements, new community integration measures or safety improvements;
- Invest to increase or extend the use of the facility, for example, to voluntary and community groups;
- Reduce the annual running cost of a facility;
- Have a positive impact on the environment, for example, a reduction in energy consumption;
- Demonstrate collaboration with the Local Authority or other relevant bodies in the catchment area;

- Support the creation of a sense of place within the community including through the enhancement of the built environment;
- Address health and safety issues; and/or,
- Invest in technology which will be accessed by individuals and communities that are impacted by disadvantage.

Projects may also be judged having regard to additional criteria deemed appropriate by the LCDC which demonstrate the added value of the project or element of a project in suitably addressing the programme's aims in each Local Authority administrative area.

6 Corporate Governance

6.1 Monitoring

Grantees will be required to comply with the highest standard of transparency and accountability as documented in Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation 'Circular 13/2014 - Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds¹.'

The overall principle is that there should be transparency and accountability in the management of public funds, in line with economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The circular outlines, for example, that grant recipients should not dispose of publicly funded assets without receiving prior approval from the LCDC.

6.2 Governance Code

The Department is encouraging funded bodies to adopt the Governance Code²: a Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland, which will assist in achieving excellence in all areas of their work. The Governance Code requests organisations to agree to operate to key principles to run their organisation more effectively in areas such as leadership, transparency and accountability and behaving with integrity.

¹ <http://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2014/13.pdf>

² www.governancecode.ie

7 Approval Procedures

The LCDC will review and assess all applications for funding received under this Programme to ensure consistency with the relevant Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

In deciding the final allocations of funding to projects, the LCDC may take account of several factors including geographical balance and the need to fund a variety of different projects and the relative disadvantage of the area where the facility is located (or will serve)³.

Following the decision, each approved project, subject to the completion of legal formalities and other requirements, will receive an offer in principle of grant-aid from the LCDC. This offer will be subject to compliance with the relevant conditions and subject to the satisfactory acceptance by the applicant of that offer.

The LCDC must only issue funding upon receipt of invoices, receipts and any other required proof of expenditure from the group/organisation for the approved works/equipment.

The LCDC reserves the right to reassign the funds offered to another approved project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period. This is a matter for the LCDC in question, who must inform the Department of their intention to do so.

The Department and/or the Local Authority reserve the right to carry out an audit of expenditure or conduct inspections from time to time.

Please Note:

It is important that the process of evaluation is rigorous to ensure that the best projects, taking all factors into account, receive support. It is departmental policy to ensure that every application is treated fairly and impartially.

Offers of funding may be for a lesser amount than that sought by the applicant. Applicants should be aware that the Programme may be oversubscribed. Therefore, in

³ This may include cross-referencing the location of the facility/group (or the area it serves) with the Pobal HP Deprivation Index which is available on www.pobal.ie.

such circumstances, all applications fulfilling the conditions may not be successful or may be for a lesser amount.

Applicant groups shall self-certify that they do not have the funding to undertake the project without the grant aid, or alternatively that with the grant they will now undertake a larger project which they otherwise would not be able to afford.

8 General

The information provided in this document is intended to give applicants an understanding of the process by which applications for funding are assessed and approved and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.

8.1 Freedom of Information Act 2014

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, details contained in applications and supporting documents may, on request, be released to third parties. If there is information contained in your application, which is sensitive or confidential in nature, please identify it and provide an explanation as to why it should not be disclosed. If a request to release sensitive information under the legislation is received, you will be consulted before a decision is made whether to release the information. However, in the absence of the identification of information as sensitive, it could be disclosed without any consultation with you.

8.2 Site Visits

The Department, Local Authority, the LCDC, or agents acting on their behalf may carry out unannounced site visits to verify compliance with Programme terms and conditions.

8.3 Further information

The LCDC reserves the right to request further information from the applicant to assess the application.

8.4 Usage of information

The information provided on the form will be utilised for the purposes of evaluating and administering the grant process, and to facilitate audits and any site visits. When

evaluating the applications received, the LCDC may seek advice and consult with other agencies and may disclose information on projects under consideration to those experts and agencies.

9 Application Process

The Application Form is detailed and is designed to ensure that it contains the necessary information to evaluate each proposal accurately and fairly. Please ensure that you complete the Application Form in full and that any documentation which supports your application is submitted with your application.

Only projects that meet the criteria outlined in this document will be considered eligible. Please note that incomplete applications or late applications will not be considered.

There is no limit on the number of applications for different projects from any organisation. However, applicants should be aware that an equity/fairness approach will be taken by the LCDC to ensure an even distribution of funding.

If the funding application is for one element, or a portion of a project, applicants will be required to provide documentary evidence of the availability of the balance of funding for that element of that project.

The submission of false or misleading information at any stage is treated very seriously. Any organisation that does not comply with the terms and conditions of the Programme may be subject to inspection, have their grant withdrawn, be required to repay all or part of a grant and/or be barred from making applications for a period.

For any queries please email: communitygrants@galwaycoco.ie