



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

**Irish FA/ Department for
Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Grassroots Facilities
Investment Fund
INFORMATION &
GUIDANCE NOTES**



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1. FUNDING BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Irish Football Association (Irish FA)/ Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund aims to allow local grassroots football clubs in Northern Ireland (NI) to improve and refurbish facilities, helping to create a better grassroots football infrastructure foundation. Facilities that are tired, dated and in decline make it harder for people to start or keep participating in sport and can also be more expensive to run and difficult to maintain. Investment in creating the best possible grassroots football facilities enables young people to have the opportunity to reach their full potential in football, as well as providing the local community with access to facilities where they can participate in sport and become healthy and active.

DCMS has provided capital funding via the Irish FA to distribute to grassroots football clubs to improve football infrastructure throughout NI, thus increasing participation in the grassroots game. The definition of participation is 'the action of taking part in something' and includes and impacts not only players on the pitch, but those also who spectate at football matches and any other grassroots facility users.

The main objectives of the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund are:

- To improve the capital infrastructure of grassroots football clubs across NI
- To increase participation in sport across NI, improving mental and physical health of participants
- To increase the number of multi-sport facilities in the country (30% of project value) to boost participation in non-football sports
- To reduce the postcode lottery for quality facilities by directing at least 50% of investment to disadvantaged or areas of deprivation (based on NISRA NI Deprivation Measures 2017) and boost participation in these areas
- To deliver improved access to sport facilities for women and girls (100% equal access), and other under-represented groups, to increase participation in these groups.

2. FUNDING AWARDS

2.0 Award thresholds

The Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund is financed by UK Central Government, distributed by the Irish FA to affiliated, eligible football clubs. A total funding pot of £700,000 is available for small capital projects in NI.

The minimum award available is £15,000 with a maximum award of up to £30,000.

2.1 Eligible Costs

This funding must be used for investment in capital assets that support grassroots or community sport in NI. Capital assets means tangible infrastructure, permanent assets, or fixtures and/ or upgrades/ improvements to the same. Single capital items must have an economic lifespan of more than one year. Grassroots or community sport is considered to be non-professional play, which is community-based and sometimes dependent on volunteers. It is not necessarily competitive. It is accessible to the public and does not usually require a certain level of ability or skill to access.

Retrospective funding will not be awarded i.e., costs incurred before the agreement to the Terms of Conditions of the Letter of Offer.

Eligible costs include VAT. If your organisation is registered for VAT, VAT costs will not be eligible.

Where projects require professional input incurring a cost, these costs will not be deemed as eligible with the applicant having responsibility for obtaining appropriate professional services, if applicable.

2.2 Partnership funding

This fund does not require project proposals to have partnership funding.

2.3 Sport NI 'Building Better Sports Facilities' funding

Football clubs in receipt of the Sport NI 'Building Better Sports Facilities' fund, as part of the application assessment process for the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund must provide confirmation of the total award from Sport NI.

2.4 Duplicate funding

It is strictly forbidden for applicants to seek funding which is for the same purpose as funding already awarded/secured from another third-party grants body.

2.5 Project 'State of Readiness'

For more complex capital projects, applicants should provide evidence of 'state of readiness' and confirmation of the completion date before any funding is committed. State of readiness will form part of the application scoring criteria.

3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

3.0 To be **eligible** to apply for the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund you must be:

- a football club based in NI that is affiliated to the Irish FA and,
- a grassroots football club that participates in Northern Ireland leagues outside of the Northern Ireland Football League (NIFL) structure i.e., Regional Intermediate standard football clubs and Junior football clubs and,
- a football club that either owns or operates its own football facility*.

* Football clubs must provide evidence that they either own (Title Deeds) or operate a facility (security of tenure of a minimum of 10 years to at least 31 March 2032 i.e., Lease Agreement/ Service Level Agreement). Please note that capital projects (excluding equipment purchases) that do not have the required minimum 10-year security of tenure, will be deemed ineligible for funding.

3.1 The following organisations are **ineligible** to apply:

- Leagues
- Associated entities of NIFL clubs
- Local authorities
- Schools/ colleges/ universities
- Individuals and sole traders
- 'For profit' companies
- Community sports organisations.

4. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

4.0 The Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund in NI is to support **small capital works** projects at football facilities, with an emphasis on increasing participation in sport, increasing multi-sport facilities, directing a percentage of investment to areas of deprivation and delivering improved access to sport facilities for women, girls and other under-represented groups. Items that can be funded are listed in Annex 1.

4.1 Applicants will be required to submit supporting documentation along with their application form. This may include evidence of statutory approvals (where applicable), security of tenure for a minimum of 10 years i.e., copy title deeds or lease / service level agreement with venue owner and confirmation of match funding (where applicable).

4.2 The Irish FA reserves the right to reject any incomplete or incorrectly completed forms, that prevent a full assessment. Failure to upload requested documentation could result in the application being deemed incomplete.

4.3 All small capital projects funded under the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund **must be initiated by 10 March 2022** and can complete by 31st March 2022 or as soon as possible after this date. For more complex capital projects, applicants must provide evidence of 'state of readiness' and confirmation of completion date.

4.4 **All project claims must be submitted by 30 June 2022. Claims for payment received after 30 June 2022 will not be accepted and the expenditure incurred is deemed ineligible for grant aid.**

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

5.0 Application forms must be submitted electronically to the Irish FA via the Survey Monkey link – www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/IrishFA_DCMSFunding by the stipulated deadline of **5.00pm on Wednesday 26 January 2022**. Applications must be submitted by two Authorised Office Bearers of the applicant.

5.1 When applying for Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund, applicants must clearly demonstrate within their application how the proposed project meets the funding objectives (as detailed in the funding guidelines), provide evidence of need, and forward all supporting documentation (where applicable). Templates for completion, detailed within the application form will be available on the Irish FA website <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund>.

5.2 Section 3 of Application Form – Business Case for the Proposed Project – Questions 6 – 10

Applicants, when completing questions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the application, must be concise with their answers and do so in no more than 300 words. **Each answer must include SMART objectives in order for the proposed project to be properly assessed.** SMART is an acronym and specifically a SMART objective is **an objective which is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.**

5.3 Section 5 of Application Form – Expected Project Funding – Question 15

Applicants are required to create and upload associated project costs using the table template detailed in Annex 2 and upload onto the application form. **The table must be uploaded in order for the application to be assessed.**

5.4 Applicants should note that a copy of the application form cannot be saved once it has been submitted via Survey Monkey, and we would recommend keeping a separate record of responses. Once applications have been submitted, copy application forms can be requested via DCMSfunding@irishfa.com.

5.5 The Irish FA will record and publish all relevant clarifications submitted by potential applicants via a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) log on the Irish FA's website – <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund>. The FAQ log will be updated as clarifications are sought by potential applicants. All clarifications should be directed to DCMSfunding@irishfa.com.

5.6 The Irish FA requires applicants to provide whatever information may be necessary to safeguard public funds. You should therefore ensure that the details that you provide are correct. Any misleading statements (whether deliberate or accidental) given at any stage may render your application invalid, and you may be liable to return any money paid out.

6. ASSESSMENT OF FUNDING APPLICATIONS AND PROJECT DELIVERY

6.0 All applications will be assessed by an external third-party **assessor** who will assess applications against the stipulated funding criteria as detailed in the funding guidelines. Eligible applications will be scored and ranked accordingly based on the strength of the application (i.e., how the project meets funding objectives, evidence of need, NISRA deprivation ranking, targeted users, confirmation of project completion date etc.) and funding will be allocated based on application ranking, until all available grant monies have been committed. The third-party assessor will make recommendations which will be presented to a decision-making panel who will approve awards for grant aid.

6.1 Application Scoring Matrix

The criteria presented in Annex 3 will be applied to responses provided in the application form and scores will be applied.

6.2 Funding Timeline

Action	Date
Funding programme opens	11 January 2022
Deadline for application submission	5.00pm on 26 January 2022
Application assessment period	End of January/ Start of February 2022
Application decisions issued to applicants	Mid/ End of February 2022
Letters of Offer issued to successful applicants	End of February/ Start of March 2022
Procurement process commences. Grant claims are assessed against procurement guidelines	March 2022 – June 2022
Grant awards are issued to applicants following the successful expenditure verification by Irish FA	
Projects completed and grant aid claims submitted for payment	No later than 30 June 2022

6.3 Successful applicants will be issued a Letter of Offer with funding Terms and Conditions and will be required to sign the Letter of Offer before the procurement process begins. **Items awarded grant aid should not be procured in advance of written confirmation i.e., in advance of the issuance and signing of a Letter of Offer, as retrospective funding is not permitted.**

6.4 Once applicants have completed the procurement process and the proposed project has been completed in full, an Irish FA official will carry out a visual check via a site visit before the grant claim is processed for payment. **Claims for payment received after 30 June 2022 will not be accepted and the expenditure incurred is deemed ineligible for grant aid.**



7. CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS

Please ensure that your completed application is submitted within the deadline as detailed below:

Submission of:	Closing Time/ Date:
Application Form	5.00pm on Wednesday 26 January 2022

8. UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

There is no entitlement to an award. Your application will be in competition with others for a finite pot of funding. If more applications for awards are received than available funds, it is inevitable that even good quality projects will be unsuccessful because they compare less favourably than others against the established criteria. It is possible that some projects meet all the criteria and cannot be funded due to oversubscription. In the scenario where two projects score the same and cannot be differentiated, the award may be determined via a process of random selection.

There is no appeals process for the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund. Application feedback is available to all unsuccessful applicants. A formal request for feedback should be sent to DCMSfunding@irishfa.com.

9. IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION PRIVACY NOTICE

All data will be processed and collected in line with the Irish Football Association Privacy Notice: <https://www.irishfa.com/privacy>.

10. ANNEXES

Annex 1

Can be funded:	Cannot be funded:
Improvement works and upgrades to football facilities including changing rooms, pitch upgrades, toilets, dugouts, spectator areas including covered accommodation, hard-standing areas around pitches, facilities for disabled users, club rooms	Resource costs e.g., salaries, professional fees
Improvements and upgrades to heating systems, plumbing, power supply, ventilation, and insulation	Running costs including electricity, gas, rates, rent, pitch hire, associated match costs
Football goalposts (full size and small-sided) – single capital items must have an economic lifespan of more than one year	Sports equipment such as balls, bibs, cones, hoops, hurdles, football kit etc
Football facility maintenance equipment including bespoke football pitch grass cutting equipment, synthetic turf maintenance equipment (including brushing equipment) – single capital items must have an economic lifespan of more than one year	Lawnmowers or grass maintenance equipment designed for domestic purposes
Storage facilities and containers (must be installed within the football ground)	Improvements and upgrades to bar areas and social clubs
Access and egress projects including improvements and upgrades to entrances/exits, car parks, pathways, fencing and gates	Other sporting equipment e.g., equipment for changing rooms/ club houses such as tables, chairs, bar furniture
	IT equipment e.g., laptops, servers, printers, computer hardware, mobile phones, tracking equipment, other information technology-related equipment

NOTE: The above list of items to be funded is not exhaustive. The eligibility of items will be determined by the Irish FA.

Annex 2

Category	Description of items	Quantity	Net Cost	VAT	Total costs	Funding requested from IFA	Funding from other sources
<u>Improvement works and upgrades to facilities</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Improvements and upgrades to heating systems etc.</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Football goalposts</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Maintenance equipment</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Storage facilities and containers</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Access and egress projects</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>TOTAL GRANT APPLIED FOR</u>			£	£	£	£	£

Annex 3

Poor response to the question	Acceptable response to the question	Excellent response to the question
<p>Applicant has provided a poor response to all the following factors -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of need • the request is relevant to the stated needs • details SMART outcomes arising relating to the objective • relates this need to other community/strategic plans • Has provided evidence of capacity to deliver the objective 	<p>The applicant has provided an acceptable response to all the following factors -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of need • the request is relevant to the stated needs • details SMART outcomes arising relating to the objective • relates this need to other community/strategic plans • Has provided evidence of capacity to deliver the objective 	<p>The applicant has provided an excellent response to all the following elements -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of need • the request is relevant to the stated needs • details SMART outcomes arising relating to the objective • relates this need to other community/strategic plans • Has provided evidence of capacity to deliver the objective