



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

# **Irish FA/ Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 22/23**

## **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 and physical activity across NI, improving mental and physical health of participants
- To increase participation in non-football sports (40% of project value) through funding multi-sports facilities
- To reduce the postcode lottery for quality facilities by directing at least 50% of investment to disadvantaged or areas of deprivation and boost participation in sport
- To deliver improved access for women and girls (100% equal access), and other under-represented groups, to increase participation in these groups and improve availability and accessibility of facilities.

## 2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

**2.0** To be **eligible** to apply for the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 22/23 you must be:

- a football club based in Northern Ireland that is affiliated to the Irish FA,
- 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,<sup>1</sup>
- a Local Authority based in Northern Ireland,
- a football-focussed Community Sports Organisation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Applicants 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 2033 i.e., Lease 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.

<sup>2</sup> This will be determined by its organisational objectives/ charitable purpose within the organisation's Constitution and must be in line with overall Programme funding objectives. A copy of the club's Constitution must be uploaded onto the application form. Failure to upload requested documentation could result in the application being deemed incomplete.

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

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

## 3. FUNDING AWARDS

### 3.0 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 in the financial year 2022/23 for capital projects throughout NI.

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

The objective of the award is to represent around 75% of the total project cost, with 25% match funding to be available from an alternative source. Greater levels of match funding may be viewed more favourably whilst lower levels will be considered in the context of the strength of the overall application. Evidence of match funding must be provided by the applicant. Failure to upload requested documentation could result in the application being deemed incomplete.

There are two types of match funding: 'actual' and 'in-kind'.

Actual match funding is cash in the bank, a loan or offer of funding from another source. Evidence includes either confirmation of a bank loan, bank statements or a Letter of Offer or Intent.

'In-kind' match funding is non-cash funding of free goods or services, such as volunteer hours, that can be given a value and be included in the project budget. Evidence includes verified timesheets to show the volunteer hours multiplied by an hourly wage rate (using the national minimum wage). Applicants are required to complete the volunteer timesheet template detailed in Annex 1 and upload onto the application form. The volunteer timesheet template is available on the Irish FA website <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund>.

### 3.1 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 usual 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.

If your organisation is not registered for VAT or is not in a position to have the project zero-rated for VAT purposes, VAT costs must be included in the project costs. If your organisation is registered for VAT, VAT costs will not be eligible.

Installation of all funded equipment must be completed and ready for inspection by IFA officials by the agreed project completion date.

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.

It is recommended, to develop more accurate project budgets, to obtain quotations prior to application. Obtaining quotations also assists in ascertaining the availability of contractors or supply of goods within the defined programme timeframe.

For successful projects, in order to secure best value for money and adhere to the relevant procurement regulations, for any one individual service or item being procured that has a total cost of £30,000 or less two competitive quotations must be sought. For an individual service or item that exceeds a total cost of £30,000, tender procurement regulations apply and the applicant will be required to notify potential suppliers via a public advertisement in the local press/ relevant tender websites.

### **3.2 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.

### **3.3 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.

### **3.4 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.

## 4. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

**4.0** The Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 22/23 in NI is to support and prioritise **small capital works** projects where football participation and development activities are at the core. Projects must have an emphasis on increasing participation in sport at grassroots/ community level, increasing multi-sport usage and 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. Grassroots activities in sport are foundational, local-level, community-driven, and primarily recreational. Multi-sport objectives must be sustained and provide regular benefit/ usage to at least one sport in addition to football. Items that can be funded are listed in Annex 2.

**4.1** Eligible projects at venues that host Intermediate standard football and above, project promoters must ensure that all funded items such as fencing, gates, dugouts, changing rooms etc. must comply with the relevant Irish FA ground criteria requirements. Please refer to the Irish FA's Joint Ground Criteria document (refer to the Irish FA's website)

<http://www.irishfa.com/media/41546/ifa-joint-ground-criteria-nov-2019.pdf>.

**4.2** 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 with venue owner and confirmation of match funding (where applicable).

**4.3** In order to direct at least 50% of investment to disadvantaged or areas of deprivation and boost participation in sport, applications from deprived areas will be prioritised based on a combination of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure and Local Authority inactivity rankings. All projects will also be assessed on activities with a cross-community emphasis, aiming to improve and foster community integration in regard to cultural, ethnic or religious diversity.

**4.4** 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.

**4.5** All small capital projects funded under the Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 22/ 23 **must be initiated by the agreed project start date** and must complete by the agreed project completion date (as per Letter of Offer) and must not complete beyond 31 March 2023, unless there is a justifiable case for an extension. An extension to a project must be agreed and granted with the funder i.e., Irish FA & DCMS. For more complex capital projects, applicants must provide evidence of 'state of readiness' and confirmation of completion date.

**4.6** **All project claims must be submitted no later than 31 March 2023 unless a project extension has been agreed and granted in advance. If an extension has not been granted, claims for payment received after 31 March 2023 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 - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZBCVFVH> by the stipulated deadline of **12.00pm on Monday 24 October 2022**. On the application form, applicants will be required to confirm that the information provided is truthful and accurate and the primary contact has the permission to apply on behalf of the applicant.

**5.1** When applying to the 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 are 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 9 – 13**

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 20**

Applicants are required to upload associated project costs using the table template detailed in Annex 3 and upload onto the application form. **The table must be uploaded in order for the application to be assessed.** The project costs template is available on the Irish FA website <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund>.

### **5.4 Project Baseline Information and Targets**

Applicants are required to submit baseline information and targets relating to their project. This will provide assessors with more accurate information on project targets and outputs linked to Programme objectives, aiding monitoring and evaluation. Annex 4 provides example SMART targets/ outcomes and what evaluation information must be provided as part of the application. Applicants are required to list associated project targets using the template detailed in Annex 4 and upload onto the application form. The project targets template is available on the Irish FA website <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund>.

**5.5** Applicants should note that a copy of the application form cannot be saved once it has been submitted, and we would recommend keeping a separate record of all responses. Copy application forms can be requested via [dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org](mailto:dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org).

**5.6** Applicants should use the application form checklist provided in Annex 5 to ensure that all required documentation is uploaded to and submitted with the application form.

**5.7** 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@cooperationireland.org](mailto:dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org) or [dcms.funding@irishfa.com](mailto:dcms.funding@irishfa.com).

**5.8** 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 on merit but priority will be given to those projects that deliver the greatest impact against the stipulated objectives (i.e., how the project meets funding objectives, evidence of need, deprivation ranking, targeted users, confirmation of project completion date etc.). 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 an oversight panel who will approve awards for grant aid.

Applications can be submitted by project promoters who were awarded funding under the 21/22 Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Scheme. **We particularly welcome applications from groups that have not previously been awarded Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities funding and, as part of the assessment process, new applicants will be awarded with an additional score to prioritise the funding of new projects throughout NI.**

### 6.1 Application Scoring Matrix

The criteria presented in Annex 6 will be applied to responses provided in the application form and scores will be applied.

### 6.2 Funding Timeline

Action	Date
Funding programme opens	Thursday 29 September 2022 at 9.00am
Deadline for application submission	Monday 24 October 2022 at 12.00pm
Application assessment period	October/ November 2022
Application decisions issued to applicants	November 2022
Letters of Offer issued to successful applicants	November 2022
Procurement process commences. Grant claims are assessed against procurement guidelines.  Grant awards are issued to applicants following the successful expenditure verification by Irish FA.	November/ December 2022
Projects completed and grant aid claims submitted for payment	No later than Friday 31 March 2023 at 12.00pm

**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 purchasing any goods. **Items awarded grant aid should not be purchased 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 If a project is successful, only eligible items listed in the Letter of Offer can be funded. If issues arise during the project and there is a potential deviation from the original Letter of Offer, project promoters must contact Co-operation Ireland or the Irish FA to seek advice and be granted approval in advance of any changes to the original agreement. Items not listed on the Letter of Offer, will be deemed ineligible for funding.**

**6.5** Once applicants have completed the procurement process and the proposed project has been completed in full, the project promoter must contact the Irish FA with reasonable notice to carry out a visual check via a verification site visit, before the grant claim is processed for payment. **Claims for payment received after 31 March 2023 will not be accepted and the expenditure incurred is deemed ineligible for grant aid.**

**6.6** **Project completion dates are clearly detailed within the Letter of Offer. Any project completion date extensions must be communicated and agreed with the funders i.e., Irish FA/ DCMS, in advance of the original completion date (as per Letter of Offer). Failure to adhere to the project completion date may result in the project being deemed ineligible for funding.**

## 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	Monday 24 October 2022 at 12.00pm

## 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@cooperationireland.org](mailto:dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org).

## 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

#### Volunteer Timesheet

Volunteer  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Number of Hours	Hourly Rate	Role/activity	Manager Sign-Off

Total in-kind contribution = £ (No. hours x hourly rate)

## Annex 2

### Items to be Funded

Can be funded:	Cannot be funded:
The installation of new natural grass pitches or the enhancement of existing natural grass pitches.	Resource costs e.g., salaries, professional fees
The installation of new artificial grass pitches or the enhancement of existing artificial grass pitches.	Running costs including electricity, gas, rates, rent, pitch hire, associated match costs
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 * project promoters must demonstrate how maintenance equipment will remain at and be exclusive to the specified club facility	Sports equipment such as balls, bibs, cones, hoops, hurdles, football kit etc
Installation of a new LED floodlighting system or upgrade of an existing system to LED lighting	Lawnmowers or grass maintenance equipment designed for domestic purposes
The development or upgrade of team/official's match facilities including changing rooms and dugouts to support the use of pitches and improve player experience. Changing facilities must be accessed by male, female players, those with disabilities and the overall wider community.	Improvements and upgrades to bar areas and social clubs
Access and egress projects including improvements and upgrades to car parks*, entrances/ exits*, pathways*, fencing and gates, hard standing areas around pitches * car parks/ entrances/ exits/ pathways/ fencing/ gates will only be funded if they service an existing pitch/pitches	Other sporting equipment e.g., equipment for changing rooms/ club houses such as tables, chairs, bar furniture
The installation of new covered spectator accommodation	IT equipment e.g., laptops, servers, printers, computer hardware, mobile phones, tracking equipment, other information technology-related equipment
Storage facilities and containers (must be installed within the football ground)	
Football goalposts (full size and small-sided)	

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

## Annex 3

### Total Project Costs

Category	Description of items	Quantity	Net Cost	VAT	Total costs	Funding requested from Irish FA *	Funding from other sources
<u>New or upgraded natural grass pitches</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>New or upgraded artificial grass pitches</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Facility Maintenance equipment</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>New or upgraded LED floodlighting</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Development of new or upgraded changing facilities &amp; dugouts</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Access and egress projects</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>New covered spectator accommodation</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Storage facilities</u>			£	£	£	£	£
<u>Football goalposts</u>							
<b><u>TOTAL GRANT APPLIED FOR</u></b>			£	£	£	£	£

*\*The objective of the award is to represent around 75% of the total project cost, with 25% match funding to be available from an alternative source. Greater levels of match funding may be viewed more favourably whilst lower levels will be considered in the context of the strength of the overall application. Evidence of match funding must be provided by the applicant.*

## Annex 4

### Project Targets and Outcomes

Objective 1			
To increase participation in sport across NI, improving mental and physical health of participants			
	Current / Baseline	Proposed Increase	By Date
<b>Project Target</b> Provide examples that are SMART e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase number of young people using the pitch from XXX to XXX weekly by DATE.</li> <li>- XXX hours additional usage per week by DATE</li> <li>- Increase participation from XXX XXX by DATE</li> <li>- Increase number of training sessions per week from XXX to XXX by DATE</li> <li>- Increased capacity / Open/playable for longer during the day or year</li> </ul>	e.g. 100 young people	25 new participants	30/04/2023

  

Objective 2			
To increase the number of multi-sport facilities in the country to boost participation in <u>non-football</u> sports			
	Current / Baseline	Proposed Increase	By Date
<b>Project Target</b> Provide examples that are SMART e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide multi-sport access for other organisations e.g. XXX by DATE</li> <li>- Increase access for non-football organisations from XXX to XXX per month</li> <li>- Minimum of XX hours usage for XXX non-football organisations per month from baseline of XXX</li> <li>- Develop XXX additional inclusive sports opportunities for all ages and abilities per month by DATE</li> <li>- Increase number of sports being played</li> </ul>			

Objective 3			
To deliver improved access to sport facilities for women and girls, and other under-represented groups, to increase participation in these groups			
	Current / Baseline	Proposed Increase	By Date
<b>Project Target</b> Provide examples that are SMART e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase usage for under-represented groups from XXX hours to XXX hours per week (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, disability)</li> <li>- Addition of XXX junior girls' teams within 2 years from baseline of XXX</li> <li>- Increase participation by senior ladies from XXX to XXX by DATE</li> <li>- Delivery of programme to XXX local special needs schools by DATE</li> <li>- XXX coaches attaining Disabled Coaching Badges within 2 years</li> <li>- Increased access for different groups</li> <li>- Open/playable for longer during the day or year</li> </ul>			

## Annex 5

### Application Form Checklist

Before submitting your application, please read all the tasks in the table below and tick the appropriate box against each relevant task. If a task is not applicable, please tick n/a.

Task	Yes	No	N/A
Read the 22/23 Irish FA/DCMS Facilities Investment Fund Information and Guidance notes in full			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Answer all mandatory questions in the application form that are marked with an asterisk (*)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Upload copy Constitution (only required if the applicant is a football-focussed Community Sports Organisation)			
Upload any evidence of 'State of Readiness' (where applicable)			
Upload any evidence of match funding (confirmed/unconfirmed/'In-Kind' contributions) i.e., bank statements, copy Letters of Offer, funding agreements, volunteer timesheet (if applicable)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Upload a copy of Sport NI's 2021 'Building Better Sports Facilities' Letter of Offer (if applicable)			
Upload a recent bank statement (within the last 3 months) confirming the bank account details provided			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If your organisation is the owner/Freeholder of the land/ building, upload copy Title Deeds (where applicable)			
If your organisation is not the owner/Freeholder of the land/building, upload copy Lease Agreement (where applicable)			
Upload confirmation of statutory approvals (if applicable)			
Complete and upload Annex 1 Volunteer Timesheet (if applicable)			
Complete and upload Annex 3 Total Project Costs Template			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Complete and upload Annex 4 Project Targets and Outcomes Template			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Annex 6

### Response Scoring

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