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## **Irish FA/ DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund 25-26 Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is this funding for?**

The Irish FA/DCMS Grassroots Facilities Investment Fund is designed to improve the capital infrastructure that supports grassroots football across Northern Ireland, while also encouraging multi-sport use.

The fund supports projects that:

- Create, enhance, or replace football pitches (natural grass, artificial grass, or small-sided MUGAs), as well as associated infrastructure to support the proposed pitch usage
- Improve facilities that enable local, community-based football, non-football sport, and physical activity
- Increase participation and improve access to sport and physical activity for under-represented and priority groups, including:
  - Women and girls
  - Under-represented groups
  - Communities in disadvantaged areas

This is capital funding only, it must be used for physical infrastructure, not running costs, programmes, or staff.

### **2. Who can apply?**

#### **Football Clubs**

- Must be affiliated with the Irish FA
- Must be:
  - Accredited under the Irish FA's *People and Clubs* programme, **or**
  - In the process of accreditation (to be completed before final grant claim), **or**



- Licensed for the 2025/26 season (NIFL clubs)

#### Non-Football Club Applicants

- Local Authorities
- Schools, Colleges, and Universities
- Association Football-focused Community Organisations
- Association Football-focused Charitable Organisations (registered with the Charity Commission NI)

#### Important:

If you are **not a football club**, you **must** have a formal partnership with **an eligible Irish FA-accredited or licensed football club** (your **Anchor Club**).

This club must be named in your application and meet the same accreditation/licensing standards required of direct applicants.

#### Evidence Required:

- A signed **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** or equivalent confirming how the Anchor Club will use the facility for grassroots football
- Proof of the Anchor Club's accreditation/licence or confirmation of process commencement

### 3. How much funding is available?

Minimum grant: **£100,000**

Maximum grant: **£500,000**

The following are the minimum match funding expectations:

- 40% for Local Authorities and Schools/Colleges/Universities
- 10% for all other applicants (including football clubs and community organisations)

Therefore, the minimum total project cost for Local Authorities and Schools/ Colleges/ Universities is £166,666 and for all other applicants the minimum total project cost is £111,111.

Providing a higher level of match funding may strengthen your application, particularly in relation to the fund's value for money assessment criteria.

### 4. What types of projects are eligible?

Projects must be in Northern Ireland and focused on pitch development.

Eligible capital works include:

- New or improved natural or artificial grass pitches
- Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs)

- Associated infrastructure: changing pavilions, goals, fencing, dugouts, floodlights (LED only), access paths, parking

## 5. Do projects need to be shovel ready?

Yes. Due to the tight funding timeframe, all projects must be shovel ready at the time of application.

This means:

- If **planning permission is required**, it must already be **granted**, and **all pre-commencement conditions must be discharged**
- If **planning permission is not required**, you must provide **written confirmation from the local planning authority** confirming this
- Other necessary statutory approvals (e.g. building control) must also be in place
- You have a clear, deliverable project timeline
- You can appoint contractors and begin work without delay

All projects must be able to **start promptly** and be **completed by 31 March 2026**.

### Evidence Required:

- Planning approval or exemption letter (with reference number)
- Any other required statutory approvals
- Project delivery timeline

## 6. What is the application process?

- Complete the eligibility screening questionnaire
- If your answers indicate you are eligible (subject to verification of your eligibility evidence), you will receive a link to the full application form and a personal folder to upload your eligibility evidence and supporting documents.
- The completed application form and all required evidence must be submitted by **12 noon on Thursday, 8 May 2025**

## 7. What documents are required?

The Guidance Notes include a full list of eligibility criteria, required documents, and other materials needed to support your application.

## 8. When must the project be completed?

All projects must be fully completed by 31 March 2026.

## 9. What is the assessment process?

- a. Eligibility Screening

Complete the eligibility screening questionnaire. If your responses indicate you may be eligible, you will be invited to complete the full application form and upload supporting documents, subject to verification of your eligibility evidence.

b. Eligibility Check (Stage One)

Submitted applications will be reviewed to ensure all eligibility evidence is complete and correct. Only applicants who meet all eligibility requirements will proceed to assessment.

c. Application Assessment (Stage Two)

Eligible applications will be assessed by Co-operation Ireland against the published criteria. Projects will be scored and ranked based on impact, need, readiness, and value for money.

d. Advisory Panel Review

Assessment recommendations will be considered by a panel comprising representatives from the Irish FA, DCMS, Sport NI, and CLOA.

e. Notification

Letters of Offer will be issued to successful applicants in July 2025.

*Please note depending on the volume of applications received, assessment timeframes may be subject to change.*

**10. Where can I find more information or support?**

Visit: <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-football-association/irish-fa-dcms-grassroots-facilities-investment-fund-2025-26>

Email: [dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org](mailto:dcmsfunding@cooperationireland.org)

