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Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Connected Hubs FAQ

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1 Contents

2 General 3

2.1 In connection with the Connected Hubs Call – we are not a hub, can we still apply for the grant? 3

2.2 Is there any limit to the number of applications from each county? 3

2.3 Can more than 2 people from a local authority register for the information sessions? 3

2.4 Will the information sessions be recorded? 3

2.5 If we submitted an extensive proposal, and the fund was oversubscribed would the whole application fail? Or would a reduced grant offer issue and the applicant reorganise its offering accordingly? 3

2.6 Will preference be given to rural locations in applying funding? 3

3 Multi Hub Application 4

3.1 Under the Multi hub application form, can we submit an application to cover all BCP's in our County? 4

3.2 Is there a limit to the number of hubs we can include in a multi hub application? 4

3.3 Is the application to be made by the Local Authority or by the group who are registering their interest in the scheme? Or is it the Local Authority who registers interest of the hubs who are likely to participate? 4

3.4 What is the criteria that can or should apply in making a multi-application? Do they have to be under one management? 4

3.5 Can a hub be included in both a single and multi-hub application? 5

3.6 What is meant by delivering works of similar nature across multiple hubs? Does exactly the same solution have to be implemented in each hub under the same application? 5

3.7 In the event of a multi-hub application, would all hubs have to have the same status as a community hub? 5

3.8 If pursuing the multi hub approach there needs to be a lead applicant, does the lead applicant take receipt of the money on drawdown? Will each of the hub applicants receive an even sum? 5

3.9 Is there a requirement for all hubs in a multi-hub application to align in terms of projects that they want to deliver? 5

3.10 What is the incentive to put through a collaborative multi hub application? 5

3.11 Does a group of hubs applying together need to be in the same county? 6

4 BCPs 6

4.1 Can you please clarify what is a Broadband Connection Point (BCP)? 6

4.2 In most instances BCPs are privately owned. Is it expected that the owners pay the 10% match funding cash contribution? Or can the Local Authority provide the match funding? 6

4.3 None of our BCPs are 50% state funded organisations and would only have received capital grant support from T&V, LEADER or other such programmes. Are they still classified as community facilities not private facilities? 6

4.4 If a sports club was to apply for external access to wifi/broadband only would this qualify? 7

4.5 Can sites that we have used for Wifi4EU also be invited to apply if they have remote working capability? 7

5 Community Hubs 7

5.1 What is the definition of a Community Hub? 7

5.2 If they are considered Community Facilities does the 5% cash contribution come from the facilities/communities themselves? 7

5.3 Can we request funding for a combination of work that needs to be done in our hub or does it have to be just one specific project as suggested in the scheme outline document? 8

5.4 If classed as a Community Hub, there is a requirement for match funding of 10% with a minimum 5% cash contribution. If pursuing the multi-hub application do all hubs need to align in this regard? 8

6 Funding 8

6.1 There is a minimum spend of €10k per individual hub, is this on average or do we need to spend at least €10k in each hub regardless of how much is needed to be spent to bring it up to standard? 8

6.2 What funding is available for hubs in larger towns that are not eligible for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme or RRDF? 8

6.3 In the event of an application from BCPs can the project management of the project be deemed to be part of this 5% in-kind contribution either if 9

A. it is undertaken by the BBO or 9

B. it is undertaken by a representative of one of the BCPs? 9

2 General

2.1 In connection with the Connected Hubs Call – we are not a hub, can we still apply for the grant?

No – this call is for existing hub facilities only.

2.2 Is there any limit to the number of applications from each county?

No limit will be applied.

2.3 Can more than 2 people from a local authority register for the information sessions?

Yes

2.4 Will the information sessions be recorded?

Yes, and they will then be posted to the Department's website.

2.5 If we submitted an extensive proposal, and the fund was oversubscribed would the whole application fail? Or would a reduced grant offer issue and the applicant reorganise its offering accordingly?

If the application is eligible, it will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation scheme.

Where one element of an application is deemed ineligible it will not be funded, but the remaining eligible elements may be.

2.6 Will preference be given to rural locations in applying funding?

No. The Connected Hubs call is open to all hubs irrespective of where they are in the country. In making decisions around the allocations of funding, the Department will

take into account the number of applications from urban, peri-urban and rural locations. The Department will also be mindful of the need to ensure a balanced regional distribution of the available funding.

3 Multi Hub Application

3.1 Under the Multi hub application form, can we submit an application to cover all BCP's in our County?

Yes, it is recommended that all BCPs in one local authority area be grouped for a Multi hub application.

3.2 Is there a limit to the number of hubs we can include in a multi hub application?

Multi-hub projects must have a minimum of 5 participating hubs/ BCPs. There is no upper limit on the number of hubs. There is a maximum grant level of €250k for any multi-hub project.

3.3 Is the application to be made by the Local Authority or by the group who are registering their interest in the scheme? Or is it the Local Authority who registers interest of the hubs who are likely to participate?

The Local Authority can apply on behalf of the group or an individual can apply. The expression of interest is only for the Department's information and to gauge the likely level of interest.

3.4 What is the criteria that can or should apply in making a multi-application? Do they have to be under one management?

All qualifying criteria are set out in the Scheme Outline document. Not all hubs in the application have to be under one management. The lead applicant will have the financial relationship with the Department. Other applicants that are part of a multi-hub application should collectively agree a process for how the money is distributed.

3.5 Can a hub be included in both a single and multi-hub application?

No. Hubs / BCPs cannot be 'double-funded' by applying twice.

3.6 What is meant by delivering works of similar nature across multiple hubs? Does exactly the same solution have to be implemented in each hub under the same application?

No, where similar projects can align in terms of economies of scale etc this will support the application and should be investigated / flagged by the applicants.

3.7 In the event of a multi-hub application, would all hubs have to have the same status as a community hub?

No, applications can consist of different types of hubs/BCPs. However, the particular requirements remain for each applicant hubs (i.e. public or private).

3.8 If pursuing the multi hub approach there needs to be a lead applicant, does the lead applicant take receipt of the money on drawdown? Will each of the hub applicants receive an even sum?

The lead applicant will have the financial relationship with the Department. Other applicants that are part of a multi-hub application should collectively agree a process for how the money is distributed.

3.9 Is there a requirement for all hubs in a multi-hub application to align in terms of projects that they want to deliver?

No, for administrative efficiency one application can be made on behalf of multiple hubs. The activities completed at each hub can be different. (For example different types of video-conferencing facilities may be appropriate in different locations)

3.10 What is the incentive to put through a collaborative multi hub application?

A multi-hub application allows for increased flexibility in terms of the measures installed at particular locations, as well as an opportunity for administrative efficiency where the measures to be installed are similar and/or standard. Multi-hubs applications may more completely fulfil the collaboration criteria as per the evaluation section of the Scheme Outline document.

3.11 Does a group of hubs applying together need to be in the same county?

No.

4 BCPs

4.1 Can you please clarify what is a Broadband Connection Point (BCP)?

Broadband Connection Points (or BCPs) are publicly accessible sites which have been selected to receive high-speed connectivity under the National Broadband Plan. The locations of the BCPs have been selected by local authorities and include public locations such as community halls, libraries, sports facilities, libraries, tourist locations and other public spaces.

Further information can be found at https://nbi.ie/broadband-connection-points/ .

4.2 In most instances BCPs are privately owned. Is it expected that the owners pay the 10% match funding cash contribution? Or can the Local Authority provide the match funding?

The cash element of the matched funding requirement can by met by the facility owner or community, the relevant local authority or from other sources. It cannot be met from other DRCD funding streams.

4.3 None of our BCPs are 50% state funded organisations and would only have received capital grant support from T&V, LEADER or other such programmes. Are they still classified as community facilities not private facilities?

The facilities being developed through the BCP programme have been selected and scoped to provide significant public accessibility and community benefit. For the purpose of this scheme BCPs will also be categorised as community hubs.

4.4 If a sports club was to apply for external access to wifi/broadband only would this qualify?

If the site is currently not a BCP or a hub then they are ineligible to apply for the Connected Hub Call. Funding may be available to you under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. More information can be found at https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/01125e-town-and-village-renewal-scheme/

4.5 Can sites that we have used for Wifi4EU also be invited to apply if they have remote working capability?

Yes, assuming they are existing hubs. In addition, this call is operated in accordance with EU Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 (De Minimis Aid). The De Minimis Aid is applied to the hub as the beneficiary of the funding.

5 Community Hubs

5.1 What is the definition of a Community Hub?

Community Hubs are defined for the purpose of this scheme as hubs operated by entities that receive more than 50% of their funding from State bodies (such as Government Departments, local authorities and State agencies.) Where an applicant wishes to apply as a community hub, they must provide appropriate documentation to demonstrate their level of Exchequer funding.

5.2 If they are considered Community Facilities does the 5% cash contribution come from the facilities/communities themselves?

The cash element of the matched funding requirement can be met by the facility owner or community, the relevant local authority or from other sources. It cannot be met from other DRCD funding streams.

5.3 Can we request funding for a combination of work that needs to be done in our hub or does it have to be just one specific project as suggested in the scheme outline document?

The purpose of the Connected Hub call is to expand existing hub facilities, for example providing additional hot desks, office spaces and meeting rooms for remote working. Any works that meet the criteria and the aims of the scheme will be considered for funding.

5.4 If classed as a Community Hub, there is a requirement for match funding of 10% with a minimum 5% cash contribution. If pursuing the multi-hub application do all hubs need to align in this regard?

No, each hub in the multi-hub application should comply with the relevant requirement as set out in the Scheme Outline document i.e. a public hub with 10% (with a minimum 5% cash contribution) and for all other hubs 10% must be provided in the form of a cash contribution with a further in-kind contribution to a value of 25% of the approved grant amount over 3 years.

6 Funding

6.1 There is a minimum spend of €10k per individual hub, is this on average or do we need to spend at least €10k in each hub regardless of how much is needed to be spent to bring it up to standard?

The minimum grant level per application is €10k. In the case of multi hub applications the grant may be split between locations as needed once the overall application reaches the €10k threshold**.**

6.2 What funding is available for hubs in larger towns that are not eligible for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme or RRDF?

The Connected Hub Call differs from T&V/RRDF in that there is no restriction on town population. BCPs/Hubs can be located anywhere in Ireland.

6.3 In the event of an application from BCPs can the project management of the project be deemed to be part of this 5% in-kind contribution either if

A. it is undertaken by the BBO or

B. it is undertaken by a representative of one of the BCPs?

Where allowed, in-kind contributions up to the maximum set out in relevant Scheme Outline, can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent on the project. The rate applied should be for remuneration of equivalent work, up to a maximum rate of €14 per hour. The grantee must ensure that the rate per hour applied is properly justified according to the work undertaken. Project administration e.g. attendance at meetings, preparation of grant application form, funding drawdown claims and management costs are not eligible as voluntary labour.