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An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe
agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta
Department of Rural and Community
Development and the Gaeltacht

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



SÍOL Programme 2026

Scheme Outline and Information Booklet

8 July 2026

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1 Programme Overview

The current Programme for Government commits to establish a new scheme where all state agencies work together to implement community development and town-centre rejuvenation. The SÍOL programme will target small areas of disadvantage in our towns and cities providing funding for infrastructure to improve the areas and the lives of the communities. Priority will be given to those small areas with the highest population of extreme disadvantage. The Government has secured capital funding of €31.5 million in the National Development Plan to support the SÍOL programme up to 2030.

The programme has been designed based on the statistical information available through both the Central Statistics Office and Pobal's deprivation indices outlining levels of deprivation in urban areas. Other analysis conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) is also taken into consideration. A full review of disadvantaged areas has formed part of the analysis that will underpin the new programme to ensure that the funding is targeted at the most disadvantaged areas within the designated towns and cities.

The importance of the role of Local Authorities in delivering this programme is reflected in the 5% administration fee that the Department is allocating to support the staff resources required. Local Authorities should develop projects in partnership with the local community. This could involve Local Authorities engaging with communities, LDCs and other Government Agencies in the relevant area to ensure that the most suitable projects are identified.

Programme Timelines	
Scheme launch	8 th July 2026
Deadline for submission of applications to the Department from the Local Authorities	14 th August 2026
Funding Announcement (indicative)	October 2026
Projects completed	18 months after announcement

2 Funding

The SÍOL Programme 2026 will provide funding of €5m to support projects that develop community facilities & amenities. The programme aims to deliver supports such as community safety projects, public realms works and projects to support health and wellbeing initiatives, while targeting the supports to the urban areas with the highest concentration of disadvantage.

In order to allow flexibility for Local Authorities to identify appropriate projects that will have the most impact at a local level, Local Authorities will be permitted to submit a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 7 projects for consideration on an annual basis.

It is envisaged that the majority of funded projects will have an approximate value of €60,000, however this figure is intended as a guide only, and the actual value of projects that will be awarded funding will vary depending on the total number and value of applications submitted to the Department by each Local Authority.

The programme will provide funding for the full cost of all projects as detailed in the Application Form. However, if the final cost of the project exceeds the amount stated on the Application Form, the Local Authority will be required to provide any additional funding that may be required to ensure the delivery of the project as set out in the proposal.

Funding Drawdown

Once a project has been approved, 100% of the total value of the project will be paid to local authorities to enable them to begin the project immediately.

Local Authority Administration Fee

Local Authorities will be required to have a named official in the Local Authority to co-ordinate and submit the applications for projects. They will also be responsible for the reporting of the progress of the projects that are granted funding. They will receive an administration fee of 5% of the total allocation for delivering the scheme.

Local Authority Professional Services

Should Local Authorities require independent/external professional services to support the design and/or delivery of projects, professional costs are limited at 12.5% of total project costs. Where specialist services or works are proposed to be undertaken in-house by the Local Authority, a breakdown of these costs must be included in the Application Form and a rationale provided for same. These costs must be reasonable and proportionate to the overall cost of the project and identified at application stage. Such costs will be assessed at application stage and the Local Authority may be requested to remove or reduce such costs if deemed to be excessive.

In addition, the reasonableness of the cost must be verified i.e. the Local Authority must have evidence on the project file that the cost charged is in line with, or less than, the cost of engaging an external contractor. This evidence will be reviewed at project inspection stage. Failure to have this on file could deem the amount charged to be ineligible.

3 Eligibility & Project Requirements

The programme will only support projects that are located in one of the designated SÍOL areas. Local Authorities will not be permitted to direct funding to other areas. The programme will support capital projects provided that they contribute to the enhancement of existing, and/or the development of new, accessible community recreation facilities. The below table provides an indication of the types of projects that may be supported, but is not exhaustive:

Examples of eligible projects	
1. Community Safety Projects	
Infrastructure	Traffic calming projects
Zebra crossings	
2. Public Realm works/Built Environment Projects	
Actions to remediate light pollution (terrestrial and marine) through restorative lighting strategies to protect and/or restore Ireland's dark skies	Access to unique local heritage sites / areas of natural beauty
Benches	Bins
Bus shelters	Car parking
Enhanced outdoor toilet and changing facilities	Electric Vehicle charging points
Fixing broken windows and slates	Painting of derelict buildings
Parks	Planters and biodiversity planting
Recycling	Small scale renovation works to community facilities open to the wider community such as community centres, youth centres or men's sheds etc. This includes external works such as parking and accessibility enhancements
Solar bins	Trees
3. Projects that support health and wellbeing initiatives for communities	
Bike lending schemes	Community cinemas
Community clubs such as boxing gyms	Community gyms

Equipment for fitness classes	Foodbanks
Improving access at sports grounds e.g. development/upgrade of spectator stands at local sports grounds with a particular focus on improving access for people of all abilities and ages	Multi-use gaming areas (MUGAs)/Astro-turf facilities including upgrades ¹ (Please see footnote below)
Sensory gardens, community gardens or allotments.	Skateboard parks, pump tracks or cycling tracks
Small scale renovation works to community facilities open to the wider community such as sports centres or clubhouses of sporting groups	Tennis, padel courts or basketball courts, handball alleys, cricket grounds, outdoor bowling areas or snooker halls
Playgrounds	Walking, running or athletics tracks
4. Projects that support access to education and training in community settings	
Purchase of equipment that facilitates or delivers afterschool clubs	Purchase of equipment that facilitates or delivers upskilling
Purchase of equipment that facilitates or delivers training	Toilets/showers in community facilities but not sports team changing rooms or showers.

Examples of ineligible projects	
CCTV	Feasibility projects/project development
Footpaths	Road markings
The purchase of land or buildings	Works to current school facilities which are not open to the public after school hours
Routine maintenance work and wear and tear costs	

¹ For proposed development or enhancement works on Astro pitches or surfaces please see Regulation (EU) 2023/2055 relating to the sale of certain synthetic polymer microparticles that are often used for granular infill for use on synthetic (Astro) sports surfaces. A ban is to take effect in 2031 that limits the materials used to refill Astro surfaces. For applicants considering submitting an application under the SÍOL programme for the development of, or works on, any type of Astro surface, they should in the first instance discuss these regulations with their contractor or surface supplier to ensure that their development is fully compliant with relevant legislation and is future proofed so as to ensure best value for money and longevity of the surface for users.

The Local Authority should contact the Department by submitting an email to siol@drcdg.gov.ie in respect of any queries regarding project eligibility.

Project Requirements

Proposed projects must be ready to commence on approval.

Landowner consent, planning permission, Part 8 or necessary screenings (if applicable) must be confirmed and in place at the time of application. The Department may request evidence of same during the assessment process. Such documentation must be held on file for a period of 5 years from the date of application.

Please note, the applicant must own the premises/property or have at least 7 years remaining under a lease or licence for the premises/property.

The Local Authority must ensure that facilities funded are operational for at least 5 years from the date of completion. Otherwise, funding may have to be repaid.

All community facilities and amenities funded under this programme must, in so far as is practicable, be accessible to all abilities and ages.

The Local Authority must ensure that funded facilities are publicly accessible and available for use/booking with clear arrangements to insure and manage the facility.

Any facility funded must be available to the public without a requirement to be a member of a club, enrolled in a school etc.

Facilities on school grounds must be open to the public outside school hours.

SMART objectives

Consistent with the Infrastructure Guidelines, there must be a focus on the need to ensure the achievement of SMART objectives in progressing projects:

- Specific: Avoid ambiguous action verbs such as 'Consider', 'Explore', or 'Examine'
- Measurable: Tangible outputs from the project, which should be clear from the outset
- Achievable: projects should be ambitious, but achievable in the indicated delivery timeframe
- Relevant: Projects must relate to a policy objective
- Timebound: The timeline for delivery of projects must align with the criteria of this programme as set out in this document and therefore be ready to commence on approval

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In Ireland, a whole-of-Government approach has been adopted for implementation of the SDGs. Applicants will be required to identify in their application a minimum of 3 SDGs that are being delivered through their proposed project. Further information on the SDGs can be found by visiting <https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie>

The 17 SDGs are as follows:

Goal 1 - No Poverty	Goal 10 - Reduced Inequalities
Goal 2 - Zero Hunger	Goal 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being	Goal 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production
Goal 4 - Quality Education	Goal 13 - Climate Action
Goal 5 - Gender Equality	Goal 14 - Life Below Water
Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation	Goal 15 - Life on Land
Goal 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Goal 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth	Goal 17 - Partnerships for the Goals
Goal 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	

4 Application Process

Project Selection

The SÍOL programme aims to target small areas of disadvantage in our towns and cities providing funding for infrastructure to improve the areas and the lives of the communities.

Therefore, Local Authorities should develop projects in partnership with the local community. This could involve Local Authorities engaging with communities, Local Development Companies (LDCs) and other Government Agencies in the relevant area to ensure that the most suitable projects are identified.

The programme will accept applications submitted by Local Authorities for projects that will be delivered in conjunction with groups such as schools, community and voluntary groups and LDCs.

Local Authorities may also self-deliver projects.

Community groups can include local sporting organisations where the infrastructure being supported through the application is for the benefit of the community generally (not just the sporting organisation) and is made freely available to all members of the community.

Applications must contain proposals for projects in a single facility and not in multiple locations. However, applications may include a number of different elements in respect of a single facility.

Submitting Applications

Local Authorities will be informed of their approximate annual allocation and invited to submit between 3 and 7 projects to the Department for approval in any one year.

Applications should include a comprehensive breakdown of estimated costs including Local Authority professional fees, if applicable, associated with the proposed project. Please note that only items of a capital nature, integral to the project, are eligible.

The Local Authority is required to submit an Application Form in respect of each individual project. The form must be submitted in Microsoft Word format only. The Local Authority must ensure that the forms are fully completed and comply with the Scheme Outline document.

The Local Authority is also required to submit a list of project applications on the Project Priority List document. The form must be submitted in Microsoft Excel format only. Projects should be prioritised from 1 up to 7, as applicable.

The Application Form and Project Priority List documents are issued directly to each Local Authority by DRCDG.

Please ensure that applications are fully completed and that all required supporting documentation is submitted as the Department will not follow up regarding missing documentation or incomplete application forms.

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

All applications are submitted for assessment and consideration by DRCDG in the context of available funding and it may not be possible to fund all applications.

Applications should be submitted directly by Local Authorities to the Department at siol@drcdg.gov.ie by 14th August 2026.

In addition to this Scheme Outline and Information Booklet the English versions of the following documents have issued to Local Authorities:

- Application form
- Conflict of Interest Declaration form
- Projects Priority List form

Irish versions of the above documents will be issued to Local Authorities shortly.

5 DRCDG Assessment Criteria

The Department will assess applications and select projects for funding by undertaking a two stage assessment process. It will also consider a number of factors including the order of priority indicated by the Local Authority; the range, mix, quality and impact of proposed projects and other relevant considerations.

At Stage 1, proposals will be assessed as to whether they meet the minimum criteria for consideration as set out in the table below. These eligibility criteria must all be satisfied for a proposal to be eligible for assessment under Stage 2. Proposals that fail any of these identified criteria will be ineligible and notifications will issue to the relevant LA at that stage.

Pass/Fail Assessment Criteria	Application Form Section
Evidence that the project will be located in a small area with a deprivation classification between 'Extremely disadvantaged' and 'Marginally above average' inclusive.	2.1
Evidence of all permissions being in place, including planning permission and Part 8 (if required)	2.2
Evidence of property ownership or 7 year lease period	2.2
Evidence that the project will be freely open to the public without appointment	2.2
Evidence that the necessary insurance is in place for the services that will be provided by this project	2.2
Evidence that the funded facilities will be operational for at least 5 years from the date of completion	2.2
Evidence that the project aligns with the objectives of the LECP	2.2
Evidence that the proposed project is ready to proceed on approval	2.5
Evidence that the project supports SDGs	2.6

At Stage 2, the eligible proposals will be considered under the qualitative criteria set out in the table below. Proposals will be required to meet a minimum standard described in these Documents in order to meet the minimum overall mark of 300 AND will also be required to

achieve a minimum mark for key criteria as set out in Table 5.2 below. Further information may be sought by the Department from Local Authorities at this stage of the process.

Scoring Matrix			
Assessment Criteria	Description	Maximum Score	Minimum Score Required
Quality of Proposal	Overall quality of the proposal submitted with a clear rationale for investment. (General quality of form, engagement with local groups etc.)	35	15
Project Impact	Clearly defined objectives, outputs, results and impacts to enable monitoring and evaluation	35	20
Prioritisation of proposals in Socially Deprived Small Areas	Projects located in small areas that are defined in the Pobal HP Deprivation Index as being 'Extremely Disadvantaged', 'Very Disadvantaged' or 'Disadvantaged' will receive maximum marks.	20	N/A
Sustainability and Value for Money	The potential of the project to deliver qualitative lasting impacts well beyond the life of the project, which will become self-sustaining and which will outweigh and outlast the initial public investment involved.	10	5

6 Project Delivery

The Local Authority will take a lead role in the delivery of the projects approved by the Department. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority entering into contract with the Department, as appropriate, to meet any shortfall arising out of any project non-compliance.

All projects must comply with the [National Public Procurement Policy Framework](#) published by the Office of Government Procurement. The framework sets out the procurement procedures to be followed by government departments and State Bodies under national and EU rules. The framework supports contracting authorities, including Local Government when awarding contracts for works, goods and services. It supports and enables Public Bodies to adopt procedures to meet their Public Procurement requirements and facilitates compliance with EU and National Procurement Rules.

Local Authorities are also required to comply with [Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014 - Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds](#) which outlines the public financial management principles, procedures, and additional reporting requirements to be followed in the management of grant funding provided from public money as well as the reclassification of grants and grants-in-aid. The overall principle of the circular is that there should be transparency and accountability in the management of public money, in line with economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Failure to adhere to these requirements may result in the associated expenditure being deemed ineligible.

Reporting

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that the project will be completed within the programme timelines. Local Authorities will be required to provide any reports and information relating to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Department.