



THE
IRELAND
FUNDS



HEART OF THE COMMUNITY FUND 2026

Application Guidelines

Round 1: Education & Innovation

Apply Online

19th February- 20th March 2026

irelandfunds.org/grants

What is the Heart of the Community Fund?

The Heart of the Community Fund is an open grant round designed to meet the needs of non-profit organisations delivering vital services and supports to people across the island of Ireland.

The Ireland Funds recognises the challenges organisations face in securing funding to build their capacity or meet their core costs, so the Heart of the Community Fund 2026 will provide Organisational Investment Grants. The application form will enable you to share what you're working towards and how you deliver on your mission, so we can get a picture of your organisation as a whole. If your application is successful, you can then allocate the funding to meet your most pressing needs.

This year, The Ireland Funds will deliver the Heart of the Community Fund through **two separate grant rounds**. The **first round** will support organisations in **working in education and innovation**. The **second round** will support organisations in the **arts and culture sector**. This approach allows us to better address the needs of each sector and maximise the positive outcomes of our funding.

Funding levels

The Heart of the Community Fund 2026 will provide grants between £/€5,000-25,000 to non-profit organisations with an annual turnover of less than £/€5,000,000.

How will this work?

The application form includes questions that will help us understand what your organisation does, why you do it, who you do it for and how you monitor your effectiveness. It also includes questions about your budget for the year and how much your current shortfall is, as well as a section where you can provide some examples of what this funding could be used for.

The Ireland Funds Grants Team will assess your application and, if your application is successful, will determine the most suitable amount to offer your organisation within the range available.

When you receive the grant offer, you will then be asked to specify the designation for the funding e.g. £/€10,000 for Marketing Manager Salary and £/€10,000 for Utility Bills.

We understand the need to have flexible funding that can be deployed throughout the year as needed, so up to 25% of the amount you are awarded can be designated to your "Flexible/Contingency Costs Fund".

Please note that funds must be expended within 12 months.

Application period

The Heart of the Community Fund 2026 Round 1 will accept applications online from organisations working in the education and innovation space between [Thursday 19th of February and Friday 20th](#) of March. Late applications will not be accepted.

All applications must be submitted through our online portal. Guidance on how to use this portal can be found on our website. Due to an expected high volume of applications, all inquiries will be dealt with through email. Please contact us at grantsinfo@irelandfunds.org if you have any outstanding questions that have not been addressed through the information provided.

Priorities of the Heart of the Community Fund 2026

For the first open call grant round of the Heart of the Community Fund 2026 we will prioritise applications from organisations working in two areas, (i) education, and (ii) innovation.

- **Education:** This priority focuses on organisations providing access to learning, both formal and informal, across all age levels.
- **Innovation:** This priority supports organisations taking innovative approaches to address a problem, either by creating something new or enhancing an existing solution.

Your organisation must be working with these focus areas to apply for funding.

Criteria

- For ROI: Organisations must be a registered charity unless considered an excluded body by the Charities Regulator. Examples of excluded bodies include social enterprise and amateur sports bodies. For further details please visit the [Charities Regulator website](#).
- For NI: Organisations must be a CIC, or a registered charity or have applied to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. For further details, please visit [The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#).
- For schools: In lieu of a registered charity number we will accept a Roll ID Number for the Republic of Ireland and an Institution Reference Number in Northern Ireland as proof of registration with their governing body, Department of Education.
- The organisation must have an annual turnover* of less than £/€5,000,000. Organisations with a turnover exceeding this limit** are not eligible to apply for this specific grant round.
 - *Turnover is the total income made in a certain period. It is sometimes referred to as gross revenue or income.
 - **If your organisation is a smaller semi-independent unit that operates within a larger organisation with a turnover above the threshold, please contact us to determine your eligibility.
- The work you are seeking funding for must take place on the Island of Ireland.

Due diligence is critical for The Ireland Funds. To be eligible, organisations must be a registered charity/ CIC or an excluded body and;

- **Must have:**
 - Governing Document (i.e. Memorandum & Articles of Association; Trust Deed; Constitution).
 - Financial Statements (Audited or Unaudited Accounts are equally accepted).
- **Must have a governing document that contains the following clauses:**
 - Income and Property including a Directors Clause:
 - Outlining the allocation of any income to the sole purpose of pursuing the organisations purpose and objects.
 - Ensuring that any Directors will not be remunerated by salary or fees.

- Winding Up/Dissolution:
 - Providing security for income/funds should the organization cease operations. Funds are guaranteed to be transferred to an organisation with a similar charitable purpose.
- Limited Liability:
 - Formal recognition that the company is limited by guarantee, as opposed to shares, and establishes that dividends etc. will not be afforded due to the organisation's status as a CLG.

- Please note multiple applications from the same (registered) organisation for different areas of work or different geographic areas will not be accepted.

Ineligible activities

The Heart of the Community Fund will NOT provide support for the following activities:

- Individuals, bursaries, or scholarships
- Medical expenses
- Animal welfare activities
- Commemorative structures
- Advancement of religion/faith or religious beliefs
- Political activities and promotion of individual political candidates

How to Apply:

Heart of the Community Fund applications are being accepted through our online portal only. The link to the portal will be made available via the website www.irelandfunds.org/grants during the open application dates.

Practical application advice

During application

- Keep answers concise, compelling, and coherent. Do not exceed the word count.
- Tell us about your mission, activities and communities in clear, plain English and avoid using too much jargon.
- Complete all questions on the application form accurately.
- Submit all required documents as per the guidance notes, e.g., governing documents.
- Once submitted, all applications are final. Please ensure you review and are happy with your application before submitting it.

After application

- Keep a record of your application. The online portal will allow you to download a completed PDF copy of your full application just before you submit it. We would also urge you to keep a record of the email address and password you used as you will be able to return to view the submitted application at a later day.
- Once the application has been received, confirmation will be sent to the email address provided on your form.
- Please note that acknowledgement emails may land in your spam or junk folder. Ensure you have marked grantsinfo@irelandfunds.org as a 'safe sender' so you don't miss anything.

All applications must be submitted through our online portal. Due to an expected high volume of applications and remote working all enquiries will be dealt with through email. Please contact us at grantsinfo@irelandfunds.org if you have any outstanding questions that have not been addressed through the information provided.