

Expression of Interest Guidance Notes

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**Section 1:**

**Top tips for applicants to the Scheme**

Before you start completing your EOI, her are some important reminders.

The main aim of the Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme is to help established social enterprises in Northern Ireland to enable them to increase their capacity, potential profitability and sustainability whilst supporting those who live in rural areas.

This aim can be met through one or more of the following funding priorities/objectives:

* Improving the sustainability of your rural social enterprise.
* Strengthening rural community/communities.
* Improving the economic circumstance of rural communities; and
* Working in partnership with others.

**Describe the project clearly**

Explain clearly what the project will do and how it will economically and socially benefit rural communities. It is hard for us to justify providing a grant if we do not understand the project.

**Show us what the funding will mean to the success of the project**

We are obliged to invest public money carefully. We are looking for viable, growing enterprises. If it can be demonstrated that the project is good value for money, and that the grant money will be used to improve the enterprise, the project is more likely to receive the grant.

**Do the market research**

The real demand and need for the project should be demonstrated. If no need or demand is evidenced, the project is unlikely to receive a grant.

**Section 2:**

**How to express an interest**

The Expression of Interest (EOI) form is the first stage in applying for a grant from the Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme. These guidance notes explain how to complete the EOI application.

**Before you start**

Before you start your application, read the Scheme Information document on the Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme. It explains:

* Background to the scheme.
* The support available.
* Who can apply.
* Eligible/ineligible costs; and
* How to apply.

If, after having read this guidance, you still have any further queries, you should email these to [rurasocialeconomy@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rurasocialeconomy@daera-ni.gov.uk).

**How to apply**

Expressions of Interest must be completed online before the stipulated closing date. We will not accept any alternatives to the online process. The Department will not seek clarification on any aspect of the EOI you submit. The onus is therefore on you to ensure your submission is fully completed in line with these guidance notes.

**Section 3:**

**Filling in the Expression of Interest**

You must answer every question on the online application unless the instructions say you can either type ‘N/A’ or move to the next question.

**Part 1 – Applicant Details**

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| **Question** | Guidance |
| **Organisation Name** | Please tell us the full name of the social enterprise that funding is being applied for. For registered social enterprises, use the registered name of the social enterprise. |
| **Postcode** | Please give the postcode of the social enterprise. Select address from the dropdown list. If your address in not in a rural area, you will be asked to provide an explanation as to why you are eligible for this grant. If your address is in an urban area, this must be completed. |
| **Email address** | Please provide an email address for the social enterprise. |
| **Contact details for person responsible for application** | Please give us the details of the main contact for this application including –   * Title * Name (This is pre-populated using the current logged on user details and can not be changed). * Telephone number * Email address (This is the main way we will make contact. This is pre-populated using the current logged on user details.) * Confirmation that contact is 18 years or older (contact **must** be 18 years or older) * Position within the organisation (this relates to the position within the social enterprise of the individual completing the EOI form. If the form is completed on behalf of an organisation, we would normally expect the applicant to be a director or committee member). |
| **Secondary contact details** | If possible, please give us the details of another contact for this application including –   * Title * Name * Telephone number * Email address * Confirmation that contact is 18 years or older (contact **must** be 18 years or older) * Position within the organisation |

**Part 2 – Social Enterprise details**

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| **Legal status of the organisation** | Select the best ‘legal’ fit for the social enterprise from the dropdown list. If the social enterprise fits multiple options from the dropdown list or an unlisted option, then please select other.  If you have selection ‘other’, please provide details. Otherwise leave blank. |
| **Has the social enterprise been trading for 2 years or more** | Select yes or no from the dropdown list. Please note applications from social enterprises which have been trading for less than 2 years will not be eligible. |
| **Number of full time equivalent (FTE) employees** | A full-time equivalent (FTE) employee is one that works 30 or more hours per week. A part-time employee is classified as one that works 16-30 hours per week. All part-time employees are calculated as 0.5 FTE of an employee regardless of exact hours worked. |
| **Outline the main activities of the social enterprise** | Use this section to outline the core activities of the social enterprise. Focus on the key details, such as what markets the enterprise operates in, how the enterprise generates income, what services and/or broader benefits does the enterprise provide to rural communities. |
| **Is the organisation registered with Companies House?** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’  If you have selected yes, please provide Companies House number. |
| **Is the social enterprise part of a group of companies?** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’  If you have selected yes, please provide details. |
| **Directors and committee members** | Please list the names and member type for directors or committee members of the social enterprise. Use the ‘add members’ tab to add members. |
| **Have any of the business principals been disqualified as Directors or listed on the individual insolvency list?** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’  If you have answered yes, please provide supporting information including relevant dates regarding any business principals who have been disqualified as Directors or listed on the Individual Insolvency List. |
| **Please provide the turnover and balance sheet totals** **from the most recent set of accounts for the social enterprise** | Select the business financial year end date.  Provide the turnover.  Provide the balance sheet total.  You will not be able to proceed without providing this information. |
| **Have you received any public sector funds since 2019?** | This relates to funding that your social enterprise has received, or funding committed that you are due to receive.  Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’.  If you have selected yes, please use the ‘add evidence’ tab to enter the required information on previous funding:   * Source of funding * De minimis – select ‘yes’ or ‘no’ * Details of the project funded * Amount of funding £ * Date funding was awarded * End date of project |

**Part 3 – Project Overview**

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| **Project Title** | Try to keep the name short rather than a descriptive sentence. |
| **Project Description** | Provide a short description/summary of the project. |
| **Project location address** | Please give the postcode of the project location. Select address from the dropdown list. If your address in not in a rural area, you will be asked to provide an explanation as to why you are eligible for this grant. If your address is in an urban area, this must be completed. |
| **Do you have legal title on the property where the project will be located** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to provide detail of the ownership/letting arrangements for the address as appropriate. |
| **Is the organisation VAT registered** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’  If you have selected ‘yes’ please provide your VAT registration number. |
| **Project Costs** | Please provide a breakdown of the estimated financial costs of your projects. Use the ‘add project cost’ tab to enter the required information. You must add all items related to your project. Include all items even if they are not eligible for grant so that the total project costs can be assessed.   * Type of Cost – tell us what type of expenditure will be undertaken, for example, purchase of equipment (simply insert equipment), capital build costs, marketing costs, training costs. * Net cost (£) * VAT cost (£) (VAT is expected at 20%. If your VAT amount differs from 20%, you will be asked to provide an explanation). * Date expenditure will be incurred * Is the item/work eligible for funding? Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’   Please note that if your estimated costs have been provided in a currency other than £ sterling, you will need to convert to sterling for the EOI application. Use the following weblink <http://www.ecb.int/stats/exchange/eurofxref/html/index.en.html>.  Please note that the minimum grant support available is £50,000 and the maximum grant support available is £100,000. If the total eligible grant is less than £50,000 the application will **not** be eligible, and you will be unable to proceed with the application. If the total eligible grant requested is above £100,000 it will be automatically calculated at a capped amount of £100,000 (i.e., the maximum grant support available). |
| **Project Match Funding** | The grant can only be used to cover some costs.  Tell us where the rest of the money for the project (the ‘match funding’) will come from, for example, own funds, bank loan, private loan, overdraft, and other public funds. You will need to provide evidence of match funding if you are invited to submit a full application. This may come in the form of a bank statement, letter of support (e.g., from a Credit Union), completion of a Co-declaration of support from a bank.  It should also be noted that grant payments are made retrospectively and as such you will need to have capital in place to make entire payments on project costs before reclaiming.  A minimum 20% cash contribution will be required on **ALL** applications. |
| **Key dates** | Please provide the date you would expect your project to complete, with all payments made, if your application is successful. |

**Part 4 – The Business Case**

Answers to the questions in this section will help us to understand what your project involves. We will use this to score your project.

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| **Aims and objectives** | Outline the aims and objectives for the project. Tell us what the project will do for the social enterprise and what it will achieve. How will it improve the social enterprise? |
| **Strategic fit** | The funding priorities of the scheme are set out below. Select all the priorities that your project will meet. Explain, using supporting evidence, how it will do that. Please note the project must meet at least one of these priorities to be eligible for funding. The information provided should be concise and clear and in less than 500 words.   |  | | --- | | Priorities for Funding | | **Improving the sustainability of your rural social enterprise**  To encourage a transition to more sustainable rural social enterprises through enabling the business to increase its capacity, potential profitability and sustainability. | | **Strengthening rural community/communities**  Investing in social enterprises which create products and services for and on behalf of rural communities, thereby helping to create a sustainable rural community where people want to live, work, to visit and invest in. | | **Improving the economic circumstances of rural communities**  Enabling and supporting employment pathways, training and volunteering opportunities to assist disadvantaged or vulnerable rural people to fulfil their potential. | | **Working in partnership with others**  Proactively encourage new or enhanced partnership arrangements to connect individuals, communities and opportunities in rural areas. | |

**Part 5 – Justification/Displacement/Additionality**

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| **Need and Demand** | Justify the need for your project. Answers to the question in this section will help us to understand:   * The market demand for your project * Why it is needed * Who will benefit from it   Make sure a clear case is provided to explain why the project is needed and briefly outline the market opportunity/demand for project and how this will benefit the rural area. In particular, details should be provided of any recent consultation/market research including statistics and/or letters of support from potential beneficiaries/clients. |
| **Displacement** | Outline any similar businesses nearby that might be affected (negatively or positively) by the project. Provide details of these businesses and explain how the project will affect them. This should be concise and clear. Please note that DAERA will undertake checks to ensure grant funding will not negatively impact on any local businesses. |
| **Additionality**  **Will your project proceed in the absence of grant funding?** | Select ‘yes’ or ‘no’  The Department, as a custodian of public money, is required to critically and objectively assess all requests for the allocation of public funding. A part of this assessment involved looking at ‘additionality’. This means ensuring that a proposed project will deliver net economic benefits, whilst receiving the minimum financial assistance required to deliver the project.  Please confirm if your project would proceed, as outlined, in the absence of grant funding. If the answer is ‘No’, or if you believe it would result in a scaled down version of the proposed project, or a delay in implementing the proposal, please explain the overall impact this would have on your proposed project, and any plans you have for growing your business. |

**Part 6 – Outputs**

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| **Outputs** | ‘Outputs’ are what will result from the project – these must be measurable.  Examples of outputs from a project include:   * Increase in turnover (£) * Increase in productivity (%) * Number of new products generated (number) * Selling/delivery of services to new markets (number) * Creating jobs (number full-time and part-time) * Staff/volunteers undertaking bespoke training (number) * Beginning/expanding e-commerce activity * Increase in opportunities for disadvantaged or vulnerable rural people to access employment (%) * Increase in opportunities for disadvantaged or vulnerable rural people to access training opportunities (%)   Please list some of the important outputs forecast for the project. Explain how these have been calculated. The outputs should be appropriate to the size of the project, be realistic, achievable, specific and measurable. |

**Part 7 – Planning and Other Statutory Permissions**

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| **Planning Permission** | Tell us if the project needs planning permission, and if it does, has it already been applied for, when it will be applied for, or if it has already been approved. Select the appropriate responses. If already applied for, you will need to provide the planning reference number. |
| **Are any other statutory permissions/licences required for your project?** | Tell us if any other statutory permissions/licences are required for your project, and if it does, when it will be applied for, or if it has already been approved. Select the appropriate response.  It is your responsibility to make sure that you have all the necessary permissions and licences in place for your project. It may affect your eligibility to receive a grant if these are not in place. |

**Declarations**

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| Please read this section and make sure that, you agree with, and can meet the requirements set out in it. By submitting and/or agreeing to the submission of the Expression of Interest form, you will be agreeing to the declaration. |

**Section 4:**

**What happens next?**

Your EOI will now be considered by the Department for eligibility and against the priorities of the Scheme and you may be invited to submit a full application for funding as outlined in the Scheme Information provided.

If you do not get an invitation to submit an application, you will be advised of the reason(s) for this.

Although there is no right of appeal for those not being invited to progress to the next stage, the Department will explain the reasons for your unsuccessful EOI. This is so that, if the pilot scheme leads to a new programme, you will be better placed to make a successful application if you address any shortcomings in this process.