



# **Investing in Community Development**

**Community Work Ireland**

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**CWI Pre-Budget Submission  
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## Context

Community development or community work is a long-acknowledged approach to addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. With support from the State, Ireland developed an internationally recognized community development infrastructure and a vibrant community work sector, though more recent policy decisions and resource cuts have had a considerable impact on this. Community work has been and remains a critical feature of the work to achieve equality for Travellers, women, migrants and others, and in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Over the past 15 years, the infrastructure supporting community work activity in Ireland has undergone significant change. In 2009 a cohesion process reduced 94 Area Based Partnership Companies to 52 Local Development Companies, the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) was introduced and integrated 180 Community Development Projects with Local Development Companies (CDPs previously funded independently under the Community Development Programme). While community development is central to the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP), CWI research has indicated that the commissioning/procurement process used to select 'programme implementors' has had a significant, largely detrimental, impact on community development.

Since these cuts and policy changes, new issues for community work such as the challenges of increased global migration and the rise in populism, and climate justice have emerged, and others, such as homelessness and mental health issues have become compounded. Developing a community work response to these and other issues leading to increased collaboration, the development of effective new and alternative strategies, responses and approaches, increased participation of those affected by these issues, strong partnership between state agencies and the community sector, has been difficult in the current context.

## Policy Context

In 2020, Our Shared Future, the new Programme for Government was produced and included a commitment to introduce, on a phased basis, a number of projects similar in approach to Community Development Projects (p 92).

In 2019, ***Sustainable, Inclusive, Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024*** was published following a collaborative process involving members representing the interests of community development, voluntary sector, local development, local government and the State. It acknowledges that there is a need to renew the partnership with the community sector and the voluntary sector and sets out a vision to create vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, empowered and self-determining communities that support the social, cultural and economic well-being of all members.

The values on which the strategy is based reflect community work values and includes a number of objectives and actions that refer to autonomous community work and community workers – see the end of the document.

# Investing in Community Development

This CWI Pre-Budget Submission is focused on the development of a programme to support autonomous community work that will serve to achieve the commitments in *Our Shared Future* and *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities*. A proposal for the programme is outlined below.

## Aim

The aim of the Programme to Support Autonomous Community Work is to support community development initiatives that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality, and promote human rights, in the context of issues such as racism, women's rights, migration, gender and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on already marginalized communities developed on the basis of a needs analysis carried out in association with the target communities.

## Programme elements

The Programme would target funding at existing groups or organisations that work to address poverty, inequality or social exclusion. The funding should be to support existing or emerging groups or organisations that are in need of support to undertake community work within various contexts, as well as supporting potential initiatives to emerge. Local, regional and national initiatives should be part of the process and eligible to apply.

The work of the projects must be informed by and consistent with community work values as set out in *All Ireland Standards for Community Work* and reflected in *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities* to ensure that the key principles of community work – collectivity, community empowerment, participation, social justice and sustainable development, human rights, equality and anti-discrimination – underpin the work of the projects.

Projects should be regarded as collaborators with the State in the design of mutually desirable targets and goals and partners with the State in implementation of the agreed programme.

The programme must take a team approach and be supported nationally to maintain this approach.

The funding line should support flexible and innovative community work initiatives responding creatively to current and emerging issues and concerns for communities locally, regionally and nationally. Addressing the challenges posed by:

- increased global migration and the rise in populism, and the need for community development to support the creation of conditions for real inclusion of the diverse communities, including asylum seekers, which are or will be part of Ireland;
- climate change and climate justice;
- ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination;
- ongoing experiences of poverty and marginalisation;
- the development of community approaches to, for example, health and wellbeing including mental health, violence against women and housing and homelessness.

There should be clear links with national and local policy and structures so that the learning of the projects can be mainstreamed where appropriate.

## Autonomy and Governance

Autonomy refers to the right to self-govern. This does not and should not dilute any obligation in relation to accountability and transparency. In this context, it means community development projects having the right to appoint their own Boards of Management that would have a combination of at least the following skill sets:

- Community Development;
- Organisational governance and knowledge of the legal requirements of publicly funded organisations;
- Local knowledge or knowledge of the community in which or with which the project will work.

The Boards and managers should be informed by and working consistently with the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work*, that outlines the requirements of funders and managers of community work and community workers.

## Funding

Funding should be for a four-year period, to support a number of pilot projects with a staggered start over first three years. The funding should:

- Cover the employment of workers who must have community development education, knowledge, skill and analysis;
- Have programme costs built-in;
- Allow for research and analysis, including baseline data. The actions undertaken must be based on evidence and analysis of need;
- Allow for periodic review and evaluation using both quantitative and qualitative data and information.

One of the funded initiatives should be to develop and maintain a coherent, partnership, team approach to the programme.

## Budget

The budget to support 20 projects over a four year period would be €11,360,000.00 allowing for staff, overheads and project costs.

<b>Total Budget Over Four Years</b>	€11,360,000.00
<b>Annual Budget</b>	€2,840,000.00
<b>Annual Budget for 20 projects</b>	€142,000.00

# Relevant references in Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a five year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector

- **Objective 1** Strengthen and develop participative approaches to the development of public policy and programming underpinned by an autonomous community and voluntary infrastructure.
- **Action 1.1** Develop and sustain national, regional and local structures and policies that facilitate and promote effective local development, autonomous community development, and meaningful engagement of marginalised communities.
- **Action 1.3** Develop long-term strategic community development and local development programming in partnership with national organisations and local government with greater local flexibility, ring-fenced funding streams for marginalised groups and communities, and evaluation frameworks that secure an appropriate balance between quantitative and qualitative evaluation; measure outcomes, outputs and impacts; and are not overly burdensome.
- **Objective 2** Support and facilitate communities to participate in community development and local development.
- **Action 2.4** Develop education and training mechanisms based on the All Ireland Standards for Community Work for those charged with implementing and monitoring community development.
- **Action 2.5** Develop and support a continuum of education and training opportunities for:
  - those involved in community work on a voluntary basis,
  - people employed, but not qualified, in community work to acquire qualifications,
  - continuous professional development for qualified, employed community workers, and
  - other staff in organisations with a community development remit.
- **Objective 4 Develop capacity of organisations supporting communities to participate in community development and local development, with a specific focus on marginalised communities**
- **Action 4.1** Scope and develop a sustainable funding model to support the community and voluntary sector, recognising the importance of the following as key elements to be considered:
  - a multi-annual funding approach as the standard for community development, local development and community and voluntary programmes, and public-funded projects and programmes generally,
  - an appropriate cost-recovery model for public-funded programmes delivered by community and voluntary organisations, including costs of compliance and relevant overhead and administration costs,
  - core funding for autonomous community development and local development at local level, including employment of professional community workers, and
  - supports appropriate to their mission for social and community enterprises consistent with those available to business start-ups. Cross-Government