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**Digital Innovation Programme 2018**

**Scheme outline and information**

**Department of Rural and Community Development**

**Regional Telecommunications Development Unit**

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**Introduction**

The Digital Innovation Programme 2018 (DIP) is an initiative of the Department of Rural and Community Development (the ‘Department’). It is designed to encourage local authority led projects that support digital development. These projects must promote, support, or otherwise advance at least one of the seven pillars of digital maturity. Projects that cut across more than one of the pillars are particularly welcome.

These projects will provide innovative digital solutions to issues, or identify solutions to digital issues and should be scalable and replicable by other local authorities.

Learnings from the design, implementation and monitoring of the successful projects will be disseminated among local authority Broadband Officers via a Review Report for each funded project.

The selected projects may also serve as proof-of-concept initiatives, testing a hypothesis before a large scale roll-out. Funding will be provided to successful applicants towards the design and / or implementation of the project.

Funding is dependant, amongst other criteria, on a project’s alignment with the seven pillars of digital maturity. For indicative purposes we have listed some sub-headings under each pillar, these are not exhaustive:

**Digital Skills**

Primary

Post Primary

Third level

Back to Education

**Infrastructure**

Equipment / physical infrastructure

Design / project management

Research / awareness raising

**Innovation & Entrepreneurship**

Specialised or niche enterprise

SME / start-ups

Research and development

**Digital Economy & Employment**

Digital enterprise / ecommerce

Hubs / clusters / incubation

Employment

Apprenticeships / internships

**Digital Services**

Internal system integration or improvement

External service provision

Digitisation

**Community & Culture**

Rural Inclusion

Community cohesion

Arts and Heritage

Irish Language

**Digital Transition**

Digital Champions

Mobilising communities

Preparatory work/feasibility studies

**Criteria**

1. Projects must be led by one or more local authority
2. The application form must be complete and accompanied by any supporting documents (where applicable)
3. 20% (minimum) of total project cost must be provided in the form of match funding (see exemption below)
4. Projects chosen for funding will be required to draw down 100% of DIP 2018 scheme funds before the end of 2018. If your project cannot draw down all funding this year, you are encouraged to reapply in 2019
5. Projects must demonstrate that they will support, promote or otherwise advance one or more of the seven pillars of digital maturity
6. Projects must provide a public benefit and must not provide any private benefit
7. The project must be original. DIP funding will not be provided for a project that has already concluded successfully, or is successfully operating. New approaches to existing or previously tried initiatives may be considered.

It should be noted that submissions that fail to satisfy all of the criteria set out above will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered by the Evaluation Panel.

**Funding limits**

The Department will provide no more than 80% of the entire cost of the project, up to a maximum of €75,000. However, in the case of an eligible project already approved under the Department’s Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2018, 100% funding may be available.

**How to apply**

A completed application form (Appendix 2) and any supporting documentation must be forwarded to [jake.ryan@drcd.gov.ie](mailto:jake.ryan@drcd.gov.ie) or by post to:

Digital Innovation Programme

Regional Telecommunications Development Unit

Department of Rural and Community Development

Trinity Point

10-11 Leinster Street South

Dublin 2

D02 EF85

**Closing date**

Applications will be accepted up to and no later than 5pm, Tuesday 2nd October.

It is intended to convene the Evaluation Panel within one week of the closing date and to make recommendations to the Minister immediately thereafter.

**Application form**

Your completed application form should provide the evaluation team with a clear and accurate summary of your proposed project.

While it is for you to decide the quantity and depth of the information provided, we would expect to see the following answered in your application form:

1. **Name:** what is the name of the project?
2. **What** will your project achieve? What is the purpose of your project?
3. **Why** is your project necessary? Have you carried out research? If so, include details.
4. **Where** will your project be based or operate? Where will the benefits of your project extend to?
5. **Who** will benefit? Will the project benefit a specific section of society, or everyone?
6. **How** will your project deliver planned outcomes?
7. **When** do you propose to begin the project? When will the project end? An indicative timeline for the project’s development will enhance your application.
8. **How much** will your project cost and how will you spend funds? How will you account for expenditure and how will you procure services, resources etc?

You are strongly advised to make yourself aware of the terms of the Funding Agreement (Appendix 1) before submitting your application form

**Evaluation**

Applications will be reviewed by an Evaluation Panel and will be scored against each of the following criteria:

1. **Project will support, promote or otherwise advance one of the seven pillars of digital maturity**

Is the project clearly aligned with at least one of the seven pillars?

1. **Project is scalable**

Can this project be scaled up to cover a wider area, or a larger cohort of beneficiaries?

1. **Project is replicable**

Can this project be effectively replicated elsewhere, or for the benefit of another cohort of beneficiaries?

1. **Project is achievable**

Given the scope, costs, timescale and people involved, does this project have a realistic chance of success? Can the applicant guarantee 20% match funding (subject to exemption)? Can the applicant guarantee that 100% of funding will be drawn down before the end of 2018? Does the project have a realistic chance of succeeding within its budget?

1. **Project is innovative**

Is the project entirely original? If not, does it suggest a new and innovative approach to an existing initiative? Does this project address an issue that has not previously been addressed?

1. **Project is cross-cutting/ collaborative**

Is there potential for the project to create connections between apparently disparate issues or initiatives? Does it seek to bring together expertise, resources or services? Does it seek to address more than one of the seven pillars?

1. **Quality of application**

Is the application comprehensive and coherent? Is there supporting documentation (where applicable)? Is the quality of the research / rationale that supports the proposal adequate? Is the project’s title / name offensive or in any other way inappropriate?

1. **Value for money**

The application should show that the cost of the project is appropriate to the expected outputs / outcomes of the project.

**Monitoring and record keeping**

Projects funded by the Department, as part of the DIP 2018 scheme, may be required to provide information to us for monitoring and audit purposes. We therefore strongly recommend that you put in place any and all measures necessary for effective internal monitoring and review of performance and a robust record keeping regime.

It should be noted that the Department will not provide extra funds to cover overspends and will seek the return of any unspent funds.

Successful applicants will be required to provide the Department with a financial report for the project. The format of this report is at the discretion of the applicant, however, it must comprehensively account for all received funds and all expenditure for the duration (or any other milestone as agreed with the Department) of the project.

**Review Report**

There is also a requirement to submit a Review Report[[1]](#footnote-1) to the Department post-implementation, at the conclusion of the project, or at another agreed project milestone. You will also be expected to present on the project to Regional Action Group meetings or at other fora.

The review report should include the following:

1. **Inception and design:** How was the project identified, by whom and when? Describe the project design process, would you do it the same way again?
2. **People:** Was the project team made up of LA staff, local community workers, volunteers? Did a third party provide funding, resources, services or labour? Would you do things differently in future?
3. **Implementation:** How did the implementation of the Project work out? Did you have contingency plans and, if so, were they adequate? Were there any unexpected snags? If so, what were these and how were they managed?
4. **Monitoring and reporting:** How did you/do you monitor the outcomes and/or outputs of the project? How did you / do you manage reporting requirements?
5. **Conclusions:** What have you learned from the project that would inform future projects? Do you consider the project a success? Why?

Please find a Review Report Template at Appendix 3

**Appendix 1**

**Department of Rural and Community Development**

**Digital Initiative Programme 2018**

**Funding Agreement**

**Terms and Conditions**

**General**

This grant is approved on the condition that:

1. Projects are completed in accordance with the provisions of all applicable statutes, regulations, by-laws, national and EU Legislation.

1. All appropriate financial and government accounting rules and regulations are complied with in relation to the expenditure and that the Local Authority will fully account for the sum advanced.
2. The grant does not imply that the Local Authority will receive further funding in the future.
3. The funds allocated will be used solely for the activities set out in the submitted application form. Should the funding be used for any actions other than those outlined in the submitted application form the funding will be deemed ineligible and all monies will become repayable to the Department.
4. Projects are to be completed in accordance with the project costings as approved by the Department. If project costs prove higher than anticipated, an increase in grant funding will **not** be given.
5. Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring that projects are not double funded i.e. costs for the same activity cannot be funded twice from any source, either public or private.
6. The Local Authority will recognise Department funding in respect of each project funded through the display of appropriate signage, including a plaque provided by the Department, indicating that funding was provided by the Department. Local Authorities will also acknowledge the support of the Department in all public announcements and advertising relating to the project. The Department will also reserve the right to use the project in the broader promotions of its policies.
7. The Local Authority will maintain proper separate accounts in relation to the public funds provided and document its activities in relation to the implementation of the project to the satisfaction of the Minister. This information will be made available to the Department, the Comptroller and Auditor General and/or Local Government Auditor on request.
8. The Minister will not assume liability for accidents, illnesses or claims arising out of any work supported by this grant award. The Local Authority is advised to take such steps as may be deemed necessary to insure and protect itself, its employees and its property.
9. Adequate policies should be affected against employer’s liability, public liability and third party risks. The Local Authority, if requested, will furnish the Minister with confirmation that such insurances have been provided and be willing to provide further details of insurances as may be requested by the Minister from time to time,
10. This Agreement and any dispute arising out of or in connection with it or its subject matter or formation shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Ireland.  Each party irrevocably agrees that the courts of Ireland shall have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any dispute or claim arising out of or in connection with it or its subject matter or formation (including non-contractual disputes or claims).
11. The Local Authority must ensure that all ownership and lease arrangements are in place prior to releasing funding.
12. The Local Authority must ensure that all permissions and/or applicable assessments are in place prior to the commencement of the project, in particular with regard to any designations or protected structures.
13. In line with the criteria set out in the DIP 2018 scheme outline, 20% (minimum) of total project cost must be provided in the form of matched funding, either from community/voluntary sources or from own resources. Matched funding can be wider Exchequer and/or State-sector capital expenditure, local authority investment, land or other asset contributions. In-kind contributions (e.g. land lease or voluntary labour) are eligible as matching contributions.
14. An eligible project already approved under the Department’s Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2018 may be entitled to 100% funding.
15. An evaluation of the project will be carried out and made available to the Minister on request.

**Public Procurement**

Please note that EU and National public procurement procedures must be followed with regard to expenditure proposed as a result of DIP 2018 scheme grant aid.

1. In general, a competitive process carried out in an open, objective and transparent manner can achieve best value for money in public procurement. This is in line with EU Treaty principles and EU Directives on public procurement. Essential principles to be observed in conducting the procurement function includes non – discrimination, equal treatment, transparency, mutual recognition, proportionality, freedom to provide service and freedom of establishment.
2. Guidance on supporting an acceptable procurement process can be found at [www.etenders.ie](http://www.etenders.ie). Local Authorities should retain all records relating to tendering/procurement/contracting/sub-contracting, for audit inspection for a period of 6 years after the completion of the project.

**Grant Payment Process**

The following framework will apply in order to facilitate payment of grant aid. The Local Authority, on signing this Funding Agreement, agrees to the following payment process:

1. In the first instance all payments will require the return of a signed copy of the **Form of Acceptance** and an up to date **Tax Clearance Certificate.**
2. The Local Authority will conduct an appropriate procurement process where relevant and in line with the guidelines detailed on [www.etenders.ie](http://www.etenders.ie).
3. On full completion of the project the Local Authority may request the remainder of the funding subject to (f) below.
4. The Local Authority will agree to complete a compliance checklist (Appendix 5) and return a signed copy to the Department on project completion. The completion and signature of this checklist will indicate that the Local Authority has all relevant documentation on file and will provide such documentation to the Department or its agents if required.

**Duration of Offer**

The funding offer detailed in the Letter of Offer and accepted on signature of this Funding Agreement is conditional on 50% drawdown of project funding at the initial stage(s) of project implementation and 50% drawdown of project funding at the conclusion of the project (or other project stage as agreed with the Department). 100% of project funds must be drawn down before the end of 2018. **Should this level of drawdown not be achieved, the offer of funding will lapse unless prior written agreement is obtained from the Department.**

**Monitoring of Grant Funding**

1. Notwithstanding any contracts entered into, the Local Authority will agree to operate the project in line with the requirements outlined in the DIP 2018 scheme outline document from the perspective of monitoring and collection of data on both the project and its expenditure.
2. The Local Authority will provide expenditure information and other reports or information relevant to the project as may reasonably be requested by the Minister or Department from time to time.
3. The Local Authority shall maintain all financial records relating to the project for a period of at least 6 years after project completion. The Department may conduct site visits as part of its compliance and audit functions, which may not be notified in advance. On request, the Local Authority will make all records relating to the project available to any individual appointed or designated by the Department and will comply with all directions, if any, which may be given by the Department.

**Termination of Agreement**

This Agreement may be suspended or terminated by the Minister with a notice period of one month if:

1. in the opinion of the Minister, the Local Authority is in breach of any of the terms of this Agreement and/or
2. in the opinion of the Minister, the Local Authority is contributing to significant delay with regard to requirements under this agreement including the making available of appropriate documentation for review. Documentation should be available for inspection when required.

The Local Authority may terminate this Agreement by giving the Minister 30 days’ notice in writing specifying the reasons for termination – in this case, the Local Authority must return all funding to the Department.

**Appeal and Repayment**

1. The Local Authority may appeal the decision to suspend or terminate this Agreement to a nominated Principal Officer in the Department within one calendar month of the decision to either suspend or terminate this Agreement. The decision of the Department will be final.
2. In the event of this Agreement being terminated, funds provided by way of grant, which are unspent, or were not spent on the project, or were not used in accordance with the agreed proposals, or are contrary to the conditions outlined above, shall immediately become repayable to the Minister. Repayments will be required to be made to the Minister within 2 months of the termination of the Agreement. Any money owed will be treated as a debt and may be recovered as a simple contract debt in any court of competent jurisdiction.

**Freedom of Information**

This Agreement confers on the Department the right to disclose for the purposes of a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 or otherwise, in connection with the funded project(s), (i) any information supplied by the Local Authority to the Department, (ii) any relevant data accumulated by the Department in administering the grant funding to the project, except where the information is considered to be personal or commercially sensitive. The Local Authority will be contacted in this regard prior to the release of any such information.

In relation to the interpretation of these conditions, or in relation to any other matter concerning the project, the Minister's decision is final.

**Appendix 2**

**Department of Rural and Community Development**

**Digital Initiative Programme 2018**

**Application Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicant** |  |
| **Local authority** |  |
| **Broadband Officer** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project details** |  |
| **Project title / name** |  |
| **Purpose of the project** |  |
| **Which of the seven pillars will the project support?** |  |
| **Why is the project needed?** |  |
| **Is the project original?** |  |
| **Where will the project be based?** |  |
| **Project details**  **contd.** |  |
| **Who will benefit?** |  |
| **How will the project be delivered?** |  |
| **Is the project scalable and / or replicable?** |  |
| **Project timeline** |  |
| **Who will be involved in the project?** |  |
| **How will success be measured?** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial** |  |
| **Entire project cost** | **€** |
| **DIP funds sought** | **€** |
| **% of project cost from DIP funding** |  |
| **Source of match-funding** |  |
| **Can you guarantee that 100% of DIP funding will be drawn-down before end of year?** |  |

1. This report may be made available to third parties at the Department’s discretion [↑](#footnote-ref-1)