**Department for Communities**

**2020/21 VCSE Covid Recovery Fund**

1. **Background**

The Covid 19 Pandemic has impacted Voluntary, Community and Social Economy (VCSE) organisations and a high proportion of these organisations have refocused their objectives to reduce the impact of Covid‑19 on the most vulnerable in our society. At the same time, the pandemic also demonstrated the value and contribution of VCSE organisations in the delivery of services provided to those most in need.

The purpose of the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund is to help safely deliver essential services during the Covid-19 services and to assist with the safe re-opening of the VCSE sector to maintain service delivery.

Following the closure of the first phase of the Fund in December 2020, a review has identified that funds remain available that would allow for the purchase of PPE and other sundry items to enable the re-opening and/ or continued delivery of vital community services. With potential for future PPE funding opportunities limited, this provides an opportunity for the Sector to make new or additional applications to help organisations plan ahead and ensure their premises are ready to deliver services as soon as Covid restrictions are relaxed.

This phase of the Fund, which opens for applications at 10.00 am on Monday 18 January 2021, is to ensure that VCSE organisations have the sufficient PPE required to continue service delivery. Groups can apply for awards up to £5,000 for purchase of PPE. Organisations who were previously successful in applying to this element of the fund can reapply to receive up to £5,000 (e.g. if an organisation was awarded £2,000 from the 1st phase of applications, they can apply for a further £3,000).

1. **Who is managing the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund?**

Co-operation Ireland, in partnership with Rural Community Network, has been appointed by the Department for Communities (DfC) to manage delivery of the 2020/21 VCSE Covid Recovery Fund.

1. **What funding is available?**

The VCSE Covid Recovery Fund allows organisations to apply for funding for both Personal Protective Equipment and sundry equipment which enables them to address the impact of Covid 19 on their services and activities they deliver to the community. Examples of the type of equipment that will be supported through this Fund include:

1. Personal Protective Equipment
2. Protective screens
3. Foggers and Sanitising Stations
4. Cleaning materials such as disinfectant, sanitising fluids, hand-gels
5. Temperature checking equipment, e.g. thermometers
6. Signage
7. Service user/Customer Flow systems
8. Software licensing costs if it can be evidenced that such costs enable and enhance service delivery difficulties resulting from the impact of Covid-19.
9. **How do organisations apply to the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund?**

**Due to the restrictions caused by Covid-19, the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund will be managed using an online application process.** Applications to the fund must be made using the following link:

[**https://cooperationireland.org/projects/covid-recovery-application/**](https://cooperationireland.org/projects/covid-recovery-application/)

Once an application has been submitted, the contact person will receive two e-mails, which will enable access a secure, password protected web-folder. These e-mails acknowledge that the application has been received and provides guidance on how to upload information to the web-folder. All the documents that are required to support the application must be uploaded to this web-folder within 72 hours of submitting the application.

1. **Is our organisation eligible to apply to the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund?**

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|  | Applicants must be independently, constituted Voluntary, Community or Social economy organisations.  |
|  | Applicant organisation must have been constituted for a minimum of 12 months prior to the date of application. |
|  | Applicant organisations must be located in Northern Ireland. |
|  | Applicants must be able to buy the equipment and pay suppliers by 31st March 2021. |
|  | Applicants must be able to submit claims for all expenditure by 30th April 2021. |
|  | The items included in this application must not be included in any other application/award of grant aid. |
|  | All equipment purchased with this award must be new – second-hand equipment cannot be grant-aided by this Fund. |
|  | **N.B. Organisations which have previously awarded funding for PPE and Sundry Equipment from this programme can re-apply to this call. However, the maximum that can be awarded for PPE and Sundry Equipment cannot exceed £5,000 across both applications.**  |

1. **How will our Application be managed?**

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| 1 | The VCSE Covid Recovery Fund be open to applications between:* **Monday 18th January 2021 (10.00 am)**
* **Friday 29th January 2021 (4.00 pm)**

A further call for applications may be made if further monies become available.  |
| 2 | Applications will be assessed once received - it is recommended that applicants have the following documents available prior to completion of the application:* **Constitution** - A signed and dated copy of the organisations Constitution.
* **Bank statement** - copy of the Bank Statement for the account to which grant will be paid.
* **Quotations** -two quotations from 2 different suppliers for all items included in the application.
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| 3 | If an application is successful, grant will be paid retrospectively upon receipt of a completed claim form and supporting documentation as noted in Section 7.  |
| 4 | The Department for Communities reserves the right to:* Offer a lower grant amount than was requested.
* Reject an application.
* Place applicants on a reserve list in case additional funding becomes available.
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1. **If our application is successful, how will the grant be paid?**

Grant aid will only be paid after the expenditure has been incurred and the organisation has provided the information detailed in the following table**:**

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| **CLAIM FOR GRANT AID** |
| 1 | A Payment Request Form signed by the chairperson of the organisation. |
| 2 | A Transaction schedule detailing the items purchased. |
| 3 | Invoices from suppliers.N.B. Supplier invoices must be in the name of the applicant organisation. Invoices to individuals or other organisations will be considered ineligible for grant aid. |
| 4 | Bank statement, in the name of the applicant organisation, evidencing the payment made to suppliers. |
| 5  | Two quotations from 2 different suppliers (only if a different supplier has been used than those identified at application stage).  |
| 6 | Payment of grant aid will not be made in advance of submission of evidence of expenditure. |

1. **Further help**

It is expected that the VCSE Covid Recovery Fund will attract considerable interest across the sector and result in a high volume of applications to the Fund. Potential applicants are therefore advised to submit their applications as early as possible.

**Queries about the Fund or the application and management processes should be directed in the first instance to** **covidrecovery@cooperationireland.org****. We will endeavour to respond to your enquiry as quickly as possible.**