



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

# Civil Society Fund

## Call for Applications 2024

### Deadlines

**Eligibility Form and Accompanying Documents:** 2 October 2023

**Application Form:** 1 December 2023

## Contents

1. Civil Society Fund.....	2
2. Timeline.....	2
3. Grant Limits.....	2
4. Eligibility.....	4
5. Application Process.....	5
6. Appraisal and Approval Process.....	6
7. Contracts and Payments.....	7
8. Standards.....	7
9. Freedom of Information.....	8

## 1. Civil Society Fund

The Civil Society Fund (CSF) supports overseas development projects which have the potential to contribute to the priorities and commitments in [A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development \(2019\)](#). Applications are accepted on an annual basis from Irish international development NGOs – mainly small and medium sized organisations - and invited international NGOs. From 2024, the maximum available grant will increase to €800,000 per annum (previously €400,000 per annum) and the timeframe to carry out projects will increase to up to five years in duration (it was previously up to three years in duration).

The CSF competition is a two-stage process. Interested organisations will firstly need to submit an Eligibility Form. The Department will subsequently inform organisations of their eligibility to apply and eligible organisations will receive the application form. The process is highly competitive and not all applications will be successful.

## 2. Timeline

The following sets out the timeline for the 2024 CSF Round:

- Eligibility Form and Accompanying Documents: 2 October 2023
- Application Form: 1 December 2023
- Appraisal: January/February 2024
- Notification of Outcome: April/May 2024
- Contracts and Payments<sup>1</sup>: May to October 2024

## 3. Grant Limits

### 60% Dependency

Income received from the Department, either directly or indirectly, must not exceed 60% of the overall organisational income of the applicant. This should be calculated based on an average of published audited accounts over the last two years and excludes in-kind income. The grant sought should not exceed this.

### Minimum and Maximum Available Grants

The minimum annual grant is €50,000 and the maximum annual grant has increased to €800,000 (previously €400,000), subject to the limit of 60% dependency on the Department.

### Percentage Contribution

There is no co-funding requirement. The Department will fund up to 100% of annual project costs up to the maximum grant limit.

---

<sup>1</sup> On fulfilment of conditions and receipt of satisfactory reports on previous projects.

### **Indirect Costs**

The Department will support indirect costs up to a maximum of 10% of the annual CSF grant. Indirect costs are costs in support of project objectives but not necessarily incurred for the project and as such cannot be readily associated with the project, e.g. these may include administration, financial services and travel and subsistence.

### **Ineligible Expenditure**

The following activities are ineligible for CSF support:

- Activities which may discriminate against any groups or persons on the basis of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, etc.
- Activities in contravention of international human rights norms and standards
- Activities that support or involve the sending of volunteers to orphanages or other residential care facilities for children
- Core funding<sup>2</sup>
- Global Citizenship Education activities in Ireland<sup>3</sup>
- Evangelisation or proselytisation
- Fundraising
- Individual or family sponsorship
- Interventions that are primarily welfare support(s)
- Major infrastructural schemes
- Membership of an umbrella or representative body
- Organisational development
- Public awareness in Ireland
- Retrospective expenditure (i.e. costs incurred prior to the project start date agreed with the Department)
- Standalone activities that are not part of a wider project
- Study or research fellowships (excluding short-duration training of staff, partners and beneficiaries within the region)
- Response to sudden-onset acute emergencies (however, interventions for chronic or protracted humanitarian crises are eligible)

## **4. Eligibility**

---

<sup>2</sup> The Civil Society Fund is designed to provide project funding, not institutional core support.

<sup>3</sup> Separate grants are available for Global Citizenship Education within Ireland (understood as an educational process which aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world).

The following eligibility criteria apply:

- 1. Country of Registration:** The applicant organisation must be either Irish, or a non-Irish organisation which has received an invitation to apply for funding.
- 2. Charitable Status:** Irish applicant organisations must hold a Registered Charity Number for a minimum of two years as of 2 October 2023 and be compliant with the Irish Charities Regulatory Authority annual reporting requirements. International NGOs must be in receipt of a relevant invitation from the Civil Society Fund, registered as charities in the countries of their headquarters for a minimum of two years as of 2 October 2023 and be compliant with the relevant charities regulatory authority (or equivalent) reporting requirements.
- 3. Organisation Focus:** Irish applicant organisations must have ongoing operations in Ireland that relate to the direct management and oversight of overseas development projects. International NGOs must have HQ operations that include responsibilities for the direct management and/or oversight of overseas development projects. Missionary organisations and religious orders are not eligible to apply and should instead contact [Misean Cara](#).
- 4. Independence and Added Value:** If the organisation is part of a larger international family, it must have its own constitution or governance document and an independent board of trustees (i.e. the board must be locally appointed and be free and able to make independent decisions on strategic and operational issues).
- 5. Tax Clearance Certificate:** Irish organisations must submit a Tax Clearance Certificate with the Eligibility Form. Non-Irish organisations must provide an equivalent assurance.
- 6. Funding Status:** Applications cannot be accepted from any organisations which have been approved by the Department to receive a grant in 2024 from either the Department of Foreign Affairs Civil Society Fund or Ireland's Civil Society Partnership for A Better World (previously the Programme Grant II).
- 7. Focus of Work:** The areas of intervention by the organisation must meet the [OECD Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) definition of Official Development Assistance](#) and take place in a country or countries classified by the OECD DAC as eligible for assistance.
- 8. Accounts:** The Eligibility Form should be accompanied by full audited accounts for the two financial years prior to application<sup>4</sup>. Accounts must also be available on the organisation's website prior to the eligibility deadline.
- 9. Record of Compliance:** Applicants with a record of non-compliance with the terms of

---

<sup>4</sup> The organisation's own financial year can be used.

Department contract(s) may not be considered for funding.

**10. Safeguarding:** Applicants must have policies and procedures in place to protect vulnerable and young adults, children<sup>5</sup>, beneficiaries, staff and volunteers, as relevant. Copies of these policies should be submitted along with the Eligibility Form. If it is intended to on-grant some or all of the CSF support to a partner organisation, these must also have relevant policies and procedures in place and copies of these should also be submitted with the Eligibility Form.

Organisations that consider that they meet the above criteria can now request Eligibility Forms by contacting [civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie](mailto:civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie). The completed Eligibility Form, Tax Clearance Certificate, accounts for the past two years and safeguarding policies should be submitted to [civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie](mailto:civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie) **by 5pm on 2 October 2023**. *Please note that forms which are received after this deadline cannot be considered.* Eligibility decisions will be communicated in late October to each relevant organisation and application forms will issue to eligible organisations.

Eligibility forms should be completed in respect of the applicant organisation only. Where the organisation is part of a consortium, the form should be completed by the lead organisation. It is acceptable if the proposed project, requested grant and duration differ from that submitted in the subsequent Application Form.

## 5. Application Process

The application form will consist of five main sections and two appendices as well as five annexes. The five main sections will be as follows:

1. Project Summary
2. Organisational Overview and History of DFA Funding
3. Organisational Policy and Governance
4. Proposed Project
5. Additional Information and Clarifications (optional)  
Appendix 1: Governance  
Appendix 2: Partners

The five annexes are equally as important and should be presented in the Excel format provided:

1. Results Framework

---

<sup>5</sup> Irish NGOs which engage, either directly or indirectly, with children must have relevant policies which are compliant with the [Children First Act 2015](#) and non-Irish NGOs must have equivalent policies and procedures in place.

2. Budget
3. Estimated Flow of Funds
4. [OECD DAC Codes](#)
5. Salary Breakdown

An organisation may submit only one application to the Civil Society Fund. Where a consortium of organisations wishes to apply, the application should be completed in respect of the lead organisation with the other organisations reflected as partners. It is acceptable if the proposed project, requested grant amount and duration differ from that set out in the Eligibility Form. Applications will be accepted by e-mail to [civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie](mailto:civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie) until **5pm on 1 December 2023**. *Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.*

The application form will include guidance for completion. Please ensure that the content of the application form is clear and complete as the Department will not seek further information during the appraisal process. Please carefully read the guidance associated with the application form. Information provided in the application form is subject to verification and grant offers may be withdrawn if any information is found to be inaccurate or unsubstantiated.

Questions should be sent to [civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie](mailto:civilsocietyfunding@dfa.ie). If necessary, a FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) document will be made available at [www.irishaid.ie](http://www.irishaid.ie).

Please note that any attempt to either directly or indirectly influence the outcome of the decision-making process in relation to grant applications will result in disqualification. As such, please ensure that no representative of your organisation seeks individual meetings with any representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs in connection with the application once the Call for Applications issues.

## 6. Appraisal and Approval Process

Organisations will need to reach a minimum threshold in each of the following five areas in order to be recommended for funding:

1. Evidence of a clear logic of intervention
2. Evidence of capacity to deliver results
3. Coherence with [A Better World](#)
4. Evidence that the organisation operates from a sound strategic, policy and financial basis
5. Governance and financial oversight

Organisations will be informed of the outcome of the appraisal process in writing. Prior to the signature of contracts and payment of grants, successful organisations will be required to meet a number of conditions, including but not limited to, the receipt of satisfactory reports on previous projects and submission of all policies and strategies referenced in the application form,

a revised budget, flow of funds, results framework and OECD DAC Codes relevant to the project. As such, the grant offer should be considered provisional until the Department confirms that the relevant conditions have been met.

## 7. Contracts and Payments

The Memorandum of Understanding and Contract will be entered into with the applicant organisation only and that organisation will be accountable to the Department for the oversight and administration of the grant. In that regard, the organisation under contract must have a significant role in the oversight and management of the CSF grant. The Department's primary engagement will be with a nominated staff member of the organisation under contract. The Department will not directly engage with any third party, including offices in other countries or partner organisations.

The Memorandum of Understanding may include agreed benchmarks to be achieved by the organisations over the period of the project. The contract will include obligations regarding the management, delivery and monitoring and evaluation of the project. It will also include requirements regarding communication, monitoring and reporting.

## 8. Standards

### Grant Funding Principles

Organisations should be aware of the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circular (13/2014) relating to the [Management of and Accountability of Grants](#). Four principles apply to organisations which are in receipt of grants from public funds: clarity, governance, value for money and fairness.

### Legislation

Organisations are expected to ensure that all applicable laws, statutes and regulations are complied with. For Irish offices, this includes, but is not limited to the [Charities Act 2009](#); the [Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015](#); the [Criminal Justice \(Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Act 2010](#) as amended by the [Criminal Justice Act 2013](#); and the [Children's First Act 2015](#) and the associated [2017 Guidance](#) as well as relevant legislation in countries of operation. Non-Irish NGOs are also expected to adhere to relevant legislation in all countries of operation, including headquarters.

### Best Practice

Organisations are expected to adhere to the [guidance](#) from the Irish Charities Regulatory Authority, including the [Governance Code](#).

It is expected that all organisations will follow the [Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages](#). Organisations are also expected to make every reasonable effort to ensure safety of their staff and conform to the Department's [Guidelines for NGO Professional Safety and](#)



[Security Risk Management](#). Where relevant, organisations are also expected to adhere to [Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies](#).

Organisations implementing humanitarian interventions should demonstrate adherence to humanitarian standards including [Sphere](#) and [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\) on Quality and Accountability](#). It is also recommended that organisations follow the minimum standards suggested in the [CHS Alliance Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Implementation Handbook](#).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Where the CSF grant is on-granted to implementing organisations, the onus is on the organisation under contract with the Department to satisfy itself as to the suitability of the implementing partner organisation to properly implement the project and manage the funds. The organisation under contract with the Department should adequately monitor project implementation. It is important that the Results Framework and budget agreed with the Department is adhered to. Any required changes must be agreed in advance by the Department. Organisations may be subject to field monitoring visits by representatives of the Department. These monitoring visits will be covered by terms of reference, with a focus on monitoring the achievement of results.

Organisations in receipt of annual grants of €200,000 or over should conduct an independent final evaluation of the programme, in line with good development practice.

### **Reporting**

Each organisation will report on progress towards expected results annually in line with Monitoring and Reporting Guidelines which will be shared in advance of signature of the Memorandum of Understanding and Contract. Reports will include project progress, analysis of results, lesson learning and governance and organisational updates. Reports must also be accompanied by the most recent annual accounts and a Certificate of Assurance signed by both a board member and a senior member of staff confirming that the Department grant has been properly accounted for.

## **9. Freedom of Information**

Documents, including application forms and annexes, any report submitted to the Department, any other written communication with the Department and any records which the Department may generate about the applicant organisation are immediately considered records of the Department of Foreign Affairs and as such, are subject to the provisions of [the Freedom of Information Act 2014 \(amended\)](#).