

Community Work Ireland and All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training

Pre Budget Submission

Budget 2027



Rialtas na hÉireann
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**An Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe
agus Pobail agus Gaeltachta**
Department of Rural and Community
Development and the Gaeltacht

Community Work Ireland

Established in 1981, Community Work Ireland is the national organisation that promotes and supports Community Work/Community Development as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequalities, and promoting human rights. CWI is a membership organisation comprising over 1,000 individuals and organisations that support Community Work/Community Development and work in the most disadvantaged communities throughout Ireland. For nearly 40 years, Community Work Ireland has played an important role in working to advance policy and programmes that meet the real and pressing needs of marginalised communities seeking to ensure the meaningful participation of communities in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training

The All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB) is the all island body that supports and promotes Community Development and ensures standards and quality in Community Work education and training and in Community Work practice. Community Development, or Community Work, is long acknowledged as essential for addressing poverty, inequality and discrimination in ways that collectively include and empower the excluded and can lead to positive outcomes for all. We do this along with those involved in Irelands longstanding and well recognised Community Development infrastructure through a variety of initiatives, Symposia and Continuous Professional and Practice Development and in particular through ensuring that education and training at all levels meets the standards required for collective outcomes with communities.

Introduction

Community Development, or Community Work, is long acknowledged as essential for addressing poverty, inequality and discrimination in ways that collectively include and empower the excluded and can lead to positive outcomes for all. With support from the State, Ireland developed an internationally recognised Community Development infrastructure and a vibrant Community Work sector and vibrant community projects working across a variety of issues and in particular with marginalised and minority groups. While policy decisions, mergers and resource cuts especially but not only during the 2008 - 2011 recession Community Development and Community Work methods have again over recent years become recognised as key to addressing community issues in inclusive ways which involve people collectively. This is evident in the requirements across a variety of state programmes and initiatives e.g. SICAP and the Family Resource Centres and has always been the starting point for the work of Traveller organisations and locally based women's networks. The establishment of the Community Development Programme in 2021 marked a significant step in this process, showed acknowledgement of the importance of autonomous Community Work by the Department of Rural Development and the Gaeltacht and needs expansion beyond the small number of issues now covered.

This Pre-Budget submission focuses on the promotion of Community Development through the extension of the Community Development Programme which despite its small size since 2021 has ably demonstrated its value and significance. We call for immediate reinforcement of SSNO funding. We also call for reinforced support for Continuous Practice and Professional Development and urgent moves towards adequate terms and conditions reflective of the training and education

essential for the complexities of the work in addressing the challenges faced by communities at every level.

CWI and AIEB support our members and partner organisations in the community sector who have made pre budget submissions on a range of anti-poverty, social inclusion, equality and climate justice measures (See appendix 1)

Community Development Programme

The Community Development Programme was launched in June 2021, reflecting the commitment in the Programme for Government of the day to re-establish the programme. The programme aims to support community development initiatives that address poverty, social exclusion and inequality and environmental concerns, and promote human rights. The associated objectives set out to: develop collective community responses to these; demonstrate the benefits of community development when addressing new and emerging issues and to call for collaboration and cooperation between marginalised groups, mainstream services and decision-making bodies

The Community Development Programme has guaranteed funding from DRCDG to the end of 2026. Community Work Ireland is funded to support the programmes and promote the work undertaken with a view to building the case for programme with a view to building the case for expansion and extension of the programme. For further information on the Programme see appendix 2.

Invest in the extension and expansion of the Community Development Programme from 2027 and beyond.

In Budget 2027 CWI and AIEB call for:

- Inclusion of an additional 10 projects in the Programme.
- Increasing the budget for each project by 5% per annum over the next 3 years.
- An increase in funding for Community Work Ireland supports to the Community Development Programme (5% increase and 20,000 per annum to cover additional support costs for 10 additional CDPs)

Year	Budget Per Project		Total Projects Budget	CWI Support Budget	Supporting	Total
2026	€125,000		€1,250,000	€98,769	10 projects	€1,348,769
2027	€131,250		€2,625,000	€123,707	20 projects	€2,748,707
2028	€137,812		€2,756,240	€129,892	20 Projects	€2,886,132
2029	€144,702		€2,894,040	€136,386	20 Projects	€3,030,426
Total '27 – '29	€413,764		€ 8,275,280	€389,985	20 Projects	€8,665,265

Terms and Conditions and Supporting Best Practice

The link between best outcomes for and with communities and education and training is well recognised by all involved and has been acknowledged by the state through support for AIEB and for the AIEB bursaries for introductory and professional education. This support needs ongoing reinforcement and extension.

Ongoing support is also needed for the Continuous Practice and Professional Development (CPPD) essential for practitioners and volunteering participants to equip themselves to identify develop responses to, work with communities on the challenges faced in today's complex world often fuelled by social media distortions.

Core to the development of sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities is a diverse, professional, agile and responsive community development workforce. Investment in targeted workforce development initiatives to support those involved in Community Work to access Community Work education and training underpinned by the All Ireland Standards for Community Work is key to supporting the development of a discipline that can do this while being reflective of the communities where Community Work takes place.

In the context of supporting continued professional and practice development, it is essential that Government programmes that require and support Community Development include ringfenced resources to support the professional development needs of those involved in Community Work throughout the spectrum, including access to community learning initiatives, and endorsed professional qualifications and Continuous Professional Development.

Proper and ongoing terms and conditions of employment are required for Community Workers given the knowledge, skills and values needed and the associated education and training required to ensure that those who undertake it are equipped to do so to the best of their ability and in the best interests of the communities they work with.

In the context of supporting professional development, it is essential that Government programmes that require and support Community Development include ringfenced resources to support the education and training needs of those involved in Community Work across the spectrum up to and including access endorsed professional qualifications.

The Community Development workforce is experiencing considerable difficulties with recruitment and retention. The terms and conditions of community workers, including salaries, have been neglected for many years and overtaken by positions in newly designed programmes such as Healthy Ireland and the current Local Area Integration Teams. Community organisations report considerable issues with recruitment and retention and community workers and Community Work students report that the poor terms and conditions and the lack of opportunity for progression influence their decisions to apply elsewhere for jobs.

State investment in this area can have a significant impact on outcomes for Community Work and communities, including marginalised and minority communities, as well as State supported programmes such as SICAP, the Community Development Programme and others.

Supporting National Organisations

The Scheme of Support for National Organisations (SSNO) provides critical core funding to national NGOs to carry out their work. The current funding round is from 1st July 2026 – 31st December 2029 with a maximum amount awarded per organisation of €90,000 per annum. This is the same maximum figure allocated in 2016 meaning that at the end of 2029, despite inflation, cost of living increases, rising fuel and operational costs and increasing demands on national organisations, they will have received no increase in SSNO funding for 13 years. This situation is causing huge strain on organisations in the sector and must be addressed urgently.

Invest in the extension and expansion of the SSNO from 2027 and beyond.

CWI and AIEB call for:

- A commitment in Budget 2027 to review the SSNO and explore its essential reinforcement.
- A commitment in Budget 2027, to increase SSNO funding by 25% to be continued to the end of the Scheme in 2029.

Appendix 1

Social Inclusion, Climate Justice, Equality and Human Rights

CWI and AIEB support the following calls:

Poverty

- Redesign how poverty is calculated to more accurately reflect the real situation, particularly the impact of housing costs.
- Introduce a Minimum Income, benchmarked to the cost of living.
- Introduce a Universal Care Income.
- Stop subsidising the private sector to deliver more expensive, poorer quality services, that more efficiently should be delivered as public services.
- Overhaul the tax system on a progressive basis, eliminating tax avoidance & taxing wealth to reduce inequality.

Anti-Racism and Inclusion

- A dedicated, ring-fenced implementation fund for the National Action Plan against Racism and establish dedicated, multi-annual budgets to fully implement the plan's recommendations.
- Significantly increase the €1.1M allocated to Ireland against Racism funding to ensure grassroots organisations can scale up local initiatives combating racism
- Core funding for migrant organisations across the country to support inclusion and anti-racism initiatives at community level.
- A dedicated, ring-fenced implementation fund for the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II in Budget 2027 with an increase of 20% to the current annual NTRIS implementation budget.
- A dedicated, ring-fenced implementation fund for the National Traveller Health Action Plan..
- An adequate and ringfenced budget to be secured and allocated for the implementation of the Roma Health Action Plan in 2027.
- A dedicated, ring-fenced implementation fund for the Traveller and Roma Education Strategy.

Childcare

- An additional €300m investment in Budget 2027 to reduce childcare costs and improve accessibility.

Violence against Women

- Resource Cuan to provide secure and multi-annual funding to frontline and DSGBV specialist services.

Climate and Just Transition

- Allocate specific resources and commit to gender, equality and poverty-proofing all climate policies and investment; including the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund (ICNF) and the Social Climate Fund.
- Provide targeted cost-of-living supports at households most exposed to energy poverty and transport disadvantage

- Maintain and increase funding for community climate action projects and provide long term clarity for funding and funding sources that allows groups to plan for the future and sustain momentum – such as the Climate Action Fund and the Just Transition Fund

Disability

- Introduction of a Cost of Disability Payment, which is recurring and paid on a weekly basis to those in receipt of disability-related supports presently.

Mental Health

- Invest at least an additional €328 million for mental health, including €8m to establish Ireland's first Mother & Baby Unit.

Appendix 2

Community Development Programme

10 Community Development Projects were selected from a total of 123 applications and these are:

- Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement
- ICON Community Development Project
- Clare Traveller Community Development Project
- Longford Roma and New Communities Project
- VOICE Community Development Project, ILMI
- Donegal Intercultural Platform Community Development Project
- Cultúr Community Development Project
- Limerick Traveller Network
- AMAL Muslim Women's Association, Dublin
- AMACH! LGBTI, Galway

The projects undertake Community Development work in different areas and with a diverse range of communities. This work is underpinned by the internationally recognised understanding of Community Work that is a developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making in a structured and co-ordinated way.

These values reflect the values that underpin the document approved by Government, *Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership: Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector at a Local and National Level*, which sets out an agreed set of values and principles for collaboration and partnership working with the community and voluntary sector at national and local level. The values and principles were developed by the sector and agreed by Government, and provide the foundation for all consultation, collaboration and partnership working between the community and voluntary sector and central and local government.

The Community Development Programme to date is working as envisaged in the original commitment in the Programme for Government. It allows for the autonomy and flexibility required to begin to address some of the most deeply embedded social issues in our society while at the same time having clear accountability processes.

The second Progress report by the independent evaluator states that the Programme, 'continues to reflect commitment, energy, and creativity in the pursuit of Community Development approaches to change. The Community Development values are patently strong and engaged across the projects. The overall and unique design of the programme remains robust and appreciated by the projects'. It notes that the Programme 'remains an important actor in the field of civil society endeavour for human rights, equality and anti-discrimination, social justice, and sustainable development. The scale of practices of interest that emerge, the diversity in the focus and priorities of the projects, and the emphasis on Community Development is a source of learning of increasing value for the wider civil society. The programme and the projects have progressed to a point where

the focus is increasingly on the task of Community Development, and on sustaining the work done on the process of Community Development, which has made this increasing focus on task possible'.

CWI and AIEB are calling for a significant investment in the extension of the Community Development Programme to expand and extend autonomous Community Development projects to the most marginalised areas and with the most marginalised communities. This will lead to the creation of a sustainable community infrastructure that will contribute to ensuring social cohesion, crisis preparedness and strengthened democracy. The extension of the programme should allow for addressing challenges facing communities such as; the drugs crisis affecting so many communities across Ireland, weakening levels of trust in institutions of the state and the spread of hate and division in our communities, intergenerational poverty and intersectional issues facing communities across Ireland in rural, urban, island and Gaeltacht communities, which are complex and require targeted specialist Community Development responses.

The projects have identified the important shared characteristics of the approach that the Community Development Programme facilitates:

- **Ensuring participation and inclusion of marginalised and minority communities**

The projects give a voice to communities that often go unheard – this requires investment in those communities. It allows supported growth and ownership of future decisions – the process and opportunity to have direct impact is accessible for the first time for many in the communities the projects are working with.

- **Changing Narrative/Shifting Thinking**

Recognising that marginalised communities are not responsible for the issues they face and they cannot address those issues on their own, the projects are shifting the thinking from a focus on issues such as discrimination and racism as an issue for minorities to a focus on the majority role.

- **Responsiveness and flexibility**

The autonomy afforded to the Projects enables them to respond quickly, nimbly and creatively to challenges that they face on a daily basis. This has included responding effectively and successfully to actions taken by those seeking to spread hate and fear in their communities.

- **Lived experience at the centre**

The projects put the lived experience of the communities at the centre of all the work, supporting active involvement and leadership of participants to address their own human rights and equality issues.

- **New Partnerships**

The CDP Network is showing that there are new ways of working with the State. This includes the partnership with the Project Team and the co-design of the Programme Planning and Monitoring Framework.

- **Programme Approach – networking/learning**

The CDP Network comprises the ten projects with support from CWI. The network has created an essential space for networking, learning, capacity building collaboration, solidarity and support.

- **Accountable Autonomy**

A core and crucial element of the Community Development Programme is that it supports the capacity of communities themselves to organise and take action together. The autonomy underpinning this is essential in that it allows CDPs the capacity and space to: Develop partnerships and collaborative arrangements and processes within the community sector and cross-sectorally; maintain and express a critical perspective in relation to policy and practice based on experience and informed by work within the communities affected by these; advocate and organise collectively for positive social change;; be responsive and flexible to changing and unexpected contexts and emerging challenges and put in place relevant, accountable and appropriate governance structure.