

Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme (RMCGS) 2025/2026

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Overview

The RMCGS is funded from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme. The key aim of the TRPSI Programme is to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within rural communities across Northern Ireland.

The Scheme is open for applications from Monday 15 September 2025 until 12 midday on 20 October 2025.

Key objectives

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2025/2026 has been designed to:

- Help rural community-led, voluntary organisations to address local issues of **access poverty, financial poverty, and social isolation**;
- Improve the lives of those in rural communities, and in particular the wellbeing of isolated individuals; and,
- Provide an opportunity to implement energy efficiency measures / environmental improvements.

These objectives help deliver on the **NI Executive Programme for Government (PfG) 2024/2027¹** which aims to build stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural communities where people want to live, work, visit and invest and DAERA's own vision for 'Developing a Net Zero nature positive future, supporting sustainable agriculture and thriving rural communities'.

***If you would like more information about the RMCGS please contact your local
Rural Support Network (RSN).***

The Grant Scheme

Micro Capital grants between £500 and £2,000 are available to rural community-led, voluntary organisations for projects tackling issues of local poverty and / or social isolation, and / or implementing energy efficiency measures / environmental improvements. Projects must focus on one of the following four themes:

- Modernisation (of existing building): structural work (requires a lease*), other examples include white

¹ [Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)

goods, tables, chairs.

- Information Communication Technology: IT equipment including PC's/Laptops, PA Systems.
- Health and Wellbeing: any capital item that aims to improve people's wellbeing.
- Energy Efficiency: E.g., upgrade of lighting, windows, doors, and insulation.

Environmental Improvement: may include the purchase of gardening equipment.

**Works that alter the structure or fabric of the building and includes where an item such as a dishwasher, cooker requires new plumbing or wiring that will result in alterations to the structure or fabric of the building.*

The RMCGRS can offer grant aid from 50% up to 85% of the total eligible cost of your project. **NB:** The total project cost cannot exceed £4,000. Match funding for your contribution of at least 15% must be in the form of a 'cash' contribution. Labour or 'in-kind' contributions will not be accepted.

In order to ensure that as many organisations as possible get the opportunity to benefit from this Scheme, organisations can only make **one** application to the Scheme.

What can be funded?

Grant aid can only be used to meet costs associated with capital equipment, the improvement of a capital asset and / or the extension of the useable life of a capital asset. Organisations can apply for a wide range of capital items, such as office equipment, furniture, kitchen fittings, and minor capital works to improve premises.

Eligible items **must** clearly relate to the key themes of (i) Modernisation, (ii) ICT, (iii) Health & Wellbeing, or (iv) Implement energy efficiency **/ environmental improvements measures***.

**To encourage local communities to implement energy efficiency / environmental improvements eligible costs may include, e.g., draft proofing, double glazed windows, change of lighting to LED, light sensors/timers, insulation.

***Environmental improvements. Eligible costs may include the purchase of gardening equipment, e.g., tunnel kits, pots, spades, and hoes. A maximum of 15% of the overall project costs may be used to purchase plants, trees, hedges, flowers etc. (Plants / shrubs / flowers must be perennial, i.e., plants that live multiple seasons).

As this is a capital Scheme, the following types of activity **cannot** be funded.

Examples of Ineligible Activities	
Training	Running costs
Hospitality, Food, Drink	Staff / Volunteer expenses
Clothing, Uniforms except for Personal Floatation Jackets (safety equipment)	Labour costs not directly associated with purchased Capital works / items
Motorised vehicles	Feasibility Studies / Reports
General Maintenance	Furniture accessories including cushions, curtains
Carpets	Drones

Consumables, i.e., items which will be used up or depleted during normal use and thus needs replaced regularly, e.g., cleaning supplies, paper products.
No aspect of an activity being funded should be party political in intention, use or presentation, or likely to be perceived as discriminatory on grounds of religion, colour, race, gender or disability.
Organisations with a category 1 Business ID are ineligible. This is because a Category 1 ID is considered to be an active farming business.

This list is not exhaustive, if you are in doubt about the eligibility of your project, please contact your local **Rural Support Network (RSN)** before applying.

*Your organisation must ensure that all actions undertaken in relation to this project comply with the relevant statutory requirements and legislation in existence during the lifetime of the project. Projects involving work to modernise a building (alter the structure of the fabric of the building) will only be accepted from either the owner or lessee. Only one application can be accepted per building.

Who can apply?

You **can** apply for a Micro Capital grant if:

- ✓ the organisation is located in a rural area (Annex 1) and the primary services/activities are provided in rural areas.
- ✓ you can demonstrate within your application how your project will contribute to reducing rural poverty and / or social isolation within your local community (Annex 2);
- ✓ you need a capital grant between £500 and £2,000 for a specific poverty or social isolation project;
- ✓ the application can demonstrate the expected benefits to the local rural population of the completed project;
- ✓ you are a not-for-profit community / voluntary organisation;
- ✓ you have a formal Constitution or governing documents;
- ✓ you have a minimum of three people on your management committee (this must be clearly detailed within your constitution or governing documents);
- ✓ you have a bank or building society account in the name of your group, which requires at least two signatures for each withdrawal (this must be clearly detailed within your constitution or governing documents);
- ✓ you can submit a copy of your most recent Accounts or a signed Financial Statement. The Financial Statement must be signed, a typed signature is permitted;
- ✓ You are the sole applicant and owner OR lessee of the building for which the application to RMCGS for work to modernise a building (i.e. alter the structure or the fabric of the building) is being made;
- ✓ you can provide two 'like for like' quotes (net after taking into account recoverable VAT) for each item to be purchased. For online quotes, the applicant is required to continue to check out and use this screenprint as the quote. Delivery costs can be included as an additional cost. NB: Online quotes (e.g., Amazon) cannot be from the same supplier; where delivery costs are being claimed, these must be detailed on all relevant quotes.
- ✓ your organisation can deliver the project, pay the supplier(s), and submit a grant claim **by 26 February 2026**
- ✓ you are appropriately insured or prepared to obtain appropriate insurance if awarded a grant (building or contents insurance as appropriate).

What cannot be funded?

We **cannot** fund the following:

- × Organisations located in an urban area.
- × Individuals, Sole traders and / or Commercial trading companies;
- × Companies that exist to distribute a profit;
- × Statutory Authorities or organisations governed by Statutory Authorities;
- × Appeals or charities set up to support statutory bodies;
- × Organisations with an income in excess of £80,000 (not including in-year restricted funds, e.g., non-business / grant income);
- × More than one application to modernise a building.
- × Costs already incurred – an application cannot be made for capital items that have already been ordered or received before the award of a Letter of Offer;
- × Grant cannot be used to match another funder's project;
- × Projects where the value of match funding is greater than the value of grant; and
- × Second-hand equipment.
- × In any application for Grant Aid where DAERA has deemed the Applicant Organisation to have provided false or misleading information or has failed to disclose any material fact which may have had a bearing on DAERA's consideration of their application, the Applicant Organisation will not be eligible to apply to any DAERA Schemes.

Eligibility

Your application will be considered against the Eligibility Criteria for the Scheme outlined above. As this Scheme is funded as part of DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme, you must also demonstrate within your application how your project will contribute to reducing rural poverty and / or social isolation within your local community.

Please note.

1. We intend to inform applicants if their application is considered 'ineligible' within eight weeks of the closing date.
2. If your application is eligible, we will contact you with details of the Letter of Offer Workshops in your area. You **must not start** your project until you have attended the Letter of Offer Workshop and/or contacted your local RSN to agree to the terms and conditions of the Letter of Offer. Your organisation **must** be represented at the Workshop.
3. Your project must be completed, i.e. the items to which grant was allocated has been received by your organisation and is operational, and your claim for grant submitted **26 February 2026**. **No extensions** will be given.
4. The organisation must incur the initial cost of the purchases and then claim grant once the project is completed, i.e. when the items to which grant was allocated is received and operational. The organisation must have paid for all project expenditure **and submitted a claim for payment by 26 February 2026**. **No advance payments** will be provided.
5. **DAERA need to be made aware immediately of any Conflict of Interest**, however arising, that may occur between your organisation and any other organisation, supplier, person, or employee associated in any way with the delivery of the Project.

6. Following completion, your project may be selected by DAERA for a verification check to ensure your grant aid is being used for the purposes intended.
7. The application should identify the likely benefits to the rural population of the completed project by recording the expected number of people with access to or using the new or improved facilities/equipment.

How to apply

This Scheme is open for applications from Monday 15 September 2025 until 12 midday on 20 October 2025.

To apply, complete the online form by entering all the relevant information and uploading all the additional documents required. Upon submission of the application, an auto generated e-mail receipt confirming the application has been submitted will be issued to the email used to register the application. You will also be asked to complete an Equality Monitoring survey which will help the Department to comply with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

The following documents *must* be included with your application:

- Your group's Constitution / governing documents. These documents should clearly detail that there is a minimum of three people on your management committee and state the group's financial procedures for transactions, noting that at least 2 signatures are required.
- Your most recent Accounts or a signed Financial Statement, signed by a committee member of the organisation, (a typed signature is permitted).
- Two like-for-like quotations from at least 2 different suppliers for item(s) that you wish to purchase. Procurement requirements are outlined (Annex 3). NB: Online quotes (e.g., Amazon) cannot be from the same supplier and clearly show the name of the supplier. For online quotes, the applicant is required to continue to check out and use this screenprint as the quote. Online quotes must include quantities sought.
- If delivery costs are being claimed, these should be detailed on the relevant quotes.
- For projects involving Modernisation of an existing building, i.e. alterations to the structure or fabric of the building, the proof of ownership or lease.

The onus to ensure that your application is received before the closing date rests solely with each applicant. Therefore, please ensure that you leave sufficient time to submit your application by the closing date. If you have any queries, please **contact your local RSN Team**.

*If you would like more information about the RMC GS please contact your local
[Rural Support Network \(RSN\)](#).*

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL LATE OR INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS BE
ACCEPTED.**

The Department takes data protection, freedom of information and environmental information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information received from you is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (2016). This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, the Department is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided for this purpose.

A full copy of the DAERA Privacy Statement can be found here: - <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement>

**The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme is funded by the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs as part of its
Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme.**

Annex 1

Rural Location

Definition of a Rural Area

SETTLEMENTS WITH POPULATIONS IN EXCESS OF 5,000 INHABITANTS.

For the purposes of the Scheme, RMC GS 2025/2026, rural Northern Ireland means all those areas outside the statutory development limits of those towns with a population in excess of 5,000 inhabitants plus the areas of Strathfoyle, Newbuildings, and Culmore, in Derry/Londonderry Urban Area (OUA) and Milltown, Helens Bay, Crawfordsburn, and Groomsport in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA).

Settlements with populations in excess of 5,000 inhabitants are listed below based on the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements March 2015 produced by NISRA.

The structure of the new classification of settlements is shown below in Table 1. The table lists the settlements in each band, in order of their 2011 Census Day population estimates.

Table 1

Classification	Settlement Development Limit (SDL)
BAND A - BELFAST	BELFAST CITY
BAND B - DERRY CITY	DERRY CITY
BAND C - LARGE TOWN (POPULATION 18,000+)	METROPOLITAN NEWTOWNABBEY
	CRAIGAVON URBAN AREA including AGHACOMMON
	BANGOR
	METROPOLITAN CASTLEREAGH
	LISBURN CITY
	METROPOLITAN LISBURN
	BALLYMENA
	NEWTOWNARDS
	CARRICKFERGUS
	NEWRY
	COLERAINE
	ANTRIM
	OMAGH TOWN
	LARNE
Band C Total	14
BAND D - MEDIUM TOWN (POPULATION 10,000 - 17,999)	BANBRIDGE
	ARMAGH
	DUNGANNON
	ENNISKILLEN
	STRABANE
	LIMAVADY

	COOKSTOWN
	HOLYWOOD
	DOWNPATRICK
	BALLYMONEY
Band D Total	10
BAND E - SMALL TOWN (POPULATION 5,000 - 9,999)	BALLYCLARE
	COMBER
	MAGHERAFELT
	WARRENPOINT / BURREN
	PORTSTEWART
	NEWCASTLE
	CARRYDUFF
	DONAGHADEE
	KILKEEL
	PORTRUSH
	DROMORE_BANBRIDGE
	BALLYNAHINCH
	COALISLAND
	GREENISLAND
BALLYCASTLE	
CRUMLIN	
RANDALSTOWN	
Band E Total	17

Footnotes:

1. The names and the listings of the settlements have been taken from the set of Settlement Development Limits (SDLs).
2. The labelling of bands in this classification as 'towns' or 'villages' is purely descriptive. It is noted that, for example, some settlements described in the classification as 'towns' are legally 'cities.'

Annex 2

Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework –

The TRPSI Framework focuses on three Priority Areas for Intervention, namely Access Poverty, Financial Poverty and Social Isolation, and aims to support measures designed to address these priorities in rural areas. It is recognised that there is potential for significant overlap between the three priority areas and that individual measures may address more than one priority area.

Access Poverty - this priority aims to improve access to key services for vulnerable rural dwellers by supporting interventions which;

- Improve urban-rural linkages (e.g., through the provision of better transport and broadband services etc.);
- Improve access to key services (e.g., healthcare, education and training, leisure facilities, library services, advice services, childcare etc.).

Financial Poverty – this priority aims to address financial poverty among vulnerable rural dwellers by supporting interventions which:

- reduce household expenditure or other living costs (e.g., transport costs);
- increase household incomes; (e.g., through improved employability, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, increased benefit uptake etc.);
- address issues relating to the additional costs faced by people living in rural areas (e.g., fuel costs);
- address the barriers to escaping financial poverty (e.g., low qualifications, low skills, lack of access to affordable childcare, lack of access to quality jobs, disengagement, lack of access to information and advice, poor health etc.);
- help alleviate the effects of financial poverty (e.g., food poverty, health problems, obesity among children, debt etc.).

Social Isolation – this priority aims to address social isolation among vulnerable rural dwellers by supporting interventions which:

- promote positive mental health and wellbeing;
- increase opportunities for social engagement (e.g., social activities, sport and leisure activities, cultural activities etc.);
- provide support to organisations at risk of social isolation (e.g., farmers, older people, people with disabilities, disengaged youth, etc.).

NI Executive Programme for Government (PfG) 2024/2027

The PfG focuses on three fundamental missions: People, Planet and Prosperity. The RMCGS aligns to the PfG 'People' and 'Planet' categories. The 'People' category aims 'to build stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural communities where people want to live, work, visit and invest.' The 'Planet' category aims to 'harness the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonizing our economy and society.'

Annex 3

Procurement

Estimated values	Action & Minimum Number	Comments
<p>From £588.24 (lower limit permitted for total project costs)</p> <p>Up to £4,000 (upper limit permitted for total project costs)</p>	<p>At least 2 price-checks / quotations from <u>different</u> suppliers</p> <p>NB: Online quotes (e.g., Amazon) cannot be from the same supplier. The supplier's name is clear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quotes should be 'like-for-like;' like for like refers to the specification of the item(s). E.g., TV details would include like for like screen size). ▪ For online quotes, the applicant is required to continue to check out and use this screenprint as the quote. Online quotes must include quantities sought. ▪ Quotes can include delivery costs as an additional cost. Where delivery costs are being claimed, these must detail on all the relevant quotes. ▪ The quantity of each item should be on the quote. ▪ The lowest quotation should be selected with corresponding costs detailed on the application form. DAERA will reimburse at the cost of the lowest quotation

Annex 4

Eligibility Criteria

NB: This document details the criteria that will be used to confirm if your application is eligible.

	<i>ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA</i>	Yes (✓) No (X)	<i>COMMENT</i>
1.	Applicant organisation is located in a rural area (Annex 1) and their primary services/activities are provided in rural areas. (Q1.1)		
2.	Applicant organisation is not-for-profit community / voluntary. (Q1.9)		
3.	The project addresses an issue of local poverty and / or social isolation, in line with the key objectives of the TRPSI Programme. (Q 2.3)		
4.	The project has not commenced. (Q2.6)		
5.	At least two quotes have been provided for each item to be purchased (net after taking into account recoverable VAT). (Q3.1) Online quotes (e.g., Amazon) have been checked to ensure; (i) they are not from the same supplier. (ii) the correct quantities have been recorded. (iii) the quote is from the checkout/basket. (iv) Delivery costs if applicable are clearly shown on quotes. (Q3.2)		
6.	Grant requested is between £500 and £2,000 and within grant range 50% to 85%. (Q3.2)		
7.	Applicant is providing minimum 15% match funding. (Q3.2)		
8.	The project can be completed, and grant claimed by 26 February 2026		
9.	Applicants have provided their signed (typed signature is permitted) Constitution / Governing documents which confirms the Management Committee has a minimum of three people and at least two signatories are required for cheques / withdrawals.		
10.	The organisation has a bank or building society account in the name of the organisation, which requires at least two signatures for each withdrawal;		
11.	For projects involving work to modernise a building (alterations to the structure/fabric of the building), proof of ownership or a lease have been provided.		
12.	Applicant has provided a copy of the organisation's most recent Accounts or a signed Financial Statement (typed signature is permitted) which confirms an annual income less than £80,000 (not including in-year restricted funds, e.g., non-business / grant income).		

**** APPLICANT MUST MEET ALL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO PROCEED TO SELECTION ****

Please remember – you must supply the relevant documentation with your application, e.g., Constitution / Governing documents, quotes, copy of your lease / proof of ownership for projects involving work to your building.

Failure to supply these documents will result in your application being deemed ineligible.

Closing Date for receipt of completed application forms is:

Monday 12pm Midday on 20 October 2025

No LATE or INCOMPLETE applications will be accepted.