

S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020

Implementation Plan: Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme

Operational Programme	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020
Priority	5: Sustainable Urban Development
Thematic Objective	6 Preserving & Protecting the environment & promoting resource efficiency 4 Supporting the shift to a low carbon economy in all sectors
Investment Priority	6(e) Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures 4(e) Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures
Scheme	Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme
Categorisation Code	089, 094
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
Managing Authority	Southern Regional Assembly
Intermediate Body	Southern Regional Assembly
Level 1 Public Body	Urban Local Authorities
Grant Rate	50%
EU Co-Financing Rate	50% of eligible public expenditure

Objectives of Intervention

To increase the number of integrated urban regeneration initiatives to improve the urban environment and revitalise urban areas

Description of Intervention

Under this theme, local authorities for the designated growth centres in the S&E region will be invited to submit projects which fit with their integrated strategies to tackle the social, economic, environmental, climate and demographic challenges affecting the urban centres, in accordance with Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation (EU) 1301/2013, and which support the overall development strategy for the urban area concerned.

Sustainable integrated urban development measures supported will focus on the efficient use of existing resources within the urban environment hence reduce the pressure for the centre to 'spread' outwards and lead to further land degradation. The actions to be supported could include:

- Green regeneration, physical enhancements and social revitalisation including open public/community spaces;
- Rehabilitation of brownfield sites including renewal of existing and/or demolition and construction of new buildings and landscaping;
- Rehabilitation/development of cultural infrastructure/assets which improve the urban environment.

The actions supported under this priority will bring multiple benefits to the selected urban centres. First of all, the preparation of integrated strategies by the relevant authorities will stimulate a comprehensive re-appraisal of development needs, challenges and potential opportunities within the urban areas, in co-operation with local stakeholders. The proposed actions will provide a much-needed stimulus and financial incentives to the urban authorities to invest in strategic measures which address the challenges identified and to avail of new opportunities to improve the urban environment, to enhance economic growth and for job creation. These will complement the development objectives specified in the various land-use and transportation strategies and statutory development plans, which are already in place. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the funding of the selected strategies will un-lock and leverage additional public and private investment in the urban areas, thus having a significant multiplier effect.

The provision of social, arts/culture and heritage facilities in urban centres can provide new uses for previously under-utilised or vacant public buildings or the construction of efficient new buildings in areas in need of revitalisation, thus contributing to environmental improvements and integrated urban regeneration which is central to the objectives of investment priority 6(e). Rehabilitation of buildings and public spaces not only brings improvements in the built environment, but can also bring economic, social and/or cultural benefits.

Improving the quality of the physical environment also has a number of positive secondary effects, including social benefits, contributing to improvements in the quality of life for all. Within the context of resource efficiency, the provision of social infrastructure, and support for community initiatives can provide new uses for existing vacant buildings and under-utilised open spaces.

In addition, a common challenge facing all of the designated urban centres is to increase non-private car commuting into the urban areas. Low-density, car-dependent, suburban green-field development has meant that development has become more dispersed and fragmented geographically, with greater distances between where people live and work.

To address this common challenge, this investment priority will support sustainable urban mobility initiatives, consistent with investment priority 4(e) of the ERDF Regulation. The multimodal actions to be supported could include a number of the following:

- pedestrianisation;
- installation and extension of a network of cycle lanes;
- installation and extension of bus lanes;
- reduction in short-distance car journeys through the introduction of good quality travel information;
- improved walking and cycling access to public transport.

These supported actions will lead to reduced GHG emissions through promotion of modal shifts. Alternatives to private car use such as walking, cycling and improved access to public transport will therefore be supported. These actions will also contribute towards creating sustainable communities, having a focus on access to public transport, and the provision of cycleways, bus lanes and pedestrian priority areas.

The sustainable urban mobility actions supported will be consistent with Ireland's Smarter Travel policy. Improved infrastructure in the main urban centres will encourage more people to switch to more sustainable modes of travel thus promoting multi-modal transport availability in Ireland's urban centres. Local authorities are required to promote the delivery of public transport, cycling and more sustainable travel patterns generally in existing urban centres under Ireland's Smarter Travel policy. Local authorities have been tasked with creating sustainable neighbourhoods so that walking and cycling can be the best options for local trips, for example to reach local facilities such as shops and schools and places of work. Alleviation of traffic congestion, as well as improving urban mobility, will also bring benefits in terms of reduced air pollution and noise levels in the urban centres.

Finally, consultation with communities is an important guiding principle in the elaboration of integrated urban development strategies from which urban authorities will select the most appropriate actions for co-funding under the OP.

Responsibilities of Intermediary Body

The Southern Regional Assembly as both Managing Authority and Intermediate Body will be responsible for carrying out all Managing and Intermediary Body Authority functions as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013. These include, inter alia:

Selection of Operations

- draw up and, oversee the application of appropriate selection procedures and criteria that ensure the contribution of operations to the achievement of the specific objectives and results of the relevant priority; are non-discriminatory and transparent; and take into account the general principles set out in Articles 7 and 8 of CPR (EC) 1303/2013;
- ensure that a selected operation falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned and can be attributed to a category of intervention a measure identified in the priority or priorities of the operational programme;
- ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;
- satisfy itself that the beneficiary has the administrative, financial and operational capacity to fulfil the conditions referred to above before approval of the operation;
- satisfy itself that, where the operation has started before the submission of an application for funding to the Managing Authority, applicable law relevant for the operation has been complied with;
- determine the categories of intervention the measures to which the expenditure of an operation shall be attributed.

Financial Management and Control

- verify that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the operational programme and the conditions for support of the operation;
- ensure that beneficiaries involved in the implementation of operations reimbursed on the basis of eligible costs actually incurred maintain either a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all transactions relating to an operation;
- put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures taking into account the risks identified;
- set up procedures to ensure that all documents regarding expenditure and audits required to ensure an adequate audit trail are held in accordance with the requirements of point (g) of Article 72;
- Verifications shall include the following procedures:
 - administrative verifications in respect of each application for reimbursement by beneficiaries;
 - on-the-spot verifications of operations.

Responsibilities of Public Beneficiary Body

The Public Beneficiary Bodies (Urban Local Authorities) will be responsible for ensuring that all payment claims for European Structural and Investment Fund expenditure submitted, are supported by receipted invoices and audit documents, and that a clear audit trail exists. They will also be responsible for ensuring in respect of co-financed Interventions/projects, that only eligible expenditure actually incurred is certified and submitted to the Intermediate Body. Urban local authorities will be required to respect EU and national regulations in respect of public procurement, information and publicity and electronic transmission of data. The Public Beneficiary Bodies will be responsible for commissioning and overseeing the implementation of the approved projects.

Integration of Horizontal Principles

Following a screening of the scheme using the screening questionnaire prepared in consultation with the horizontal principle bodies, the following actions will be taken to integrate the relevant horizontal principles:

1. The scheme will promote accessibility for all in supported projects and ensure a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities (Article 9 UNCRPD);
2. Local Authorities will be required to provide evidence of community consultation, including all relevant groups and interests;
3. Local Authorities will report on the number of projects in deprived communities;
4. Data will be captured on changes in non-private car use arising from sustainable urban transport projects;
5. Local Authorities will be required to prepare Environmental Impact Statements, on proposals which meet the criteria;
6. The scheme will, where appropriate promote locally-sourced, sustainably produced materials and environmentally-friendly building methods;
7. Local Authorities will be required to ensure that restored and/or rehabilitated buildings have improved energy-efficiency;

8. Data on affluence/deprivation in designated gateways and hubs will be included in the Gateway and Hubs Development Index.

Selection Process and Criteria

1. Project Selection Process

The Urban Development Priority will be overseen by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government which has overall responsibility for spatial planning and urban development policy in Ireland. Local Authorities within the designated urban growth centres in the BMW/S&E Regions will be invited to select specific actions for which support is sought. Clear guidelines will be provided to the local authorities with the calls for proposals to ensure that the selected actions meet the required standards and target the appropriate challenges in selected urban areas.

An assessment panel will be established to make the awards of ERDF to the selected projects. This panel will be chaired by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and will also contain representatives from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Regional Assemblies and other Government Departments, as appropriate. This panel will examine the selected actions before making allocations, taking account of the overall objectives of the Priority and the specified assessment criteria, eligibility of the selected actions and compliance with the approved selection criteria, in accordance with Articles 125(3)(a), 125(3)(b) and 125(3)(d) of the Common Provisions Regulation.

2. Project Selection Criteria

Actions will be selected by urban authorities on the basis of a detailed specification and criteria to be prepared for the investment programme. These criteria will take account of, inter alia, the following key criteria:

- Coherence with the integrated strategy submitted, including the strategic fit with national, regional and local plans, national GHG reduction strategies and individual Urban Centre Strategies;
- Quality of the selected proposal(s) in terms of social inclusion and contribution to economic development of urban centre, universal design and environmental sustainability;
- Social and economic benefits that the proposal will bring to the community and to the urban centre concerned over-and-above what is there already in terms of employment and sustainable economic development;
- Value for money of the proposed actions to be supported and the expected leverage effect of additional public and private funding;
- Inclusiveness of the consultative process undertaken in the development of the integrated strategy and the prioritization of project actions, in terms of council and community buy-in;
- Delivery arrangement including project management arrangements, milestones, targets, deadlines and outcomes.

There may be more than one call issued to local authorities over the lifetime of the programme.

Appeals

Local Authorities will be given an opportunity to re-apply to the Steering Committee for funding in instances where they are dissatisfied with a grant award decision, setting out the basis for their request for re-consideration of the decision.

Performance Indicators

Priority-level Output Indicators: Investment Priority 1(a)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
5.1	No. of integrated growth centre strategies	No. of strategies	ERDF	More Developed	9	Managing Authority	Annual
5.2	Population (no.) living in areas with integrated urban development strategies (common indicator)	No. of people	ERDF	More Developed	1,571,356	Managing Authority	Annual
5.3	No. of multimodal urban mobility projects implemented	No. of projects	ERDF	More Developed	4	Managing Authority	Annual

Programme-Specific Result Indicators: Investment Priority 1(b)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Category of Region	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
6(e)	Improvement in the social, economic & physical conditions in selected urban centres, based on an urban development index	Index Values	More developed	4.90 (2012 GHDI average score)	2012	5.1	Managing Authority	2018 & 2023
4(e)	Non-private car commuting levels in the designated urban centres	%	More developed	22.26	2011	42.26	22.26	Every 5 years

Financial Management

The Designated Growth Centre's Grant Scheme will be administered by the Southern Regional Assembly. Payments will be made to beneficiaries on the basis of invoices and statements of account submitted by them. These claims will be subject to examination and approval by the Managing Authority (Administration) and passed to the Managing Authority (Finance Unit) for certification. Payments are made from the ERDF advances transferred from the Office of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to the Suspense Account of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The funds are authorised for release by DPER following review of the checks completed by the Regional Assembly.

The Managing Authority will ensure that compliance checks are carried out at both Public Beneficiary Body and Intermediary Body level in relation to procurement, information and publicity, tax clearance, eligibility rules (EU and national) to ensure all requirements are met.

Projects under this priority will generally be financed by a combination of Public Beneficiary Bodies own resources and ERDF grants paid to the bodies from funds provided from the ERDF Suspense Account as transferred to DECLG from DPER.

Grants in respect of projects approved under the selection procedures outlined above will be paid to the Public Beneficiary Bodies by the Regional Assembly in arrears, on the basis of certified returns of expenditure. Claims, once approved and certified, in respect of ERDF assistance will be submitted to DECLG for release of payments from the ERDF Suspense Account. Upon receipt of the ERDF funds, the Regional Assembly will pay over the ERDF grant to the Local Authorities.

The Public Beneficiary Body will be required to have in place separate accounting arrangements in respect of project expenditure under the sub-measure. In accordance with the applicable regulations, the Public Beneficiary Body will be required to maintain proper reports of account and details of all costs including certified invoices, cheque statements, etc. in respect of any claim for payment.

Document Retention

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 will be kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included. In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2-year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the final expenditure of the completed operation is included.

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

Monitoring and progress reports will be submitted annually to the Monitoring Committee in a format specified by the Managing Authority.

Information and Publicity

The Regional Assembly will ensure that the beneficiary local authorities will comply with section 2.2 of Annex XII of Commission Regulation 1303/2013 and with Articles 4 and 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014. All Information and Publicity will be undertaken in accordance with the Communications Plan.

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and the ERDF will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo & text references, in accordance with the Communications Plan.