

4. Provision of Rural Services

National Measures

These grants are for projects that aim to alleviate some of the difficulties faced by rural communities, particularly the lack of access to services and the provision of infrastructure. Projects should make a contribution to growing the local economy. They could include the development of community buildings, public spaces, or cultural tourism amenities.

Who can apply?

- New or existing micro or small businesses;
- Rural community groups;
- Public or private entities working in partnership with small and micro business and rural community groups; and
- Local authorities (in exceptional circumstances, where for example the project outcomes are enhanced by their inclusion, or the local authority can show that the project and the funding required is in addition to their statutory requirement to provide rural services).

Maximum grant amounts and rates

Where the project involves an economic gain, the maximum grant amount under de minimis is €200,000. The maximum grant rate is 100% for investments which are non-profit making, but have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider local economy.

Investments in renewable infrastructure the maximum grant rate is 50% for micro enterprises and 40% for small businesses.

What is eligible?

- Plans for the development of municipalities and villages in rural areas and their rural services
- Creation, improvement or expansion of all types of small scale infrastructure, including investments in renewable energy
- Setting up, improving or expanding of essential rural services for the local community
- Projects that involve visits to farms for educational purposes, so that the public get a greater understanding of the countryside and rural areas
- Small-scale village infrastructure projects, including amenity buildings and village access, for example roads and footpaths
- Community renewable energy production and distribution networks
- Developing village infrastructure and access to key services, which may include tourism projects that increase services for the local community and contribute to village renewal
- Setting up, improving or expanding essential services for the local community

Costs can include

- construction, acquisition (including leasing) or improvement to immovable property

- feasibility studies and construction of renewable energy production plant and distribution capacity
- Purchase or lease purchase of new machinery and equipment
- General costs linked to facilitating investments such as architect, engineer, consultation fees, but these can't add up to more than 15% of the project's total eligible costs

Ineligible costs in addition to the general costs

- computers, software and printers that are used for the general running of a business, such as processing orders and accounts
- salaries associated with the on-going running of projects
- access to broadband services
- landscaping - unless it is part of 'making good' for an application for a major attraction or accommodation expansion. In which case, only the landscaping contractor's fees would be eligible, not plants, seeds, turf or trees
- projects to meet statutory requirements for disabled access, fire regulations or emergency exits, unless the costs of providing access, exit and complying with regulations form part of the normal costs for a major expansion project