



**An Roinn Leanáí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Youth Services Grant Scheme (YSGS) Reform Project:

Policy Intent Statement

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Section 1: Background and objectives

1.1 Background context:

For almost 40 years, the Youth Services Grant Scheme (YSGS) has supported National Youth Organisations in delivering services that have benefited the social and personal development of children and young people. Over the last four decades, this funding has played a significant role in supporting the Irish youth work sector.

Public spending and grant funding rules and regulations have developed significantly since the inception of the YSGS. While the rules for oversight and administration of the YSGS have been updated to account for some of these changes, facilitated by the cooperation and commitment of the YSGS organisations, further reforms are required to fully modernise the YSGS.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is committed to reforming this important scheme, to better meet the evolving needs of children and young people.

1.2 Objective and rationale of PIS:

The YSGS Reform Policy Intent Statement (PIS) equates to a (re)stating of the core ethos of the reformed YSGS (section 2); whilst also providing clarification on a number of policy principles underpinning the reformed scheme (section 3).

The Policy Intent Statement (PIS) seeks to provide clarity and transparency with regards to the overarching objective and principles of the reformed YSGS; so that all prospective applicant organisations to the YSGS have a clear understanding of the type of youth work to be supported under this scheme.

The PIS effectively will replace the YSGS original scheme guidelines – produced by the original funding department, the Department of Education in the mid 80's.

Section 2: Over-arching Policy Intent Statement

Youth Services Grant Scheme: Policy Intent Statement

Under the Youth Services Grant Scheme the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth funds:

- the effective delivery by youth organisations, operating with appropriate governance and oversight, of quality youth services to young people that supports their social and personal development; and
- organisations that provide the necessary sectoral supports to facilitate the delivery of such services.

The policy intent of the YSGS is to fund high quality youth services that provide for and respond to the interests and needs of young people, are open and accessible to all and involve participants in service planning and decision making.

Underpinning this intent, YSGS funding aims to:

- provide opportunities for young people to participate in high-quality, primarily volunteer-led youth programmes in non-formal settings that support their personal and social development;
- support applicant organisations, via structured funding allocation, to respond to the evolving needs of young people;
- support organisations to build awareness in the community, and amongst young people, of the high quality services they deliver;
- maximise the availability of youth services to all young people, reducing barriers to access; and
- embed transparency and equitability in the funding application process.

The scheme will seek to minimise the administrative burden that is placed on organisations availing of YSGS funding, wherever possible.

Section 3: YSGS Policy Principles

These policy principles are designed to ensure the Policy Intent of the YSGS is delivered:

- The YSGS funds organisations that adhere to the principles of universal services, as defined (3.1)
- The YSGS will provide funding in support of services for young people under 25, focussed upon young people aged between 10 years and 24 years. (3. 2)
- The YSGS supports volunteer-led youth services, in addition to youth-worker led services (3.3)
- The YSGS supports national/major-regional youth organisations; i.e. those with a broad geographical, and/or digital reach (3.4)
- The YSGS funds organisations that comply with the governance standards specified by DCEDIY to provide compliance assurance and oversight of exchequer funding (3.5)
- The YSGS supports organisations that have in place agreed mechanisms to ensure quality youth provision (3.6)
- The YSGS supports organisations that foster an inclusive environment within Ireland’s youth work sector (3.7)
- The YSGS supports organisations that facilitate young people to have their voices heard in decision making within the service, and to play a role in shaping their communities and wider society(3.8)

3.1 Policy principles regarding universalism:

The YSGS will fund organisations that adhere to the principles of universal services, as defined below.

A 2022 Rapid Review of relevant literature commissioned by DCEDIY captures the changing nature of universal youth work over the last decade or so; where ‘open-access’ youth services have been seen to branch into the following classifications:

- ‘Purely’ universal services: which are available to all young people, and
- ‘Focussed’ universal services: which adhere to the principles or methodologies of universalism (e.g. open in terms of timescale, content, and intended outcomes) but are aimed towards a particular cohort of young people (e.g. LGBTQ-identified young people, young people in rural areas, young people with disabilities etc.).

In order to retain the diverse nature of the YSGS, both categories of universal youth work will be supported by this scheme.

The YSGS will fund organisations that adhere to the principles of universal services. Such organisations will be:

1. Focused on the social and/or personal development of young people.
2. Accessed voluntarily by young people.
3. Accessible by all young people, within the framework of pure and focussed universal services outlined above.

4. Primarily volunteer-led.
5. Able to facilitate the development of activities and programmes in partnership with young people so that the focus is on the young person as an individual and young people as a collective.
6. Respectful and responsive to the young people’s wider community and cultural identities and help strengthen the young person’s connectedness and sense of belonging.
7. Structured in a way that will not disadvantage young people according to their background, ethnicity, religion or geography.
8. Open to delivering youth services both digitally and face-to-face; where face-to-face delivery is generally preferred.

The YSGS Grant Funding Allocation Model will outline the conditions under which YSGS funding may be used to support services that are targeted towards specific cohorts of young people.

3.2 Policy principles regarding age-cohort:

The YSGS will provide funding in support of services for young people under 25, focussed upon young people aged between 10 years and 24 years.

Applicant organisations will be required to demonstrate that a defined¹ percentage of their participants are aged 24 or under.

The rules and guidelines affecting age eligibility on the YSGS will include a transitional period; to enable organisations to adapt to the new policy position. The duration of this transitional period will be a matter for discussion with National Youth Organisations.

The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 defined a young person as “any person aged [over] 10 years and under 25 years of age.

The effective successor to this strategy, the *National Policy Framework on Children and Young People 2024 – 2028*, is still being drafted as of March 2023, and as such, the effective youth age-range is not yet determined.

The priority age-range for the YSGS may therefore need to be adjusted on foot of any overarching policy decisions emanating from this forthcoming Policy Framework.

¹ This percentage will be defined during the later deliverables of the YSGS Reform Project.

3.3 Policy principles regarding volunteers:

The YSGS will support volunteer-led youth services, in addition to youth-worker led services.

While paid staff will be eligible for funding under the scheme, it is recognised that volunteers play a vital role within the youth sector in Ireland.

It is also recognised that youth organisations can provide valuable opportunities for young people themselves to engage in volunteering.

DCEDIY is aware of the challenges that face the voluntary sector, such as falling volunteer numbers and the need to encourage and support the work of volunteers.

3.4 Policy principles regarding scope and reach of funded organisations:

The YSGS will support national/major-regional² youth organisations; i.e. those with a broad geographical, and/or digital reach.

The YSGS will support the following categories of national/major regional youth organisations:

- Organisations that directly engage with young people through the provision of frontline services.
- Organisations that indirectly engage with young people as part of their infrastructural support role to member groups or affiliated organisations who provide frontline services.
 - The type of ‘infrastructural’ supports that national organisations may provide to member groups include, but are not limited to: capacity building, corporate governance, advocacy, policy development, etc.

3.5 Policy principles regarding governance standards:

In delivering the reformed YSGS, DCEDIY will institute governance standards that enhance levels of assurance and oversight with respect to Exchequer/public funding.

All organisations, irrespective of type/size, will comply with the Governance Framework of the YSGS.

The required level of compliance will take into account the size and relative complexity of organisations.

² Further definition will be provided during the YSGS Reform Project Deliverable dealing with Eligibility Criteria. It is anticipated that a criterion such as “activity across at least X counties” will be applied in definition of the term “major-regional”.

3.6 Policy principles regarding quality standards:

In line with DCEDIY's commitment to supporting the delivery of quality youth services, the scheme will support organisations that have in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure quality youth provision.

Organisations funded under the YSGS will have the opportunity, where appropriate, to contribute to the development and implementation of the revisions to the National Quality Standards Framework.

These organisations will be required to participate in the revised NQSF and any verification process that might flow from same.

3.7 Policy principles regarding equality and inclusion:

In line with national policy on equality, diversity and inclusion, the YSGS will foster an inclusive environment within Ireland's youth work sector.

The YSGS will enable and support measures that promote equality and inclusion in youth services.

Proactive measures that reduce barriers to access for young people to youth services will be considered as part of the review and reform of the mechanism to allocated funding on this scheme

Organisations funded under the YSGS will:

- have the opportunity to support DCEDIY in the development of equality and inclusion-based approaches that will facilitate the objective outlined in this Policy Intent Statement; and
- be required to reflect inclusion, equality and diversity objectives in their services offerings to be eligible for support under the scheme.

3.8 Policy principles regarding participation:

The YSGS will support young people to have their voices heard in decision-making and to play a role in shaping their communities and wider society.

National and international policy has stressed the importance of meaningful participation for young people in decision-making.

For organisations that receive funding under the YSGS, use of the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making will be recommended.

These organisations will facilitate the active participation of young people in the design/development, delivery and evaluation of programmes and services.

Section 4: Conclusion

The YSGS Policy Intent Statement (PIS) encapsulates the objectives and principles of this important scheme.

The YSGS occupies a unique space in the youth sector, in that it provides funding for both:

- direct delivery of (universal) services to young people; and
- broader, sectoral-level supports

Owing to this positioning in the youth sector landscape, the YSGS Policy Intent Statement by necessity includes a statement of the high-level aims underpinning this scheme, and guidelines on key policy principles.

It is important to note that this Policy Intent Statement is specific to the YSGS (not the sector as a whole) and is non-exhaustive.

The Policy Intent Statement will be supplemented by a number of other reform-related outputs; including qualifying criteria and grant funding rules.

These additional outputs will provide greater clarity and transparency regarding the more granular aspects of the YSGS. Engagement with stakeholders, including the youth sector will inform the development of these outputs.