

Strengthening Disability Services Fund

Details of scheme for award of funding

€20m in once-off grants to voluntary disability service providers

The Government has allocated €20m, under the Transforming Lives reform process, to be paid in once-off grants to voluntary disability service providers towards achieving additional measurable progress in reforming disability services, to build the capacity of disability organisations, and to improve the quality of life of those who rely on these services. Applications for grants will be received and decided in 2020 by a panel of assessors established by the HSE, and funds dispersed to organisations to deliver approved proposals during 2021.

As this is once-off funding, it doesn't go into any service provider's funding base, so it needs to be used on once-off expenditure that adds value to what's already being funded through the existing HSE allocation. Applicants for such funding will be expected to outline how they will achieve such additionality, and the long-term benefit they hope to achieve, e.g. through improving their systems for supporting individuals or delivering services.

What won't be funded under the scheme

- Pay increases for staff or management
- Activities for which funding is already in place in the organisation's base allocation from HSE
- Paying off accumulated deficits
- Activities grant-aided under another Government scheme

Three funding strands

Voluntary organisations who have a **Service Agreement** with the HSE to deliver disability services may apply for funding under the Scheme, which has three strands.

1. **Improving person-centred delivery in line with Transforming Lives** – indicative total available €10m
2. **Partnership arrangements in service delivery with similar bodies** in its particular field (e.g. serving a similar geographic area or disability community) – indicative total available €5m
3. **Initiatives towards building sustainable organisations**, with a higher share of funding devoted to the front line, e.g. consolidation of back-office operations in sister organisations or other reform initiatives towards building sustainable organisations – indicative total available €5m

In general, only one application may be submitted by any organisation. This application, in the case of an organisation with multiple service sites, may cover a range of proposed activities in relation to one or more of its sites.

However, where it could yield significant strategic benefit to overall disability sector capacity or efficiency, an organisation may submit a Strand 3 application in addition to one under either Strand 1 or Strand 2.

In no case will the funding received by any individual organisation under Strands 1 or 2 exceed 1% of their 2019 HSE allocation.

Reserved funding for smaller bodies (Service Agreement or Grant Agreement of under €1m)

€300,000 in funding in aggregate will be reserved for organisations with a Service Agreement or Grant Agreement with HSE Disability Services of under €1m in 2019. Joint applications from such bodies will be welcomed.

Strand 1 – improving person-centred delivery under Transforming Lives

In disability services, innovation is being driven under the Transforming Lives programme, to support individuals with disabilities to live ordinary lives in ordinary places through person-centred individualised services and supports. Key elements in this programme are

- Time to Move On – programme to transfer institutional and campus provision of disability residential services to community-based regular housing
- New Directions – person-centred day services, supporting individuals to maximise their potential and to engage in mainstream activities of their choosing in their community
- Progressing Children’s Services – reform of disability therapy services into locally-based multidisciplinary teams serving all eligible children in their catchment
- Individualised budgets – pilot programme underway to allow individuals purchase and manage their own support services

It is expected that proposals would be explicitly linked to additional activities or achievements to be delivered under Transforming Lives, or to improving outcomes for people with disabilities in line with the agreed suite of outcomes (see Appendix).

Examples of eligible proposals under this strand are given below. Other proposals that meet the criteria of progressing **Transforming Lives** and improving person-centred delivery will also be open for consideration.

Eligible proposals, Strand 1

- Undertake a project in person-centred practice, in line with the HSE’s Framework¹
- Additional therapy sessions for service users – e.g. around managing distress giving rise to challenging behaviours
- Additional staff training sessions on aspects of the Transforming Lives agenda, e.g. New Directions Interim Standards; Person-centred planning
- Purchase of assistive technology including IT for service users to enhance independence
- Purchase or development of apps that help those receiving services remotely
- Small building works to improve disability premises – changes to make buildings more home-like, general refurbishment, Covid precautions/improved space standards, improved energy efficiency, fire safety works
- Other qualifying proposals linked to Transforming Lives agenda

Strand 2 – Partnership arrangements in service delivery with similar bodies

Over 250 separate voluntary organisations are funded by the HSE to provide supports for people with disabilities. Many of them serve geographically adjacent communities, or people with broadly

¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/newdirections/a%20national%20framework%20for%20person-centred%20planning%20in%20services%20for%20persons%20with%20a%20disability.pdf>

equivalent support needs. Through working in partnership in delivering services, it is possible to improve the efficiency and reach of services, therefore improving service users' access to supports.

Examples of eligible proposals under this strand are given below. Other proposals that meet the criterion of improving partnership in service delivery will also be open for consideration.

Eligible proposals, Strand 2

- Shared training sessions with sister bodies
- Shared activities or services with sister bodies
- Local area co-ordination of support across organisations based on geography not impairment type
- Shared respite activities or facilities on a geographic basis
- Better pathways to access neuro-rehabilitation services through joint action with CHO
- Other proposals meeting the criterion of shared frontline delivery across organisations

Strand 3 – building capacity and sustainability of service providers

HIQA has pointed out that poor governance and systems are associated in the disability sector with systematic failures of compliance. The future of quality supports and services to people with disabilities will rest on organisations that have a positive culture and ethos of empowerment of service users, have strong leadership and management, are supported by excellent systems, and deliver effectively and efficiently. The **Report of Working Group 6 under Transforming Lives**, and the 2013 Beegan Report, examined how a more viable delivery sector could be achieved through greater consolidation and partnerships. In particular, a streamlining of back-office operations across voluntary disability organisations has the capacity to release more resources to be assigned to frontline services and supports for people with disabilities.

Funding under this strand of the programme will aim to support strategic alignment and consolidation of capacity across voluntary service providers, to better deliver for service users.

Examples of eligible proposals under this strand are given below. Other proposals that meet the criteria of building management and leadership capacity through consolidating organisations, and of streamlining back-office operations across agencies will also be open for consideration.

The HSE may work with provider umbrella bodies and individual providers to identify strategic interventions under this funding strand.

Eligible proposals, Strand 3

- Mapping of when IT systems, accounting system, due for replacement/upgrades, which give the opportunity for any replacement system to move to a model shared with other bodies
- Detailed work identifying how payroll systems, management information systems. IT systems or HR systems could be aligned or partnered with those of sister bodies
- Work to align organisational policies and systems on service practices (e.g. proactively managing challenging behaviour) or organisational management (e.g. risk management, purchasing policy) with those of a sister organisation with more robust systems in place
- Streamlining property holdings, e.g. work on moving ownership of housing to a suitable Approved Housing Body

- Other activities to promote better governance and move towards consolidation into sustainable organisations with the systems, governance, expertise and resilience to deliver the Transforming Lives model of service

Application process

Applications must be made to HSE Disability Services at disability.strategy@hse.ie and returned on the official application form, and will provide the following information

- Description of the proposal
- Rationale
- Link to Transforming Lives
- Added value
- Expected outputs and KPIs
- Expected benefits and KPIs (link service user benefits to outcome framework 9 goals?)
- Budget
- Timescale and milestones
- Accountable person for the project

In the case of applications for grants of over €25,000, applicants will be required on their application form to set out an assessment of risks, and their proposed steps to mitigate risk.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated by the evaluation panel, based on the following criteria

- Quality and coherence of proposal
- Contribution to well-being of service users
- Potential lasting impact
- Capacity and sustainability of providers to deliver person-centred services and comply with standards
- Value for money

The evaluation panel may suggest amendments to be made to the proposal prior to any approval.

Drawdown of monies

Drawdown of funding will normally be in three tranches

- One third (rounded to nearest €1,000) on approval of proposal
- One third (rounded to nearest €1,000) at agreed milestone, and on receipt of interim report on activities, progress and budget
- Final tranche – on receipt of report detailing what was delivered, what was achieved, key learning points and final budget

Grants of under €25,000 will be made in a single payment.

Governance and accountability for funding under the scheme

Governance

Each application will be submitted on behalf of the organisation's CEO who will be responsible to the HSE and to its own Board for governance and delivery in relation to the funding. Each organisation

will appoint a named person as project manager who will be responsible for day to day delivery and liaison with the HSE.

Appended to Service Agreement

Any agreement on funding made under this Scheme will be appended to the organisation's service Agreement or Grant Agreement with the HSE and will be subject to the normal oversight procedures in relation to such Agreements. This agreement will be signed by the CEO and Chairperson of the funded body.

Additional accountability provisions

As this once-off funding is being awarded under a separate Budget line, some additional accountability procedures will apply

- Organisations who get grants over €25,000 paid in tranches will be expected to submit interim reports to the HSE before payment of the next tranche
- Organisations will be asked to submit a final report to their Board and to the HSE, detailing what has been achieved under the agreed KPIs, the learning from the project, how that learning will be carried forward within the organisation, and the final budget
- Accounts of the grant monies may be subject to random audit on behalf of the HSE

Key Dates:

- Closing date for receipt of Online applications: 18th November
- Review of applications: 19th – 25th November
- Letter of approval of Projects to issue: 27th November
- Funding drawdown: from 1 December 2020

Appendix – Outcomes framework for disability services

Disability service users:

- 1 Are living in their own home in the community
- 2 Are exercising choice and control in their everyday lives
- 3 Are participating in social and civic life
- 4 Have meaningful personal relationships
- 5 Have opportunities for personal development and fulfilment of aspirations
- 6 Have a job or other valued social roles
- 7 Are enjoying a good quality of life and well being
- 8 Are achieving best possible health
- 9 Are safe, secure and free from abuse