

Programme Questions

What is the Dormant Accounts Fund NI?

The Dormant Accounts Fund NI's aim and outcomes

Aim: The NI voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector will be more resilient and prepared for the future, through increased capacity and sustainability.

Outcomes:

- VCSE organisations will be more confident about their ability to adapt to future challenges
- VCSE organisations will be more financially resilient
- VCSE organisations will have increased skills and capacity
- Strategic planning in the VCSE sector will improve
- There will be more collaboration within and across sectors.

The Dormant Accounts Fund NI will support the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Northern Ireland to be more resilient and prepared for the future by funding activity that builds capacity and sustainability. We hope the programme will support organisations to be able to adapt to future challenges and be more financially resilient in the longer term.

It will fund organisations that can identify the best way to improve their long-term capacity, sustainability or resilience to best deliver their mission.

Can you look at the presentation slides here - re the fact this grant programme is phase one of the Fund

We anticipate that we will award funding for between one and three years, in order to have the greatest impact for the organisations and the communities they serve.

What is the assessment process and what timescales are involved?

Once we receive your completed application, we will review it and may contact you to discuss it further. We will consider the extent to which the project will meet the aim and outcome of the programme. We will consider the extent to which your organisation understands the challenges and opportunities that exist in relation to its capacity, sustainability and resilience and whether the proposed project will result in long term positive change for the organisation and its mission/aim.

We aim to give you a decision on your application within 4 months of submitting a completed application. However, this depends on how many applications we receive and our resources. If we are not able to meet this timescale we will let you know.

If my application is unsuccessful can I reapply?

Yes, if your application is unsuccessful you will be given feedback on whether there is anything you can do to strengthen your application

What are the plans for the criteria for future phases of Dormant Accounts?

We have just launched the first phase of the Dormant Accounts Fund and will be taking a test and learn approach for the next while. We want to learn from the grants we make now and the ones that aren't successful while we engage with the sector, stakeholders and support networks and organisation to explore more about what will work best to help sustain the sector. We will review the programme further down the line based on this learning. Dormant Accounts is an ongoing programme with no deadlines and the money does not need to go out by a set date.

Eligibility Questions

Can groups apply to different pots of funding for their project?

If your idea meets the aims and outcomes of the Dormant Accounts Fund NI it is unlikely that it will fit another pot of funding as the criteria is quite specific. The Dormant Accounts Fund is supporting organisations to make transformational long-term changes to their organisation rather than help them manage the immediate impact of Covid19 or to continue existing provision. It is recommended that you explore all funding options before deciding which pot best fits your needs.

If I group has already received National Lottery Funding can they apply to the Dormant Accounts Fund NI?

Yes, groups can apply to the Dormant Accounts Fund NI even if they are currently in receipt of project funding from the National Lottery.

If a group has a high level of free reserves will this likely impact on them getting a successful outcome?

Whilst we don't have a set level of reserves that we will look at in terms of eligibility, we will explore this further during assessment. For example, if a group does have a high level of free reserves, we will ask them why this can't be used to make the transformational change that they are applying for.

Can churches or faith-based organisations apply?

Religious institutions like churches or synagogues etc are not eligible for Dormant Accounts Fund NI funding. Faith-based VCSE organisations working in the community can apply if they meet the eligibility criteria as being one of the following organisation types.

- an unregistered community or voluntary organisation
- a registered charity (unincorporated)
- a registered charity and not-for-profit company
- a not-for-profit company
- a Community Interest Company
- a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

New organisations - you say the Fund will not be able to help new organisations become established, what do we mean by a new organisation?

We do not have a set definition of what we class as a new organisation. However the Dormant Accounts Fund is about improving the sustainability of the VCSE sector in Northern Ireland and therefore we want to focus the funding towards strengthening the organisations that are already operating rather than helping to establish new organisations.

Eligible Cost Queries

Can capital refurbishment or building costs be considered?

No these types of capital costs are not eligible under this programme.

Can salaries or extension to existing posts be considered?

There is no restriction with regards to salaries or extending posts but this will all depend on how these posts will support the organisation to make the desired change.

Could an organisation employ new staff to make the necessary changes through this fund?

This could be an eligible cost depending on what an organisation needs to become more resilient, sustainable and build capacity. If you want to apply for salaries consider what will happen when the grant comes to an end? Will you have to apply for more funding? Think about the long-term needs as your application needs to be strategic.

Can staff training costs be considered?

Staff training costs could be included as part of an overall plan to improve the resilience of your organisation. We do want to be flexible with this programme and will consider all costs you tell us are necessary to make that change to become more sustainable, resilient and fit for the future.

Can consultant costs be included?

You can include costs for professional advice and consultancy to help you make the changes that are needed for your organisation. We want the Fund to increase the skills within the VCSE sector, so think about whether the project will cascade learning to your staff, volunteers, and trustees rather than simply 'buy -in' a service from a consultant.

Can we use a consultant to help us with our Application to Dormant Accounts Fund NI?

The application should be completed by your organisation. However, you can take advice from an advisor/consultant if required. Make sure you are getting objective advice rather than being directed in a particular way. You could also make contact with a network organisation such as NICVA or Rural Community Network for advice.

You might also want to go through this useful tool to help you think about what your organisation could do to improve its capacity sustainability or resilience:

<https://vcsestrengthchecker.org.uk/about>

Please note that completing the VCSE Strength Checker will not give any organisation a direct advantage when applying for funding either from the National Lottery Community Fund or any other funder.

Other Sources of Support

Where can I get advice for social enterprise with regards to State Aid and Subsidy/ Subsidies

This is new and emerging legislation that could affect organisations that sell goods or services on a market. We sent some information to Social Enterprise NI to share with their members as State Aid / Subsidy rules might directly affect those type of groups. Organisations are welcome to contact our team to get a copy sent to them if they feel this would apply to their organisation.

Where can groups go to for support when starting up a new organisation?

Helper networks and organisations such as NICVA would be a good place to start. Check out the NICVA website for upcoming workshops about sustainability and resilience.