

Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs

2. Civil Society Fund (CSF)

Background

Irish Aid has long supported Irish and Southern civil society organisations through a variety of funding mechanisms. As the scope of Ireland's co-operation with developing countries has widened significantly over the past decade, the Irish government has decided to streamline its support schemes for non-government organisations (NGOs) while at the same time enhancing the quality of the funded interventions.

The Civil Society Fund (CSF) is a new grant programme designed to provide funds more effectively and efficiently. It is designed to be a flexible funding tool that will facilitate a broad range of applications ranging from projects by small organisations to large programme proposals from professionally-staffed NGOs.

The CSF has replaced the following funding schemes: NGO Co-financing 'Main' scheme, Block Grant scheme, Partnership Fund 2005, Personnel Co-funding, Human Rights & Democratisation (Civil Society Support), HAPS (HIV/AIDS Partnership Scheme) and the Organisational Development Grants.

Types of Grant

Co-financing of NGOs – divided into 'project applications' and 'multi-annual block grant programmes'.

Grant Size

For project applications, the maximum grant size for each application is €200,000 per year. The maximum annual ceiling for NGOs receiving multi-annual project support is €1 million.

For block grants, only one application per organisation is permitted during any three-year period. The maximum grant size in 2006 was €1.5 million.

Own Contribution

Organisations applying for project applications will have to contribute at least 25% of the project costs. For block grants, there is currently no minimum contribution specified.

Funding Priorities

According to the CSF working guidelines, its overriding objective is "to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by improving the livelihoods of disadvantaged communities in developing countries". In particular, with the CSF Irish Aid seeks to promote the following five key objectives:

- strengthening the voice of civil society organisations to enhance their influence on development policies at the local and national level;
- supporting communities to stimulate their participation at local and national levels;
- supporting communities to gain access to local development resources and the improvement of basic services;
- supporting communities and organisations to respond effectively to HIV/AIDS through prevention, care and support programmes; and
- supporting communities to realise their human rights, in particular the rights of women and children.

Organisations will have to explain how the proposed project or programme will make a particular contribution to a least one of the above objectives, based on the applicant's relative strengths, experience and expertise. Each intervention should contribute to strengthening local civil society organisations and local communities and to linking these organisations and communities to constituencies in Ireland.

Irish Aid will prioritise interventions that address the following cross-cutting themes, which are an integral part of Ireland's development co-operation:

- gender inequality and the empowerment of women, including gender-based violence;
- HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care;
- sustainable development and safeguarding the environment; and
- the promotion of human rights, especially building the capacities of communities to understand and exercise their rights.

With regards to HIV/AIDS, the CSF guidelines propose specific issues that organisations should consider when mainstreaming HIV/AIDS through proposed interventions, such as the extent of HIV infections in the community, the impact of the disease on local resources and institutions, the number of orphans and vulnerable children in the community, etc. As Irish Aid views civil society organisations as important partners in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, NGOs may also apply for thematic programme support for HIV/AIDS which includes institutional, broad-based and specific responses.

For more information, please refer to the CSF guidelines (Annex 2 in particular).

Grant-making Criteria

Currently, only Irish-based NGOs are eligible to apply for funds from the CSF. However, Irish Aid plans to invite international NGOs and organisations from the South to apply, based on an assessment of its strategic priorities and the quality of the organisation's programme.

The applicant must be a non-government, not-for-profit organisation that is either registered in Ireland with a CHY number or equivalent or is a higher education or research institution with a tax clearance certificate from the relevant revenue authority. Moreover, the applicant must provide evidence of a support base in Ireland.

The applicant's focus of work must be poverty reduction and development in developing countries (i.e., generally the bottom 50 countries of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index) or in regions with countries which have low human development indicators and widespread poverty.

Organisations must demonstrate their capacity to implement the planned activities, to work with its local partners and to report on the project's results. The outcomes of the intervention should be reported according to the format required by Irish Aid, and Irish Aid funding must be acknowledged in annual reports and other publications.

Applicants must submit audited accounts for the three years prior to the application. Independent financial reviews of the organisation may also be required. All organisations must demonstrate their adherence to 'good practice' standards and codes of conduct.

Guidelines

Detailed CSF guidelines can be downloaded from: http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/grants_civil.asp.

Project Duration

The maximum project duration for project applications and multi-annual block grants is three years.

Deadline

The closing date for project applications for the first of three rounds of funding for 2007 was 13 October

2006. For block grants, only one application per organisation can be submitted during any three-year period. Please check the Irish Aid website for upcoming deadlines.

Application Forms

The CSF application form and the pre-qualification form (Form A) in MS Word format can be downloaded from: http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/grants_civil.asp.

Application and Procedures

New prospective applicants have to complete a pre-qualification process to be eligible to apply for CSF funds. This requires them to establish their organisational credentials and capacity to co-operate with Irish Aid. After the electronic submission of the pre-qualification form (with attachments), applicants will be registered with a reference number that is then valid for three years. The type of funding from the CSF is divided into two categories:

- Project applications: applicants may request funding for interventions fulfilling the CSF funding priorities detailed above. Organisations can also apply for an organisational development grant as part of the project application for internal capacity-building purposes.
- Multi-annual block grant programme applications: organisations that have a successful track record of implementing Irish Aid projects will be invited to submit applications for block grants. Organisations applying for these grants are expected to focus their interventions around thematic or geographical priorities and define long-term, coherent strategies to contribute to a set of high-level objectives that have a lasting impact on poor and marginalised communities.

After appraisal by desk officers of relevant Irish Aid sections and external consultants, the Civil Society Approvals Committee will make the final selection of successful proposals.

Language

English

Tips

All organisations should carefully follow the CSF guidelines and make sure their proposals address the key objectives and cross-cutting issues laid down therein.

At present, only Irish-based NGOs are eligible to apply for CSF funds. As Irish Aid aims to support civil society organisations in developing countries under this scheme in the future, interested organisations should contact the Civil Society Section of Irish Aid to express their interest in receiving CSF funding.

Interested NGOs from the South should also contact Irish NGOs that have received grants from Irish Aid in the past to explore the potential for future partnerships. For a list of relevant Irish organisations, please see: http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/partners_civil.asp.

Dóchas, the Irish Association of NGOs, can also provide information for Southern civil society organisations looking for an Irish partner: <http://www.dochas.ie>.

NAME OF GRANT PROGRAMME	Civil Society Fund (CSF)
NAME	Irish Aid / Department of Foreign Affairs
ACRONYM	None
DEPARTMENT	Civil Society Section
CONTACT	Civil Society Section Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs Bishops Square Redmond Hill Dublin 2 · Ireland Phone: + 353 (1) 4082000 (please ask for a desk officer of the Civil Society Section) Fax: + 353 (1) 4082880 Email: http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/about_email.asp Note: In 2007, Irish Aid will relocate to Limerick. Please check the website for updated contact information.

COUNTRY INDEX

PROGRAMME COUNTRIES

Ethiopia
Lesotho
Mozambique
Tanzania
Timor-Leste
Uganda
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OTHER COUNTRIES

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Belarus
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Bulgaria
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GENERAL SUBJECT INDEX

Any