



## **Evaluation of Empowering Community Pilot Programme (ECPP) Tender Brief**

### **Overview**

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG) wish to contract a suitably qualified and appropriately experienced consultant(s) to undertake an evaluation of the overall impact and specific outcomes achieved under the ECPP to date in the communities supported by the programme.

As we enter Year 3 of the ECPP, it is timely to assess the effectiveness of this funding programme. This evaluation will involve collecting and analysing data to determine to what extent the programme is meeting its overall goals and specific objectives and what the impact of the programme has been on communities living in the small areas of disadvantage where the programme is being delivered. It will also make recommendations on the future direction of the programme.

### **Background**

Funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, the ECPP commenced in 2022, providing funding for an initial 14 projects. At present there are 17 projects supported under the programme, with annual funding of €2.3 million.

The areas selected for funding under the ECPP are areas classified as either very or extremely disadvantaged identified using the Pobal HP Deprivation Index which is the primary tool used to identify areas in need. Final funding allocations are approved by the Minister.

The ECPP programme implementers in any given area are the Local Development Company (LDC) with the relevant Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) having an oversight role.

The aim of ECPP is to empower local communities to craft their own response to area-based poverty, social exclusion and the resulting consequences, with the support of the relevant Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The specific objectives of the programme are:

1. To support a community development approach to area-based poverty and social exclusion.
2. To build leadership within communities, supporting and enhancing collaboration between existing community structures to develop and help implement tailored community work responses to the specific challenges faced locally.
3. To empower local communities to craft their own response to tackling community challenges.

Under Budget 2025, additional funding of €1 million has been secured for the ECPP. Consideration is currently being given as to how this additional funding can be utilised to maximum effect for communities that are experiencing disadvantage.

The ECPP is currently funded on an annual basis based on the outcome of the Budgetary Estimates process. The ECPP is supported by the ECPP Working Group that is chaired by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, with members from local authorities, Local Development Company Network (LDCN) and Local Development Companies (LDCs).

## **Programme Evaluation Aims and Objectives**

The overarching aim of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the ECPP is achieving its goal of empowering local communities to craft their own response to area-based poverty, social exclusion and the resulting consequence in the target areas included in the programme's scope to date.

DRCDG's primary investment with ECPP has been in the recruitment by Local Development Companies of Community Engagement Workers to carry out focused community work in small areas classified as either very or extremely disadvantage (according to the 2016 and 2022 HP Pobal Deprivation Index) in both urban and rural locations across the country.

ECPP Community Engagement Workers are recruited in each of the selected areas, to develop and facilitate relationships between community stakeholders, community groups and statutory agencies and structures. They engage with the supported community and reinforce community development values and principles. They assist the community to take ownership of and address the issues that are most important to them and facilitate and create positive change.

This investment allows for intensive Community Development work to be carried out in the target areas within the context of other Local Development Company programmes supported by the State such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), as well as in collaboration with other local community and voluntary organisations, statutory agencies and the communities in the ECPP areas .

Community Development work is defined for the purposes of the programme itself and this evaluation with reference to the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Standards as:

*"a developmental activity comprised of both a task and a process. The task is social change to achieve equality, social justice, and human rights, and the process is the application of principles of participation, empowerment, and collective decision-making in a structured and coordinated way".*

<https://www.aieb.ie/all-ireland-community-work-standards/>

Using this definition, and given the centrality of Community Work practice to the delivery of the ECPP, the following research questions should be considered by the evaluator in order to better understand the impact of the programme to date:

1. What actions and approaches have been adopted by programme implementers in different areas that are consistent with/demonstrate evidence of the utilisation of the principles of Community Development in the work?
2. To what extent has local leadership been strengthened within the target areas, which approaches have been used to identify and nurture local leaders and with what results?
3. What has been the nature and extent of local collaboration that has been introduced and/or strengthened as a result of the presence of the ECPP in the target areas? What issues are typically the focus of local collaboration supported by the programme? What have been the main results of this collaboration and how does this link back to the overall aim of the programme?
4. How have communities been supported to craft their own, collective responses to issues of concern to them through the Community Work carried out by the ECPP Community Engagement workers? To what extent can these issues of concern be attributed **to** the effects of area-based poverty and social exclusion?
5. To what extent can the impact of the investment in the ECPP be determined by examining what would likely have occurred in the absence of the investment?

An additional task for the evaluator is to recommend a suitable mechanism for ongoing, formative evaluation of the programme using participatory or other appropriate methodologies. In developing this recommendation, the evaluator should consider the likely impact of adopting such an approach in terms of additional benefit to the communities linking back to the principles of empowerment that are central to Community Work. Any recommendations should take into consideration the nature of the programme and the need to maintain its agility and flexibility while simultaneously ensuring that the programme is achieving its aims and objectives, remaining true to its ethos.

There is some scope for the evaluator to input around additional potential areas for exploration where appropriate in the course of the research project and in consultation with the DRCDG and the Subgroup of the ECPP Working Group.

In summary, the research should contribute to an understanding, from the perspective of the communities in the areas where the ECPP is operating, the programme implementers, DRC DG, the LCDC and other relevant stakeholders where required, of:

- The overall impact of the ECPP in empowering local communities to develop their own response to area-based poverty, social exclusion and the resulting consequences, including enhanced access to key services.
- How specifically the Community Engagement Workers funded under the ECPP engaged with the supported communities and the extent to which Community Development values and principles were evident in the approaches taken.
- How the Community Engagement Workers funded under the ECPP worked with other agencies in the area and complemented their work.
- The types of supports and approaches which worked well alongside lessons learned from less successful initiatives.
- Any gaps/limitations identified in service provision in the target areas through the work of the ECPP.
- How effective the investment in the ECPP was in terms of meeting outlined objectives.
- Recommendations for the future direction of the programme including the role of the LCDC's based on lessons learned and good practice identified in the implementation to date.

## **Main Tasks**

The successful candidate will have the following tasks:

1. Undertake a literature review to establish parameters for the evaluation.

Identify and present a suitable methodology to respond to the research questions detailed above. It is anticipated that the research will commence with the collection of quantitative/survey data to establish and prioritise key themes across the implementation areas. The analysis of this data will then form the basis for 1:1 interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, primarily:

- The ECPP Community Engagement Workers:
- Other LDC staff, and LCDC members and staff involved in the delivery of the ECPP; and

- Members of the target communities<sup>1</sup>.

Qualitative data emerging from interviews and focus groups should be presented in a narrative form which clearly demonstrates the impact of the programme and should include vignettes/ mini case studies as well as documenting examples of good practice and key learning from challenges encountered.

2. Agree a timeline with the Department and the Subgroup of the ECPP Working Group providing for consultation/feedback meetings at pre-agreed milestones throughout, specifically:
  - a. in advance of the literature review,
  - b. in the devising of the survey,
  - c. in providing feedback on the themes to be addressed through the interviews and focus groups,
  - d. at the presentation of the draft report, including recommendation on an ongoing mechanism for formative evaluation.
3. Produce a final report including an executive summary and clearly outlining the chief research findings and recommendations for the programme moving forward. Details of the recommended methodology for ongoing formative evaluation as outlined above should also be included.
4. Presentation of the report and findings at a webinar involving key stakeholders, using a slide deck to summarise the process and its results.

## Timeline

The project is expected to last no more than 16 weeks in duration. The project will begin by **Monday 18 August 2025**, with a check-in meeting to be held within 8 weeks of commencement with the DRCDG where the successful tenderer will make a presentation on the direction they are taking with the report as well as any issues being encountered, and feedback can be provided, an interim progress report by **07 November 2025** and the final report to be completed and approved by **05 December 2025**.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the DRCDG working with programme implementers will identify/recommend participants for interviews and focus groups, depending on the themes emerging during the research. It is envisaged that a mix of urban and rural projects will be included.

## **Consultant(s) Specifications**

**The person(s) will have:**

### **Research Skills**

- Proven skills and experience in undertaking independent research projects, specifically in the area of programme evaluation.
- Demonstrable ability to translate research findings into clear recommendations.
- Knowledge and experience of participatory and/or peer-research methods.
- Knowledge and experience of conducting research in the context of social exclusion and poverty.

**Experience and awareness of Community Development Work principles and practice, anti-poverty and social exclusion and associated policy:**

- Prior experience of interviewing or conducting focus groups, including with individuals from more marginalised backgrounds.
- Awareness of the approach and skills required to create an inclusive and enabling space for participation when engaging directly with the beneficiaries of the ECPP.
- A thorough understanding of community work and the application of Community Development approaches in tackling poverty, social exclusion and area-based deprivation.
- Skills and experience in identifying and consulting with a range of statutory and community sector stakeholders relevant to the research aim.
- An understanding of relevant and associated policy.
- A comprehensive understanding of the 2016 and 2022 Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

### **Personal Attributes**

- Excellent interpersonal, presentation, writing and communication skills.
- Strong organisational and project management skills, with the ability to independently manage and prioritise workload in order to fulfil the aims of the evaluation within the specified timeframe.

### **Project Management**

The appointed consultant(s) will be responsible for project management and will liaise with/report to the DRCDG and the Subgroup of the ECPP Working Group.

## Submission of Tender

This is a fixed price contract that will be awarded following a competitive procurement process.

Tenders must be submitted by e-mail to [ECP@drcdg.gov.ie](mailto:ECP@drcdg.gov.ie) with the subject line ***Evaluation of the Empowering Community Pilot Programme*** on or before 17:00hrs on **Thursday 31 July 2025** and include:

- Cover letter.
- Brief overview of organisation/consultancy and suitable personnel for project lead.
- Given the target group for the research, submissions need to reference ethical considerations, safeguarding policies, and procedures for the project.
- Outline relevant experience – track record in strategic planning, facilitation, and consultation, including specific experience of consulting similar populations and details of safeguarding procedures in place.
- Detailed description of methodology and timeline for proposal.
- A projected work plan and programme, with start and finish dates, including a timescale for specific tasks.
- Two referees, including contact details.
- Breakdown of costing, inclusive and exclusive of VAT.
- Tax Clearance Access Number details.
- Evidence of insurance.
- Number of persons responsible for fulfilment of contract and CVs of all personnel proposed to be involved in the research.

## Timeframe

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The successful applicant must be in a position to commence the work on **Monday, 18 August 2025** after the awarding of the contract.

## Budget

This is a fixed price contract of €22,000 inclusive of VAT and all expenses.

Queries should be directed by e-mail to [ECP@drcdg.gov.ie](mailto:ECP@drcdg.gov.ie) with the subject line ***Evaluation of the Empowering Community Pilot Programme***

Please note:

- that a clarification meeting and interview of the tenderers will form part of the tender award process, if deemed necessary by the assessment panel.
- that all reports will be subject to approval by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

## Scoring Framework

Tenders received will be assessed on the basis of the following award criteria: Award Criteria	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Maximum Score</b>	<b>Minimum Score Required</b>
Relevant experience as related to the project	30%	300	180
Proposed Methodology, project structure timeframe	30%	300	180
Demonstrate knowledge and experience of consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders	30%	300	180
Costings Value for Money	10%	100	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>		

## List of 17 ECPP small areas where ECPP is being delivered

Local Authority /LCDC	LDC	Local Electoral Area	Electoral Division (Small Geographic Area)
<b>Cork City</b>	Cork City Partnership	CORK CITY NORTH WEST LEA-6	KNOCKNAHEENY
<b>Donegal</b>	Donegal Local Development	GLENTIES LEA-6	ARAN



<b>Dublin City</b>	Liffey Partnership LDC	Ballyfermot- Drimnagh LEA-6	Cherry Orchard A
	Dublin North West Area Partnership	CABRA-GLASNEVIN LEA-7	CABRA WEST B
	Dublin City Community Co- Operative	CABRA-GLASNEVIN LEA-7	INNS QUAY B
	Dublin North West Area Partnership	BALLYMUN-FINGLAS LEA-6	FINGLAS SOUTH B
	Northside Partnership LDC	ARTANE-WHITEHALL LEA-6	PRIORSWOOD C
<b>Galway County</b>	Galway Rural Development Company	BALLINASLOE LEA-6	BALLINASLOE URBAN
<b>Kildare</b>	County Kildare LEADER Partnership	ATHY LEA-5	ATHY WEST URBAN
<b>Limerick City and County</b>	PAUL Partnership Limerick	LIMERICK CITY NORTH LEA-7	JOHN'S A & JOHN'S B
<b>Longford</b>	Longford Community Resources	LONGFORD LEA-7	LONGFORD RURAL
<b>Mayo</b>	Mayo North East LEADER Partnership	BALLINA LEA-6	BALLINA URBAN
<b>Roscommon</b>	Roscommon LEADER Partnership LDC	Castlereagh, Roscommon	Castlereagh, Roscommon

<b>South Dublin</b>	SDC South County Partnership	PALMERSTOWN-FONTHILL LEA-5	CLONDALKIN-MOORFIELD
<b>South Dublin</b>	South Dublin County Partnership LDC	Tallaght-Jobstown	Tallaght-Jobstown
<b>Westmeath</b>	Westmeath Community Dev LDC	MULLINGAR LEA-6	MULLINGAR RURAL
<b>Wexford</b>	Wexford LDC	ENNISCORTHY LEA-6	NEWTOWNBARRY