



17 September 2020

Call for proposals to support women and diversity in Local Government

Dear Chief Executive

As you are aware, the **Programme for Government – our shared future** highlights the need for greater diversity and gender equality in local government, especially where there are far too few women involved in elected politics.

Building on previous measures, the Department wishes to continue to support proactively local authorities in their endeavours to advance the agenda of encouraging the participation of women in local government. The Department also wishes to support initiatives that promote wider inclusivity and diversity in local government and local decision-making structures.

In this regard, the Department is now requesting local authorities to consider appropriate proposals for projects that meet these objectives. The Department takes the view that preparations should commence now for the 2024 local elections and consideration given to how to create a positive environment for women and candidates of diversity to become involved in local government.

As per the call for funding issued in December 2019, the Department is interested in providing financial support to local authority initiatives that would contribute towards the goal of increasing the presence of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds in local government leading up to the 2024 local elections and beyond. The Department wishes therefore to invite applications for funding from local authorities interested in pursuing such initiatives.

The recently published Independent Review of the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Elected Members, led by Sara Moorhead SC, (https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/independent_review_of_role_and_remuneration_of_local_authority_elected_members.pdf) makes a number of important recommendations in relation to non-pay-related supports for elected members. These aim to make the role of the elected member more sustainable and accessible to all. These



recommendations may provide a basis for initiatives or projects in support of gender balance and diversity in your elected Council, for which you might consider applying to the Department for funding. In that regard, local authorities may wish to pursue initiatives or projects that support the work of serving elected members, which would have the effect of encouraging potential candidates in 2024.

Working with your elected members, initiatives developed must have a gender/diversity focus but could involve, for example, improved administrative systems, technological solutions, the establishment of a parenting (or caring) support group, the provision of parenting rooms, specific training or other recommendations identified in the Moorhead Report that would assist councillors in fulfilling their role as elected members.

Local authorities may wish to consider the findings of Department funded research carried out by the National Women's Council of Ireland (Women beyond the Dáil: more women in local government https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/NWCI_Research_Report_WEB.pdf) and the Immigrant Council of Ireland Research (Strength in Diversity <https://immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2020-05/Strength%20in%20Diversity%20FULL%20REPORT%20FINAL%20060520.pdf>)

Initiatives might also build more general awareness of local government and participation in local decision-making structures, particularly among minority and diverse communities in your administrative areas. Consideration might also be given to voter education for minority groups where research has shown that voter turnout and local government awareness is lower than other voter groups.

The Department would request that local authorities take into account the current national climate in terms of COVID19 while adhering to national guidelines and where necessary, adapt their proposals (or provide a contingency) to allow their proposals to proceed despite restrictions being put in place. The Department appreciates that this may not be possible for many envisaged proposals, and will allow a degree of flexibility if tighter restrictions are enforced. However, any changes to original proposals that have received approved funding must be first cleared by the Department.

The deadline for the submission of applications is Friday 30 October. Consideration will be given to all applications. However, the preference would be for worthwhile proposals that can commence before the end of the year.



All enquiries and proposals should be directed to the undersigned or Jason Kennedy email:
Jason.kennedy@housing.gov.ie.

Yours sincerely



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