

What Works: Enhancing Quality

Fund 2025

Guidance Note for Applicants

**Enhancing Prevention and Early
Intervention in Policy, Provision and
Practice for Children and Young People**

A What Works Initiative through the Dormant Accounts Fund



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Department of Children,
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Purpose of the Guide for Applicants

This guide provides practical information to potential applicants for preparing and submitting an application for the Enhancing Quality in Prevention and Early Intervention Fund (hereafter known as the Enhancing Quality Fund). In addition, it provides a general overview of the assessment process. The contents of this guide are for general information purposes and the assistance of applicants.

In order to avoid disqualification for non-compliance, applicants should familiarise themselves FULLY with this document and with the Terms and Conditions before completing and submitting applications.

Enhancing Quality Fund

The 2025 Enhancing Quality Fund aims to promote continuous improvement and innovation using a process of problem-solving in prevention and early intervention services for children and young people. Successful applicants will support the *What Works* initiative to build on the development of implementation structures and learning harnessed from over a decade of investment in prevention and early intervention in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The fund is open to practitioners and service providers in not-for-profit organisations working with children, young people and their families and who have a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

This Fund's commitment to Enhance Quality in prevention and early intervention is informed by *Young Ireland*, Ireland's National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028. Harnessing the significant learning in this area and adopting a more preventative approach has the greatest potential for improving outcomes for children and young people, and the Fund aims to support the important work being done in the sector.

What is *What Works*?

The *What Works* Initiative, funded under Dormant Accounts, aims to take a coordinated approach to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention for children, young people and their families, with a focus on those at risk of developing poor outcomes. At the core of the initiative is a desire to foster persistent curiosity amongst those working to improve the lives of children and young people in



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Ireland. *What Works* aims to support key groups working with children, young people and families to know what works, how it works and provide an evidence-supported approach to the application of this work.

Four key strands have been identified to embed and enhance prevention and early intervention in children and young people's policy, service provision and practice and these four strands can be viewed on our [website](#). Previous *What Works* funds are the 2023 Building Evidence Fund, the 2022 Sharing Knowledge Fund and the 2021 Learning Together and Digital Solutions Funds; more information about these funds can be found [here](#).

Important Deadlines for this Fund

Launch of Call	July 2025
Application Deadline	22 August 2025
Awards Announced	September 2025

Goal of the Fund

Under *What Works*, the aim of the Quality strand is to align, enhance and sustain quality in prevention and early intervention as it relates to the development and delivery of policy, provision and practice for children and young people. The effect that services and supports have on children, young people and families determines the quality of the service or support.

For the purposes of this fund, 'quality' is to be understood as a sustained process that is intrinsically linked with innovation, based on the following definition:

Quality enhancement is understood as continuous improvement, and innovation as a process of problem-solving.

The goal of the Enhancing Quality Fund is to support organisations to improve the monitoring, evaluation and analysis of their supports and services, and to use this information to improve and develop their prevention and early intervention initiatives. It aims to ensure that services for children and young people are timely, targeted and grounded in evidence-based practices that deliver meaningful and measurable outcomes.



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This focus helps build a culture of learning and accountability, supporting professionals and organisations to deliver interventions that are effective, equitable, and responsive to the evolving needs of children, young people, and families throughout Ireland.

The Fund is also envisaged to help those working with children, young people and families to access training activities or programmes that will improve service provision.

This Fund is in line with *Young Ireland* and aims to support service providers in strengthening the prevention and early intervention sector. Though the fund does not have a strict thematic focus, applicants should consider the measures they plan to take to strengthen the quality of their service provision in line with [the wider aims of What Works](#), [Young Ireland](#) and other DCDE policy objectives.

Objectives

The 2025 Enhancing Quality Fund supports projects that aim to implement *Young Ireland's* commitment to encourage and promote high-quality service delivery across the prevention and early intervention sector. Successful projects should aim to do one or more of the following:

- Support organisations to implement and embed evidence-informed approaches to improve service quality
- Enable the collection or generation of quality data to support service provision
- Improve the quality of service delivery by changing processes and/or piloting new initiatives
- Equip a professional and skilled workforce to provide quality services
- Promote and expand the availability of quality services to vulnerable and minority groups.

Applications are invited to address one or more of the following needs:

- Embedding a new measure, such as a mechanism that allows services to use feedback from service users to improve quality
- Supporting quality professional development, such as by upskilling and training
- Adapting existing services to meet evidence-informed needs
- Enabling professionals working in the area of prevention and early intervention to access and use quality data



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- Scaling 'what works' by adapting proven models for broader contexts
- Promoting robust monitoring and evaluation practices that generate learning and drive continuous improvement in delivery
- Using quality data to make the best evidence on 'what works' available to policymakers, service commissioners, providers, and other audiences
- Fostering partnerships between service providers, researchers, and communities to co-design and improve service quality
- Developing quality standards or metrics to ensure a higher level of service quality.
- Piloting evidence-based projects or initiatives that support the reach of services to rural locations
- Piloting and evaluating the use of online service delivery for "hard to reach" families and young people

Eligible Applicants

The fund is open to practitioners and service providers in not-for-profit organisations that work with children, young people and their families and that have a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

Funding

The *What Works* Enhancing Quality Fund is funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) using Dormant Accounts Funding. The amount awarded will be dependent on the quality of proposed activities outlined in the application form, the ability to measure outcomes, and the number of quality proposals received.

The proposed Fund is in line with the Dormant Accounts Fund's requirements that its funding is used to help people who are educationally, economically or socially disadvantaged by supplying opportunities for personal and social development.

The total value of the Fund is €300,000. **Applicants should note that funding is on a once-off basis and ongoing funding will not be available.**

Grant allocations will be **minimum of €5,000** and **maximum of €30,000** per successful applicant.



Payment and Repayment of Funding

Funding awarded must be spent in line with [DPER's 13/2014 Circular regarding the management of and accountability for grants from Exchequers Funds](#) and [DPER's 05/2023 Circular regarding initiatives to assist SMEs in Public Procurement](#). Grant funds that have not been spent by the end of the contract term must be returned to DCDE.

All awards will be subject to funding availability. All funding under the 2025 fund is intended as once-off funding. This funding will not be renewed.

Funding will be issued to Grantees for spending within a 12-month period once letters of award are issued to the Grantee and award acceptance forms are returned.

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible Costs (must be incurred within the period of the funding)	Ineligible Costs
Training / upskilling	Capital costs (including purchasing of land, equipment, premises, and renovation or repurposing of premises)
Staff costs (limited strictly to the project duration – no funding will be available once projects are concluded and this should be noted in the job posting and contract of employment)	Large-scale equipment (including purchase of vehicles etc.)
Researcher fees	Individual funding (including cash transfers, subsidies)
Venue hire	Costs already covered by other funding
Online platforms	Costs not related to the delivery of this specific project
Administration costs (e.g. printing, advertising, media, graphic design, travel and subsistence costs) - not to exceed 15% of the overall funding	Purchase of mobile phones and mobile phone contracts with service providers
Small IT equipment including software - not to exceed 10% of budget.	Laptops
Media production (e.g. podcasts)	Rental of premises



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Consultancy services	
Costs associated with mining and analysing data	

Eligibility Check

- Statutory organisations are not eligible to apply for funds under this measure, however, they can act as financial host organisations for successful applicants that are not set up with bank details.
- Applications from individuals are not eligible under this funding measure.
- One application per organisation will be allowed per project.
- Organisations already in receipt of funding from a Government Department for a similar project are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants will be asked to list all once-off funding that they have received for 2024/25.
- Applicants must identify the evidence or data they will use or track in the course of their project.
- Applicants must be based in Ireland.
- Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible.
- Lobbying any DCDE/DRCD officials or representatives will lead to immediate disqualification.

Monitoring and Verification

All costs must be explained and justified in the application and must be directly related to the delivery of the activities. Financial and activity monitoring and verification information and documents will be required on project completion, including:

- The Grantee should provide access to relevant records including expenditure profiles, cash profiles, regular management accounts and annual audited accounts.
- Mid-term and final reports should be accompanied by a certificate of assurance signed at management level, (in general by two responsible persons for example at management or board level), certifying that the public money granted was used in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.
- Applicants may choose to submit an end of project, 5-minute video OR high-quality infographic detailing overview of project, methodology, reach,



outcomes/impact and potential to scale up and disseminate best practice for inclusion on the *What Works* Website and presentation of at events/seminars/webinars.

- Successful applicants may be required to attend relevant learning events/workshops to promote best practice in the future pro bono at a time that is mutually convenient for all parties.
- Applicants may be required to participate in and/or contribute to future *What Works* seminars to promote shared learning.
- *What Works*, DCDE and the Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF) should be acknowledged in any press release, speech, social media post, advertisement etc.
- Any asset funded or part-funded by this award should include on it, or adjacent to it, a notice stating that it was supported by *What Works*, DCDE, and DAF funding.
- The *What Works*, DCDE and DAF logos should be used in any public notice, advertisement etc. relating to a supported project. The logo should be reasonably prominent, and at least the same size as any other logos.
- Any organisation or project supported by this fund should display a notice acknowledging that the project is supported by *What Works*, DCDE and the DAF.
- Grantees must comply with the [Statement of Principles for Grantees of Circular 13/2014, Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds](#).
- Grantees must comply with the terms and conditions of the fund as well as the contract established between the Grantee and DCDE.

Reporting

- Successful applicants must submit:
 - **7 months from date of award:** A mid-year report that accounts for the steps taken to achieve the outcomes as set out in the application, the reach and impact of the programme to date and preparation for the completion of the programme.
 - **14 months from date of award:** a written end of project report, to include methodology, project achievements, self-evaluation and impact assessment. Any research reports produced should also be submitted to the Department. Reports produced will be considered for inclusion on the *What Works* website. This report must also include the final spending position and accounting officer sign off. All unspent funding accounted for



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must be returned to DCDE after the end of the 12-month period. All successful projects will be evaluated by DCDE to review the outcomes, the reach and impact of the programme as well as future planning that has derived from the funding, including the scaling up of the programme or plans to use data or evidence deriving from the programme in future programmes.

Communications

Grantees may be contacted to provide updates on the project to DCDE throughout the year. Grantees are required to provide a swift response to these requests and agree that this information can be used for reporting and promotional purposes. All resources, tools and publications developed as a result of the funding must be made freely available to the DCDE for publication on the *What Works* website. We expect that participants benefitting from the fund will be willing to attend relevant learning events pro bono.

Any public statement concerning the project should include a statement that the project is supported by DCDE as part of *What Works*, funded by the Dormant Accounts fund and any material produced with this funding, including learning material must incorporate the **DCDE, What Works and Dormant Accounts Fund logos and branding.**

Submitting an Application

The Application Form must be signed and completed in full and must provide the contact details for a point of contact for the application. Please note grant applications must be submitted by **close of business 22 August 2025** by email only to whatworks@dcde.gov.ie. Hard copies will not be accepted and late applications will not be entertained. The email must be sent from, or cc, the signatory to the Application.

Assessment Process

All applications will be first subject to eligibility. Applications deemed eligible by the Department will be assigned for assessment. Those found ineligible will not proceed to the assessment phase. A shortlisting process may apply. Applicants may also be interviewed. There is limited funding, therefore not all applications can be funded. Each



application will be assessed by a DCDE panel on the extent to which it achieves the stated goals of the scheme.

An assessment panel will be established by DCDE to assess and score the proposals. Each eligible application will be assessed and scored against the following criteria:

Award Criteria	Weighting	Total Marks Available	Minimum Score Required
1. Quality and Impact	50%	1000	500
a) Evidence of need to be addressed (including issues or difficulties faced as a result)	30%	300	150
b) Proposed project methodology (including quality of evidence [e.g. collation of data and analysis] to support chosen method)	30%	300	150
c) The scale, reach or scope of the project (including quality of evidence for this)	20%	200	100
d) Longer term impact, including scalability, sustainability and replicability (evidence should be provided on how the project will improve service quality over the longer term)	10%	100	50
e) The inclusion and participation of stakeholders (for example, service users and the voice of the child) to inform the methodology	10%	100	50
2. Project and Risk Management	50%	1,000	500
a) Demonstration of capacity to deliver and implement the initiatives for which funding is sought (this response should include detail on timeline and activities).	50%	500	250



b) The quantum of funding being sought and the basis of the amount being sought (a detailed justification, explanation and breakdown of the cost of the funding).	30%	300	150
c) Relevance of project to the theme of Enhancing Quality and alignment with wider Department and Government initiatives such as <i>Young Ireland</i> and the <i>What Works</i> initiative	20%	200	100
TOTAL MARKS	100%	2,000	1,000

Notification and Feedback

DCDE requests that any potential applicants with queries regarding their eligibility to apply to contact the Department at Whatworks@dcde.gov.ie as soon as possible. All queries and the DCDE response will be anonymised and published in the Funding section of the *What Works* website.

Once the assessment process is complete, applicants will be informed of the outcome by email. Please note we may contact applicants for details before assessment. The Assessment panel's decision is final.

For reasons of transparency and fairness to all applicants, DCDE will not enter into written or telephone correspondence with any individual about the assessment process.

Feedback will not be provided to applicants under this scheme (qualitative or numerical). Please note that the decision of the DCDE assessment panel is final and that no correspondence will be undertaken in relation to individual assessments or scoring.

Information for Successful Awardees

If approved, an appropriate grant contract will be agreed, after which the funding will be released. Applicants who have been successful must agree to the Terms and Conditions for this fund. Grantees will enter a contract with DCDE for a 12-month period.

All funding must be spent by the Grantee within this 12-month period. Any unspent funds at the end of this term year must be returned to DCDE.



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Applicants should be available to work with DCDE to contribute to an overall evaluation of the Enhancing Quality Fund once their projects are complete.