



THE NORTHERN IRELAND
**FOOTBALL
FUND**



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

TNIFF Grassroots Facilities Programme

FACTSHEET

BACKGROUND

TNIFF is a long-term strategic programme, designed to meet the Executive's commitment to invest in our local footballing infrastructure and provide modern, fit for purpose facilities across Northern Ireland. In May 2024, the Minister for Communities Gordon Lyons approved the strategic framework for 3 strands of investment:

- Performance Programme
- Grassroots Facilities Programme
- National Football Centre

GRASSROOTS FACILITIES PROGRAMME

Minister Lyons formally launched the Pilot Stage of the Grassroots Facilities Programme on Wednesday 4 March 2026, announcing up to £9 million of funding to support at least six initial projects. This marked an important milestone in delivering long-awaited investment in grassroots football facilities across Northern Ireland.

- The Pilot Stage would support a minimum of four club-led projects (Stream 1) with a closing date of Wednesday 15 April 2026 at 5:00pm
- The Pilot Stage would support a minimum of two council-led projects (Stream 2) with a closing date of Wednesday 29 April 2026 at 5:00pm
- Funding bids between £500,000 and £1.5 million could be submitted

STREAM 1 APPLICATIONS - CLUBS & FACILITY OWNERS

- 35 Applications received from Stream 1
- 15 from the County Antrim & District Football Association
- 9 from the North-West of Ireland Football Association
- 7 from the Mid-Ulster Football Association
- 4 from the Fermanagh & Western Football Association

STREAM 2 APPLICATIONS - COUNCILS

- 7 Applications received from Stream 2
- Mid & East Antrim, Newry, Mourne & Down, Derry City & Strabane, Mid-Ulster, Causeway Coast & Glens, Belfast City and Lisburn & Castlereagh councils all submitted applications.

SUPPORT WITH APPLICATION

- Application Guidance
- Scoring Matrix
- Several information sessions were held at various locations across the country, as well as two online sessions via Microsoft Teams
- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document was collated from the information sessions

All documents were published and available online.

Clubs could also contact TNIFF officials if further clarification was required anytime during the process.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- In Stream 1, applications were assessed and scored within their respective Divisional Association.
- Each Divisional Association was assigned an assessment panel – two assessors and one moderator.
- In Stream 2, applications were assigned an assessment panel – two assessors and one moderator.
- Panel Officials met to assess and agree a score for each application within their designated panel, scoring all applications in line with the Scoring Matrix.
- An independent moderator reviewed a random sample of each panel's assessment scores to ensure that a fair and consistent approach had been applied throughout.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Department made a questionnaire available to all clubs and facility owners who did not apply to the Pilot Stage. 36 responses were received and information gathered will be used alongside Pilot Stage application data to:

- Build a detailed picture of the current condition, capacity and accessibility of grassroots facilities
- Understand regional and community-level need
- Identify barriers faced by clubs, including those supporting women, girls and disabled participants
- Shape the design, scale and targeting of a future programme of investment

NEXT STEPS

Applying to the pilot programme is only the first stage of the process.

1. Submit Application
2. Notification of Outcome
3. Due Diligence Checks
4. Issue of Funding Agreement
5. Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation
6. Completion of Project
7. Post-Project Evaluation

MORE DETAIL ON THE NEXT THREE STAGES

1. Notification of Outcome

All applicants will receive formal notification of the outcome along with copies of the scoring assessment on Wednesday 30 September. Applicants will have the opportunity, upon request, to meet with officials and discuss any aspect of their application.

2. Due Diligence

All successful applicants will proceed to the next stage – Due Diligence. This is not an offer of funding nor a guarantee the applicant will receive a letter of funding.

All applicants in the Due Diligence stage are required to submit information and documentation to allow officials to complete checks on Feasibility, Financial, Legal & Subsidy Control Act.

3. Issue of Funding Agreement

Applicants who successfully complete the Due Diligence checks will be issued a Funding Agreement.



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