

Shared Island Industrial Sustainability Challenge Fund (SCF) – Frequently Asked Question's (FAQ's)

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the Guidance Notes. The information and evidence required, as outlined in the Guidance Notes, are necessary to demonstrate that the business meets the eligibility criteria and to ensure public funds are managed properly. Please take time to read the Guidance Notes and FAQs carefully before applying.

What is the SCF?

The Shared Island Industrial Sustainability Challenge Fund is a €26m fund (€13m NI and €13m IE) which offers funding support to businesses from both Northern Ireland and Ireland. Additional eligible projects may be funded beyond the initial SCF budget allocation should further public funding become available subject to approval and funding availability.

Who is funding the SCF?

The scheme is administered by Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland in conjunction with InterTradeIreland and co-funded through the Government of Ireland's Shared Island Fund and by the agencies.

Will the SCF run on a continuous basis once the €13m funding per region is fully allocated?

No, the scheme is funded for one round of applications only.

Does the SCF count towards my De-Minimis or UK Subsidy control threshold?

No – the scheme will be administered under EU General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) & The EU Clean Industrial State Aid Framework.

When does the application call open?

The application call will open on **12th October 2026**. An Eligibility Checker will be available from this date for Northern Ireland based applicants only via the Invest NI website (www.investni.com).

Both Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI will use an Expression of Interest (EOI) form for the call. This form will be issued post completion of the eligibility checker for Northern Ireland based projects. For projects based in Ireland, an Enterprise Ireland Advisor will hold a screening call with potential applicants and where eligible, issue an EOI form to scope a potential project.

The call for EOI will remain open until **13th November 2026 @ 12 noon** or until **such times as it becomes apparent that demand for support exceeds the total budget allocated for the scheme**. Each agency will reserve the right to close the scheme early in their jurisdictions should it become apparent that demand exceeds budget. Similarly, each agency reserves the right to extend the EOI timeframe where sufficient budget remains.

What happens if the scheme is oversubscribed, or it appears that the scheme will become oversubscribed?

The SCF will be run on a first come first served basis. Each agency will use an EOI form. This form will include:

- Company Details
- Company Financials & Employment
- Project Description
- Benefit of the project to the all-island economy & sustainability benefits
- Financial Viability & Balance of Funding
- Timeframe of Project Delivery
- Innovative nature of the project
- Signed company accounts or latest management accounts will need to be submitted with the EOI

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Will additional funding streams be secured or used for the SCF?

In the event of additional funding streams being uncovered or approved by each agency in their respective jurisdiction, these streams may be used to approve additional projects on a case-by-case basis. Funding will still be allocated under the same terms, conditions and criteria as the SCF including:

- Thematic Areas
- Timeframes
- Grant Rates
- Maximum Grant Awards
- Sustainable and Economic Benefits to the all – island economy
- TRL levels
- All other terms and conditions as outlined in the Guidance & FAQs

What sort of business is SCF aimed at?

SCF is aimed at client companies of either Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland, the scheme is aimed at companies who have a **demonstrative project (Ideally TRL Level 8 – 9 in Ireland or TRL 7 – 9 in Northern Ireland)** that can provide significant sustainable and commercial benefits on an island wide basis in one of the eligible funding categories.

SCF will be open to both SMEs and Large-Size Companies.

What is considered TRL 7 – 9?

As per EU definition – In TRL 7 a system prototype is demonstrated in an operational setting.

In TRL 8 technology is ready for implementation into an already existing technology or technology system.

Once the technology system has been proven during operations, it can be called TRL 9 and considered a commercial technology.

[trl-assessment-tool-guide-final.pdf \(horizon.europa.eu\)](https://horizon.europa.eu/portal/en/trl-assessment-tool-guide-final.pdf)

Will SCF be open to universities?

No, the scheme is aimed at the private sector in an industrial/manufacturing setting. Please see section 2 in the Guidance Notes “Business Eligibility” for further exclusions.

My Project falls outside the scope of the eligible activities, can I still make an application?

The eligible criteria are as listed in the Guidance Notes below:

- Flexible Electrification (For NI companies novel renewable energy generation with industrial decarbonisation is the eligible thematic area)
- Hard to abate sectors/ClimateTech/Carbon Capture via Hydrogen, Biomethane, Alternative Advanced Fuels, Sustainable Aviation Fuel - (Note – Carbon Capture is not an eligible thematic area in NI as a standalone project type)
- Water Efficiency, Re-use and Recovery
- Circularity, Resource Efficiency & Bioeconomy
- Carbon Capture* (Not an eligible thematic area in NI as a standalone project type)

Each organisation reserves the right for discretion to amend eligible activities throughout the duration of the Application process.

What is the definition of Innovative/Novel?

The development and implementation of a new or improved product, service, model, or process which is novel (significantly different), and has/will be introduced to the market (product/service) or implemented within the business (process, model) creating value. In the case of SCF, the scheme will look to process and business model innovation via, industrial decarbonisation which can be showcased as industry standard on an island-wide basis.

The SCF will support **demonstrative/first of a kind** industrial sustainability projects in defined challenges areas, Flexible Industrial Electrification, Hard-to-Abate Climate Tech, Water Efficiency and Circularity, that have not been deployed on the island before. These are key areas of opportunity for industry to accelerate decarbonisation and strengthen competitiveness with high potential for replicability across the island.

My project relies on innovative new technologies yet to be tested in an industrial setting for commercial value?

Each project Application will be put through a full Technical Appraisal to ensure that a funding award has the maximum potential for success. Whilst Invest NI and Enterprise Ireland are aware that high risk projects exist, they will be accepted on the basis that an independent technical appraisal deems them not to be unnecessarily risky and on the basis that the potential for success exists. Projects should ideally seek to demonstrate TRL level 7 – 9 in their applications in Northern Ireland or TRL 8 – 9 in Ireland.

My project is for solar, heat pumps or battery energy storage only, will it be eligible to apply?

The SCF is aimed at novel processes of demonstrative value, whilst solar, heat pumps and battery storage will not be deemed ineligible, they will need to be combined with other technologies and processes to offer enhanced value, i.e. combined thermal storage elements, combined with electrolyzers for green hydrogen. Solar, heat pumps and batteries are tried and tested technologies in operation across the island of Ireland and will therefore need additional added value technologies to be deemed eligible, e.g. long duration energy storage to flexible electrification and reduced curtailment of energy on the island of Ireland.

How many projects will be awarded grant?

There is no minimum or maximum number of projects that will be supported. Funding will be awarded to eligible projects based on merit and the funding available. The number of projects supported will depend on the quality, scale and value of applications received. In Northern Ireland, additional public funding may become available to support projects located within the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area through the Mid South West Growth Deal. In Ireland, Enterprise Ireland may have alternative funding available to its clients for some elements of proposed projects. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) may be applicable to applicants in Ireland.

If my project is not successful under the Sustainability Challenge Fund, are there sources of support available?

Projects will be assessed against the eligibility, appraisal and value-for-money criteria of the Sustainability Challenge Fund. Where a project is not selected for support, the Agencies may, where appropriate, signpost applicants to other relevant funding programmes or support mechanisms. In some cases, projects may be considered for alternative sources of funding where they align with the objectives, eligibility criteria and available budgets of other schemes. However, any such consideration would be subject to the requirements and approval processes of the relevant programme, and no guarantee of alternative funding can be provided.

What costs are eligible for grant support?

Only capital equipment costs are eligible for support. You will be required to maintain an asset register of your capital equipment.

What costs are ineligible for support?

Ineligible costs include but are not limited to,

- Land purchase
- Working Capital
- Costs related to investments to comply with Union standards in force
- Value added tax (VAT)
- Work already commenced
- Development & Consultancy
- Marketing
- Travel
- Employment Costs

Neither agency will provide support to a project where the applicant cannot demonstrate an incentive effect.

Are projects in any sectors or subsectors ineligible for support?

Yes, the following are not eligible to apply for SCF:

- Primary Agricultural Production and Horticulture (e.g., farming and/or selling live animals, growing crops).
- Fishing and Aquaculture Production (e.g., offshore activities)
- Sporting clubs/organisations and associated company structures
- Charities
- Non private health care providers
- Education – Schools, higher and further education
- Franchises which are not autonomous enterprises as defined by Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC
- Businesses already in receipt of or intending to gain other government support for the project.
- Businesses that have an outstanding liability to Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland brought about through grant clawback proceedings. If a satisfactory repayment plan is in place, the business may apply for consideration.
- Businesses or any member of senior management within the business that are subject to a current bankruptcy order, Individual Voluntary Arrangement, Company Voluntary Arrangement, County Court Judgement, or Company Director Disqualification
- Industries or businesses which may cause Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland unacceptable reputational risk, such as gambling, tobacco products, cannabis-based products which are not authorised as medicines, adult entertainment.
- Military & Defence – In Ireland
- Government organisations and bodies and government funded bodies. Invest NI & Enterprise Ireland reserve the right at their absolute discretion to refuse to support businesses that bring Invest NI, Enterprise Ireland and Ministers in their associated Departmental Bodies into disrepute.
- Support will not be provided to undertakings in difficulty, please see Annex D in guidance
- Additional exclusions may be applied at the discretion of Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland as per each organisation's operational guidelines

The scheme has stated that it aims to support significant projects, what is meant by significant?

- In Northern Ireland it is envisaged that minimum capital spend per project of €6m/£5m will be required before an Application form can be issued.
- Projects in Ireland under Enterprise Ireland will be assessed on a project-by-project basis.

Is there a maximum grant award available?

Yes. For projects in Northern Ireland, the maximum grant that can be awarded is £7.5 million per project. Applicants should note that a fixed budget has been allocated to the call, and projects will be assessed based on the need for government intervention, value for money and the incentive effect.

For projects in Ireland, funding support will be determined by Enterprise Ireland on a case-by-case basis.

The overall objective of the Fund is to support a portfolio of high-quality projects across Northern Ireland and Ireland that demonstrate the application and deployment of innovative sustainability technologies and solutions across the defined challenge areas. In making funding decisions, the Agencies will seek to maximise the overall economic, environmental and all-island benefits of the Fund, while supporting a range of projects that address different sustainability challenges and opportunities across both jurisdictions.

Can you confirm how the projects will have to demonstrate commercial and environmental benefit on an island wide basis?

Projects must be of demonstrative (ideally TRL Level 8- 9 in Ireland and TRL 7 – 9 in Northern Ireland) value to the company, manufacturing sectors or industrial sites and should:

- address challenges in sustainability and/or environmental protection i.e. projects must deliver an environmental improvement to a manufacturing site or industrial site via a commercial entity
- Projects must demonstrate value to the all-island economy. This can include (though is not limited to):
- **Project Collaboration North & South** - Projects where the applicant and project lead is the Invest NI/Enterprise Ireland client but leverages consultancy/products/services etc from or otherwise demonstrates meaningful collaboration with entities in the other jurisdiction.
- **Policy Alignment North & South** – Projects should demonstrate how they support the strategic priorities of DfE, DETE and other relevant Departments and agencies, including productivity, competitiveness, sustainability, regional development, innovation and the creation of good jobs across the island.
- **Potential benefit for North & South** - grant aided projects will be able to demonstrate information and knowledge transfer - e.g. host visits North & South, host webinars, and showcase the project on a webpage
- **“Knowledge sharing”** on an island wide basis will be an essential component of the supported projects to aid the replication and faster market penetration of supported technologies or solutions, across both jurisdictions.
- Supported projects will be required to share knowledge on and engage in activities that facilitate scaling up to a commercial scale, accelerate deployment, and promote the commercialisation of the proposed technologies on an island wide basis.

I am an industry services provider who installs and commissions equipment. Can I apply to the scheme?

No, Applications will only be accepted from companies who will pay for and use the equipment in an industrial or manufacturing setting. Equipment installation and services companies will not be eligible to apply.

If the scheme is undersubscribed in NI but oversubscribed in IE (Or vice versa) will funding be transferred to support additional projects in the other jurisdiction?

No, the allocated funding pot will be the same for each region, €13m per region.

My project may not be able to be completed by December 2030 can I still apply for support?

No, projects must be completed by December 2030 as funding allocated cannot be paid post this date. Project timelines will be robustly challenged at appraisal stage and awards made based on project delivery being deemed feasible in this timeframe. Claims for grant on capital expenditure will not be paid post the cut-off date and expenditure incurred by December 2030 without being claimed will not be paid out by Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland.

The company will be issued with a Letter of Offer, which must be formally accepted before any funding can be awarded. This Letter of Offer will set out specific milestones and timelines to ensure all eligible expenditure is incurred and claimed by the December 2030 deadline. This will form the contractual agreement between the funding body and company.

My project is reliant on capital equipment which could take 12 – 18 months to procure which risks the project not completing by December 2030?

Access to capital equipment will be robustly challenged during appraisal, failure to show access to equipment or an ability to complete the project in the required timeframe will result in the application being rejected.

My project relies on grid connection or planning permission?

Project timeframes including grid connection and planning permission will be robustly challenged during appraisal. Failure to detail planning approvals or grid connects for timely delivery of a project will result in the application being rejected. Off grid solutions should be considered where it is believed grid connection issues are cost and time prohibitive.

Projects Requiring Environmental Permits & Additional Local Government/Planning Approvals

It will be the responsibility of the applicant to evidence how they can complete the project by 31st December 2030. Where appropriate, applicants will need to provide evidence that they have additional permitting and Local Government Approvals in place. It will not be the responsibility of each approving agency to liaise with issuing authorities to assist with project completion. The scheme promoters reserve the right to withdraw applications where applicants cannot fully showcase and demonstrate how additional approvals needed will be secured in time. Environmental Permitting includes but is not limited to Pollution Prevention Control (PPC), Abstraction/Discharge consent, Waste Management Authorisation etc.

Can I apply for a start or proceed at your own risk letter for a potential project?

No, SCF will not offer prospective applicants start or proceed at your own risk letter.

Can a parent company or business group submit multiple applications for its different business subsidiaries?

No, if you are a business that is part of a group structure with the same ultimate ownership, you may only submit one application across the entire group.

Can I apply for more than one grant for separate projects within my company in two locations?

No, just one application can be accepted per company which should be at a single manufacturing or industrial site.

Can a number of different companies collaborate on one project application to SCF?

Where collaborations between several companies are being considered for a project, one lead application should be submitted to the relevant body based on the location of the project, ie: for an Northern Ireland based project a collaborative project should be submitted to Invest NI, and for an Ireland based project, the Application should be submitted to Enterprise Ireland. The lead applicant should be the applicant who intends to install the capital equipment/solution and other companies should be seen as sub-contractors providing equipment or services to the lead applicant. Only the capital equipment costs incurred by the lead applicant would be eligible for expenditure.

I will need to secure additional funding to be able to deliver my project, can I still apply?

Applicants will need to state and showcase clearly how they can provide the balance of funding for their project. This will be robustly challenged at appraisal stage and any award of funding may be subject to stringent conditions in a Letter of Offer to provide balance of funding. Failure to showcase and evidence balance of funding will result in applications being rejected.

How do I know if my business is eligible to apply for SCF?

Details on business eligibility and exclusions can be found in the Guidance Notes. In Northern Ireland you will be required to complete the Invest NI online Eligibility Checker as part of the pre-application process. In the case of projects based in Ireland via Enterprise Ireland, contact your Client Advisor to check eligibility.

The Eligibility Checker will be available from 12th October 2026.

Do I need to be over 18 to apply for SCG?

There needs to be a Director/Proprietor/Partner aged 18 or over within the business authorised to sign the Letter of Offer contractual agreement. If under 18, they cannot be held liable to the contract with Invest NI or Enterprise Ireland

Does the business have to be in Northern Ireland or Ireland to apply?

Yes, businesses wishing to apply for SCF need to be physically located in Northern Ireland or Ireland and have at least one Director residing in Northern Ireland or Ireland. The project seeking support must also be taking place in Northern Ireland or Ireland

For projects based in Northern Ireland, the applicant will apply to Invest Northern Ireland. For projects based in Ireland, the applicant will apply to Enterprise Ireland.

Will successful projects be publicised?

Yes. As the SCF is funded through public funding, successful projects may be featured in publicity and promotional activities undertaken by Invest NI, Enterprise Ireland, InterTradelreland and funding partners. This may include case studies, media announcements, events, publications and other communications to showcase project outcomes, sustainability impacts and the benefits delivered to the all-island economy. Participation in reasonable publicity activities will be a condition of funding.

Can an advisor/consultant (anyone external to the business) make an application on behalf of the business?

No. You can give permission to company contacts to complete the Application. All Applications must be authorised in the case of a Limited Company by a Director or the Secretary, and in the case of a Sole Trader or Partnership by a Proprietor or Partner.

We would advise that nobody knows your business better than you do and the Application Form has been designed to enable an owner or manager to be able to complete it without outside assistance.

What do I need to submit as part of the Application?

The Application will have several different parts. The following should be submitted:

- Project & Business Plan – template as provided by INI or EI
- Environmental, Costings & Equipment template as provided by INI or EI
- Projected Monthly Cash Flows to December 2030 or the financial year end in which applicants intend to make their last claim – P&L, Balance Sheet and Cashflows –
*Complete with Assumptions and forecast on a monthly basis
- Signed full accounts for the previous 3 years to include P&L and Balance Sheet
- Latest in year management accounts which should be no more than 3 months old
- 3-year historical financial statements in soft copy
- Organisation Chart
- Group Structure

Will second hand equipment be eligible for grant?

Yes, though for second hand equipment, an independent valuation detailing age, condition, and current value of the equipment will need to be provided.

Can my project/company purchase equipment from a related party within a group structure or related party company?

No. Related party equipment even where a financial transaction occurs between bank accounts, will not be eligible for grant assistance. Intercompany transfers will not be eligible for assistance. For guidance on related parties and company size please [See here](#).

Can I pay for capital equipment in instalments for my project and will this be deemed eligible for grant?

Yes – however the instalment period/payment plan must not exceed the life of the letter of offer completion or end date. The completion date is the date on which the project must be completed with equipment installed and the project fully functional. The end date is the date by which all claims must be submitted.

For the SCF, the completion and end date will be set as the same date and all payment plans agreed with 3rd parties must be completed by these dates also. There will be no exceptions or extensions to these rules. For projects relying on payment plans for instalment payment of equipment, the purchase agreement, instalment plan, invoices per individual payment and bank statements to show individual payments, will be needed for the claims process.

Will Capital Equipment purchases be eligible for grant at gross purchase price or net of VAT?

The net of VAT amount will be eligible for grant, not the gross purchase price.

Northern Ireland Specific Questions

How do I submit a claim for NI based projects approved by Invest NI?

Cost based claim packs can be downloaded by [clicking here](#)

Companies can complete a cost-based claim pack and submit it to claims@investni.com

A claims inspector and claims reference number will be allocated to your claim. Only the claim pack itself will need to be submitted initially.

Companies in receipt of a letter of offer for projects under SCF will have to maintain an asset register of all capital equipment which must be depreciated in line with company policy. The claims inspector will look to view the asset register and depreciation policy as part of the vouching process.

Invoices, BAC's remittance, Bank Statements to show capital equipment has been purchased and paid for will be required. All equipment must be bought for and paid for during the life of the project and before 31st December 2030. Any invoices, or payments dated post December 2030 will be deemed ineligible and will not qualify for grant payment.

A claims inspector will conduct a site visit to view the asset in place and tie the asset number of the asset back to the asset register.

My project does not meet the envisaged minimum capital expenditure amount in Northern Ireland for eligible projects, can I apply?

It is envisaged that the scheme will be oversubscribed to applicants and therefore applications for projects below the significant expenditure threshold in Northern Ireland are not likely to be accepted. Enterprise Ireland will assess applications on a project-by-project basis. In Northern Ireland in the unlikely case of the scheme being undersubscribed, Invest NI reserves the right to reduce their minimum capital expenditure threshold.

How will Invest NI manage if additional funding is made available through the Mid South West Growth Deal for projects in the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area?

Projects will first be assessed against the core eligibility and appraisal criteria of the scheme. Where a project is located within the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area and cannot be supported from the main Sustainability Challenge Fund budget, Invest NI may consider the use of Mid South West Region Growth Deal funding, subject to eligibility and confirmation of funding availability through the Deal. Where additional funding becomes available, Invest NI reserves the right to allocate funding in a manner that maximises the number of eligible

projects supported across Northern Ireland, while taking account of the objectives and eligibility requirements of the respective funding sources.

Will applicants from the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area receive priority access to funding?

No. All applications will be assessed consistently against the published scheme criteria. However, the availability of Mid South West Growth Deal may provide additional funding capacity for eligible projects within the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area, helping to maximise the number of projects that can be supported.

Ireland-Specific Questions

Submitting a claim for Projects in Ireland

In the first instance, where you are in receipt of a letter of offer from Enterprise Ireland, you should contact your EI Client Advisor who will be able to assist with the Grant Payments team.