



South Tipperary
Development CLG

Toolkit for the Sustainable Management of Community Facilities



METHOD

Gerard Doyle, Tanya Lalor
and Eamon Connolly



Rialtas
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Committee



South Tipperary
Development CLG

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The Board of South Tipperary Development CLG (STDC) is delighted to support the work of community volunteers by publishing this 'Toolkit for the Sustainable Management of Community Facilities'. Our goal, as captured in the STDC mission statement is "to support and plan for the development of South Tipperary as a progressive region of thriving and inclusive communities".

Recognising that much of our essential local infrastructure such as community halls, sports facilities, cultural outlets etc are managed by voluntary groups, STDC commissioned research to support these groups to get maximum usage from their facilities and help them to be sustainable; socially, environmentally, and economically. This Toolkit is a product of that work and provides useful information, practical advice and resources in a user-friendly way.

The Board would like to thank the development team whose work has led to this good-practice toolkit – the committees of volunteers, METHOD consultants, our Rural Development Team – and the EU LEADER Programme for funding this initiative.

We hope that all the community groups in South Tipperary and beyond who manage facilities will find this a valuable resource.

Simon Ryan

Chairperson, South Tipperary Development Clg



Simon Ryan

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

During the COVID pandemic the importance of community cohesion and solidarity was well demonstrated. As we emerge from the crisis, building community resilience and sustainable local facilities is more essential than ever before. Following closures, community facilities have reopened and begun to build back their activities and face the challenges of lost income. However, this is also an opportunity to take stock and plan forward for the sustainability of the facilities into the future.

The Toolkit covers the areas of planning, finance, identifying and meeting the needs of all in the community, maximising the usage of the facility, attracting and retaining volunteers and essential maintenance. While the research for this Toolkit was carried out pre COVID, its publication now is timely, and we hope it will be a useful guide for voluntary management committees who provide venues for arts, culture, sports, meetings, classes, recreation and so much more across the county.

The Toolkit is the product of a year's work by Gerard Doyle, Eamon Connolly and Tanya Lalor of METHOD Consultants with community facility management committees across Tipperary. We would like to thank them, and the committees involved; Aherlow Kilross Community Council, Ardfinnan Community Council, Clonmel Town FC, Cloneen Sports and Social Club, Hillview Sports Club, Kilfeakle Community Centre and Tennis Club, Ballypatrick Community Hall, Kilcash Community Hall, Killurney Community Hall.

STDC management and staff are always committed to providing support to community groups through our various programmes, including LEADER, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Tús and Rural Social Schemes. We look forward to working with you in the coming years and wish you all success with your endeavours to make your community a great place to live, work or visit.

Isabel Cambie

CEO, South Tipperary Development Clg



Isabel Cambie

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1 Planning	5
2 Finances	12
3 Community Needs	18
4 Usage	22
5 Volunteers & Governance	26
6 Maintenance & Investment	30
Appendices	33
Appendix 1: Stakeholders and other relevant organisations	33
Appendix 2: Case studies	34
Appendix 3: Skills audit template for governance structures	37
Appendix 4: Practices that can undermine good governance	38
Appendix 5: Supporting youth engagement	39
Appendix 6: Supporting new members	40
Appendix 7: Retaining Volunteers	41
Appendix 8: Life expectancy of building items	41
Appendix 9: Maintenance schedules and checklists	42
Appendix 10: Identifying community needs	43
Appendix 11: Some sources of funding for community managed facilities	45
Appendix 12: Environmental sustainability checklist	46
Appendix 13: References and additional information	47

INTRODUCTION

There are many challenges faced by the voluntary groups who manage over 400 community facilities in Tipperary. These facilities provide essential amenities including community halls, sports clubs, arts centres, resource centres, gardens and walks etc. Key challenges include funding, attracting and retaining volunteers, maintenance, identifying and addressing community needs, and ensuring that facilities are socially inclusive. Often these responsibilities fall on a small number of dedicated volunteers to plan, govern, manage, operate and in most cases, maintain their facilities.

PURPOSE OF TOOLKIT

The purpose of this toolkit is to help community and voluntary groups to manage their community facilities in a sustainable manner. It includes topics such as how to generate income to meet costs (and how to charge for use), how to engage with your community and identify their needs, how to increase use of your facilities, and how to attract volunteers.

It emerges from a strategic planning process with several community and sporting facilities in South Tipperary, which was commissioned by South Tipperary Development CLG. However, the themes covered are applicable to all community facilities such as sports facilities, arts facilities, community centres and other spaces that are operational and open to the public.

It aims to be practical and includes tools, checklists, case study examples, and other resources.

It draws on good practice, existing published material and the experiences of groups in South Tipperary. It has not been possible to include everything in this document and links to supplementary resources are provided in Appendices.

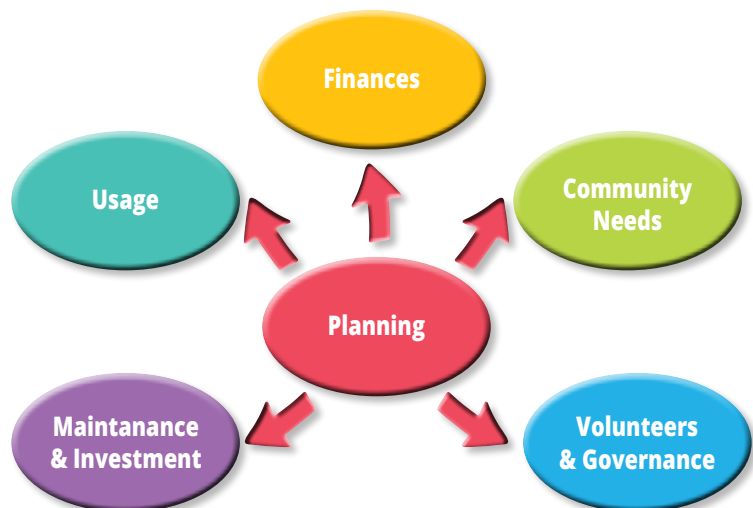
HOW WAS THIS TOOLKIT DEVELOPED?

This toolkit was developed following work with a number of community organisations managing facilities in South Tipperary. These groups took part in a strategic planning process, supported by South Tipperary Development Company. These organisations gave generously of their time and expertise, and were: Aherlow Kilross Community Council, Ardfinnan Community Council, Clonmel Town FC, Cloneen Sports and Social Club, Hillview Sports Club, Kilfeakle Community Centre and Tennis Club, Ballypatrick Community Hall, Kilcash Community Hall, and Killurney Community Hall. The consultants would like to acknowledge the contribution and commitment of these community organisations.

The entire process was supported by South Tipperary Development Company, and the consultants would particularly like to thank Sara Bourke and her colleagues for their support and insight which guided the process.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is targeted at volunteers who manage and run community facilities. Typically, these facilities will have a board of directors or management committee, with no – or very few – staff members, and might rely on volunteers or workers on Tús, Community Employment (CE) and Rural Social Scheme (RSS) programmes to run and maintain the facility. The toolkit acknowledges that managing a community facility comes with challenges: These are illustrated throughout the toolkit with quotations that arose as part of the planning process with groups.



1 PLANNING

“If you fail to plan you plan to fail”

“A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow”

“A goal without a plan is just a wish”



PLANNING

Planning is being clear far ahead about what you want to achieve, how you are going to achieve it and who is going to do the work. It looks forward for one, three or five years. This can seem a luxury for many busy voluntary community groups whose primary focus may be on the day-to-day requirements of keeping the facility open. Indeed, this was a finding of a study undertaken by Tipperary County Council which found that 68 percent of community facilities, 57 percent of sports facilities and 27 percent of arts facilities did not have a written plan¹.

“ Most of the effort for running our facility falls on a few of us....it’s the same people doing all the work...we don’t have time to look at the issues of future planning ”

Committee member of community facility in South Tipperary

Having a plan should provide clarity and support for all involved, help to use time and resources efficiently, be useful for funding applications, and for when new people join the committee. A plan should ideally be for 3 to 5 years.

The planning process should assess the current situation, set out the objectives and strategies, and should detail tasks to address the needs identified. A clear plan is also a good way to get people involved and engaged, and to get wider community support. However, it must be realistic and consider resources available (e.g. finances, and volunteers).

“ The planning process allowed [us] to clarify present and future states, especially committee roles in the future. We acknowledge... strengths, especially fund-raising and grants...recognise weaknesses in areas such as web, sales, marketing... ”

Committee member of community facility in South Tipperary

¹ Tipperary County Council (2016 and 2019) Report on Findings from a Survey of Community, Sports & Arts Facilities.



VISION AND MISSION

Your **vision** should describe your desired future state for your community facility. It provides direction for your organisation and should be a clear 'photograph' of how you would like your facility in five years or some point in the future. Example:

“Our facility is an open friendly welcoming hub for everyone in the community, bringing people together and facilitating all our local community groups for meetings and activities, and supporting new ideas and innovations. It generates enough income to cover costs through a combination of community and commercial uses.”

Your **mission** should be one to three sentences that clearly outline what your purpose is. It should be about how you will achieve your vision. Example:

“We will work with everyone in our community – younger and older, residents and visitors to develop the facility and its activities for the benefit of all. We will work with outside stakeholders who can support our objectives. We will try to keep costs affordable for community members, while covering operational costs.”

Review your vision and your mission

Before you start planning, it is useful to review your vision and mission. Sometimes people may not be familiar with them, or they may be out of date and not reflect current needs or requirements.

ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:
Do you have a vision and mission? If you are not sure, check your constitution or rules.
Are they clear and to the point?
Are they relevant – do they reflect current needs and aims?
Are they inclusive – do they reflect the voices / needs of everyone in the community, for example younger and older people; people with disabilities; new communities, minority ethnic groups?



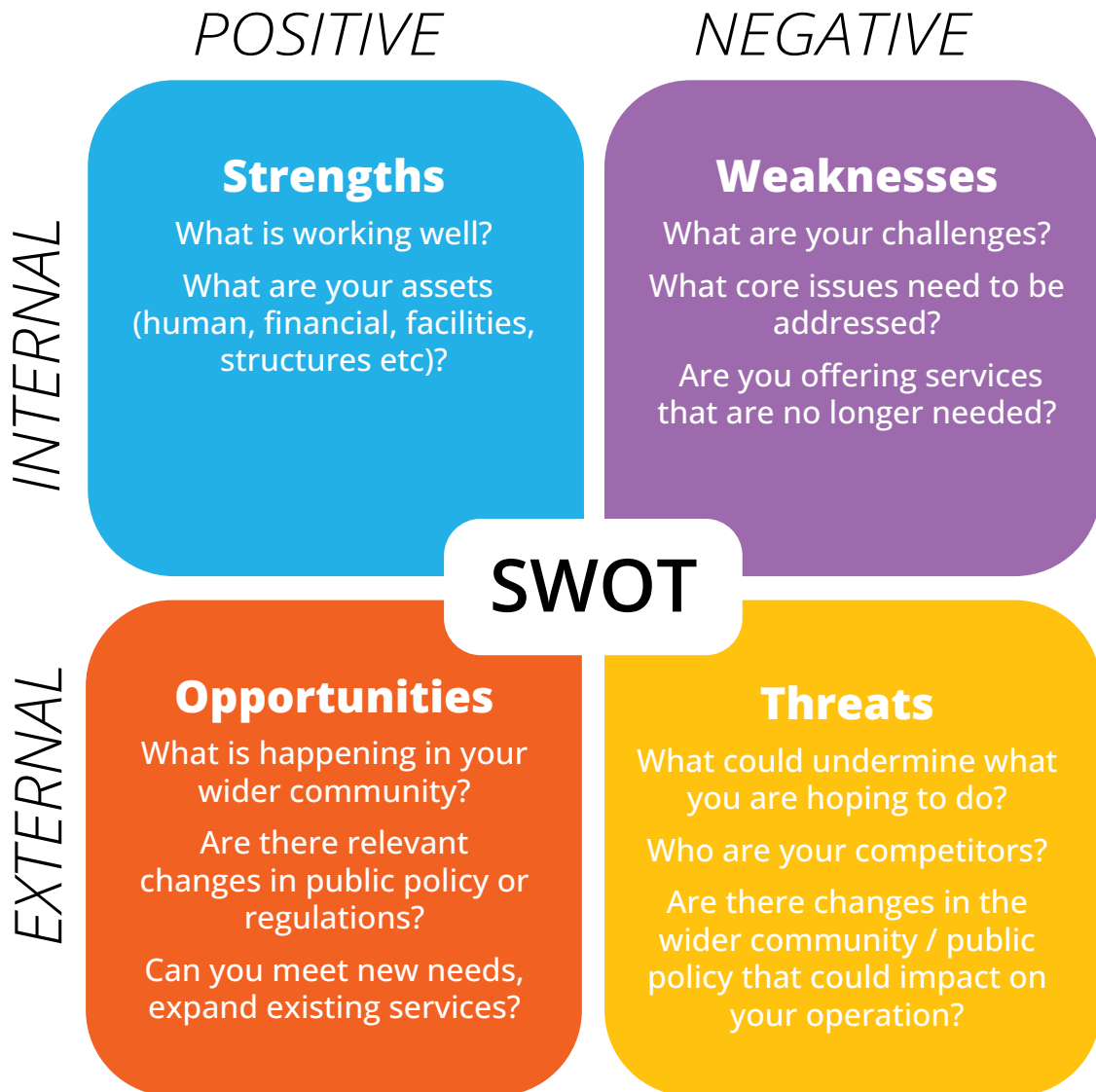
ASSESS YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

All plans start with a need or issue to be addressed. So, you need to think about what the current situation for your facility is, before you start planning what you are going to do.

THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH YOUR FACILITY	WHY IS THIS QUESTION IMPORTANT?
<p>What type of facility is it? What does it comprise e.g. buildings (and the rooms within them), sports facilities, car park, green areas, etc.</p>	<p>If your facility is multi-purpose, you may be able to use it for a wide range of activities. Teasing out the potential use of your space will help to plan or to brainstorm potential new activities and uses (brainstorming for increasing use is in Appendix 10)</p>
<p>Who owns it? If not your group, is it on a lease, and if so, for how long?</p>	<p>If you don't own your facility, or if you don't occupy it on a long-term basis, long term planning or building renovations may not be feasible. For example, if you occupy your building on a short-term lease or a license, it may be not be viable to undertake capital works, or sub-let parts of it. You should check the terms of the lease / licence to see what is permitted.</p>
<p>Who manages it / how is it managed and operated?</p>	<p>Your plan will need to be tailored to your available resources. Or you may need to look to access more volunteers or staff to achieve your objectives and plans. This may involve engaging with new volunteers, for day-to-day work or for governance and decision-making structures. See Section 5.</p>
<p>What activities is it currently being used for? Who is using it?</p>	<p>It is important to know if your facility is meeting the needs of your community. Activities should be relevant and well publicised. Planning should involve profiling your community and its needs, and consulting with the community. It is important that all sections of the community, and those who may experience social exclusion can participate. See Section 3 and Appendix 10.</p>
<p>Who / what organisations support you to sustain your facility?</p>	<p>Look beyond current users of your facility to consider who might be supporters of your facility. This could include funders and state agencies (e.g. to provide funding, to hire space for events), corporate sector organisations (to support, volunteer, provide pro-bono technical supports), sole traders and other businesses (who might provide services from, and hire space in your facility). See list of possible contacts Appendix 1.</p>
<p>What is its financial position? Are you covering your costs?</p>	<p>A review of your financial situation should consider how costs can be reduced. You need to consider are you budgeting for long term issues such as maintenance ? And you need to consider how much you need to charge (or fundraise) for long-term sustainability. See Section 2.</p>
<p>How is it maintained?</p>	<p>It is important to make provision for long-term maintenance, and to ensure that day-to-day maintenance is provided for. A guide to the maintenance needs is outlined in Appendix 11.</p>
<p>What is the environmental footprint of your facility?</p>	<p>This could include the type of energy you use, whether the building is insulated, any waste or pollution produced, in particular plastic, and attempts you make to encourage biodiversity and the natural environment. See Appendix 12.</p>

CARRY OUT A SWOT ANALYSIS

A **SWOT** analysis considers the **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities** and **threats** for an organisation, and provides a good basis for planning:



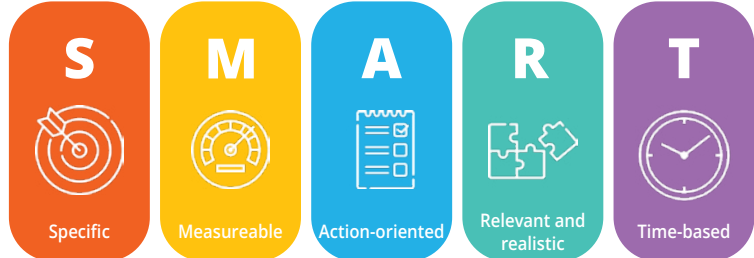
IDENTIFY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic objectives

Strategic objectives should offer some detail about what you aim to do to achieve your mission and vision. There should be a clear logic between the issue to be addressed; your vision and mission and the strategic objectives set out to achieve these. The strategic objectives should also take into consideration your SWOT analysis.

Strategic objectives should be **S.M.A.R.T.**

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Relevant and realistic
- Time-based



Once the strategic objectives have been identified, a set of actions which will be undertaken in order to meet them. As the planning process unfolds, some of the detail around implementation may be included in an operational plan.

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic Objective 1:

Reduce energy costs by 20% over the next 3 years

Actions

- Active management of energy usage via new SMART meter
- Seek funding to insulate the building and install renewable energy

Strategic Objective 2:

Increase regular daytime usage of the facility to at least 20 hours a week in Year 1 and to 30 hours per week in Year 2

Actions

- Market the facility to potential users / organisations in the wider catchment area
- Specifically target activities for retired people, carers in the home, people wishing to upskill etc who are available during the day.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS FOR EACH OF YOUR OBJECTIVES

What?	What types of activities and actions will be required to deliver on this objective?
When?	When will these activities and actions be completed by?
Who?	Who will undertake the actions?
	Who will take responsibility for making sure the actions are completed (e.g. governance)?
	Are there any organisations that could help you achieve them?
How?	What resources will you need?
	What does success look like? What are your targets?

WHAT A PLAN MIGHT LOOK LIKE

CONTENTS OF A PLAN	SAMPLE HEADINGS
Introduction	Details of facility
	Purpose of plan
Profile of the community	Profile of community and area that the facility will serve
	Identification of key groups
Demand /potential demand	Current users of facility
Opportunities /new activities	Potential uses and users of space – including scope for commercial uses
Strategy	Vision; mission; strategic objectives; actions.
Operational plan	Greater detail on how the strategic objectives will be achieved
	Activities
	Logistics – opening hours, etc
	Sources of funding
	Partnerships/ alliances with others
	Resources including staffing and volunteers
	Governance structures
Financial projections	Estimates of costs and income (usually over three years)



2 FINANCES

Financial Sustainability is essential for the management of community facilities. Not only do current costs have to be covered, there is a need to generate a surplus to cover other activities, to have a fund for regular maintenance and also for future development and upgrades.



MEETING YOUR COSTS – FINANCES

Community facilities face challenges around financial issues – as many facility costs are fixed – and these costs remain the same even if there is no income generated or users in the centre. Fixed costs include light and heat, maintenance and cleaning, insurance, audit and accountancy, and staff (where staff are employed).

The other issue is that many community facilities in South Tipperary and elsewhere apply arbitrary charges for use of their facility without reference to the actual cost of running and maintaining the facility. A study undertaken by Tipperary County Council in 2016 found that:

35% of community and sporting facilities were not applying fees and charges which would provide them with a consistent revenue stream.

In relation to sporting facilities, the survey found that 69% apply fees and charges for use of the facility, but the majority also rely on additional sources of income (e.g. fundraising and grants).

72% of arts facilities rely on fees and charges as their primary income to offset the costs and running and maintaining the facility, but 49% had no pricing schedule.



For any community facility, it is important to be aware of the following:

- There are few – if any - funding streams that will cover fixed costs (except for staffing such as Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment, Tús and others)
- Even if you cover your day to day expenses, you should create **a surplus** to build reserves and sinking funds, to cover future and occasional maintenance and repair costs (see sinking funds in **section 6**).
- Most community facilities in South Tipperary that were supported to develop their strategic plans did not have enough funds to cover unexpected costs and had not forecast the possibility of unexpected issues arising. This is not sustainable.

IDENTIFY YOUR COSTS AND DETERMINING HOW MUCH TO CHARGE FOR USERS

Financial planning and budgeting for a community facility is essential. You should establish the actual cost of operating the facility before deciding on your charging policies.

Step 1 – Establish the true costs of running your facility

All costs should be calculated, including depreciation, and provision made for long term maintenance. If you include in your costs supports provided to other community activities, e.g. a family fun day, senior citizens party or similar, and you regard these as an ongoing cost (as opposed to a discretionary payment), include these in your costs. This needs to be done annually.



Make sure that you calculate and include the costs you need to run your facility efficiently, not just your current budget – remember you may not be spending money in areas that you need to (e.g. a website, an online booking system or a job system to enable access, safety requirements e.g. COVID). This may require some research on the costs you need to provide for.

SAMPLE ITEMS	
Light and heat	Equipment
Audit and accountancy	Cleaning costs
Staffing costs	Telephone and IT/ website/ email
Printing and stationery / office costs	Maintenance
Insurance	Consumables – tea, coffee, cleaning products, etc
Materials	Depreciation ¹
Refuse and waste	Sinking fund
Long term maintenance and refurbishment	Water charges
Marketing and social media costs	Other ongoing costs for your organisation ²

- 1 Calculate a percentage based on the value of the item and the number of years it will last (e.g. 8% of an item's value if you believe it will last 12 years). If you include depreciation in your annual costs, you should not include capital expenditure in your annual costings.
- 2 For example, you might have wider organisational costs, or contributions that are made to other activities (e.g. provision of transport for key groups, etc) that you consider to be commitments that need to be included in the overall costs.



Don't forget to consider how you can reduce your costs – e.g. have you checked the rates of utility and telephone companies? In the energy audits undertaken by groups and supported by STDC, the first recommended step was to review utility provider regularly and to ensure that lights, appliances, heating etc are on time-clocks and switched off when not in use.

Step 2 – Calculate the required rate per square metre to meet your costs

Many community groups have not calculated a charge rate required to cover the true cost of operating the facility. To do this:

- Divide your total costs by the rentable space that you have - this applies to indoor space and not pitches or other outdoor spaces, because the rental value and income that can be generated from outside spaces will depend on their particular use, not necessarily their size, and
- Divide this again by the number of hours available it is available to get your chargeable rate per hour.

The following example is for illustrative purposes only

Let's say the annual cost of running a community facility is €100,000 per annum. It has three spaces for hire: a kitchen (50 SqM) and a small hall (80 SqM) and a small meeting room (30 SqM).

The total SqM that can be charged out therefore is 160 SqM. This means that the total income needed (to cover total costs) per annum is €625 per SqM that can be hired out or rented. This exclude hallways, porches, toilets and other space that cannot be hired out or charged for.

The space is available for 65 hours per week (based on 13 hours per day during the week and reduced weekend time). However, demand and experience indicate that it will not be in use for this much time on an ongoing basis. The average demand is likely to be in the region of 60% of capacity – which is 39 hours per week. And taking into consideration downtime, holidays, Christmas etc., usage is likely to be for 48 weeks in the year. This does not imply that the facility is closed for a month. Rather, it is a realistic basis for calculating typical usage to consider periods of low usage.

This means that there is a probable productive number of hours which is 39 hours per week and 48 weeks in the year = 1,872 hours. So, this means that per hour in use, each SqM will need to generate 0.33 cents.

This gives you a guide for the income you need to generate or charges you need to consider for each space – this means that if the hall is hired for one hour, at 80 SqM this should ideally yield €27 per hour; the meeting room (30 SqM) should ideally yield €10 per hour and the Kitchen (50 SqM) should ideally yield €17 per hour.

This formula can be tailored to your facility by clicking on the excel table below and inserting the figures relevant to your facility (into the non-shaded cells and the shaded cells will apply the formulas). If you use this formula, you can change the number of hours available for your facility, or the expected usage of your facility.

You should include the total size of space that you can rent or hire (room for rental), and not include other spaces that you cannot charge for. This is because the total rental income – which will contribute to your total overheads – will be derived from the space that you can rent. So determining your income required per sq metre is derived from the sq metre that you can hire out or rent.



SAMPLE FORMULA TO ESTIMATE HOW MUCH INCOME YOU NEED TO GENERATE OR CHARGE PER SqM		
Annual operating cost in euro	€20,000	
Total rental space SqM (in your building)	400	<i>Include room sizes (not porches, ancillary areas, toilets, etc)</i>
Income required per annum per SqM	€50	
Weekly capacity max (hours)	50	<i>You can base this on your opening hours</i>
Estimated usage (percentage maximum capacity)	25 hours 50%	<i>For example half of maximum usage (be realistic)</i>
Number of weeks per year	35	<i>Remember, you won't be productive for 52 weeks</i>
Estimated productive hours per annum	875	
Average rate required per SqM per productive hour	0.06	
Room size in SqM	200	
Average rate required for room per hour	€11	

The benefit of this approach is that you are both planning for the sustainability of your facility, and also transparent in your charging policies to all of your users – so that everyone is clear about the costs that you face in providing services to your community.

Using this formula will also allow you to monitor the usage of your facility and the extent to which it is meeting your cost requirements – for example, if your cost per SqM is based on hiring the space for 50 hours per week and the space is used for only 30 hours a week, this will allow you to monitor whether you are on track with your costs.

Step 3 – Decide your charging policy

Many community organisations are reluctant to charge a fee based on the actual costs that they incur. This is because:

- They feel the community cannot afford to pay
- They feel that the community has already contributed through fundraising and other supports
- They do not want to restrict access by the community
- They have a policy of not charging certain groups
- Also, the rate per hour must be competitive, and the actual cost per hour may not always be a viable rate to charge.

Remember – if your community facility is not financially viable or self sustaining, it may not be available in the future for the community groups you wish to serve – so you need to balance the current needs with future requirements to keep the facility in good and safe working order.

It is common practice to do one or both of the following:

- Apply a sliding scale for use of your facility on an hourly basis (with a subsidised community rate, as opposed to general or commercial rate for outside groups, state agencies, and funded organisations, etc.)
- Apply a weighting onto certain facilities – for example, you would expect to charge more for a commercial kitchen than you would for a meeting room – this can be a way of off-setting subsidised rates for groups.

“It’s hard to establish a set rate, when there are so many groups that we work with, who cannot afford to pay the rates we need to charge.”

Committee member of community facility in South Tipperary

Step 4 – Contingency planning

The exercise above is not simply about identifying how much you charge – it is as much about identifying how much you will need to raise from other sources of finance in order to meet your costs. In other words, if you choose not to apply a realistic rate based on the above, or if you cannot charge the rate identified, you will have a clearer sense of the need to increase fundraising activities, or apply for grants to meet shortfall – if these grants are available, or reduce your costs.

In other circumstances, it may not be viable to charge a rate based on your costs – for example, if your building has inordinately high heating costs because it is energy inefficient, it may be reflected in a very high charge rate that would not be acceptable to your user groups. In this case, it is also important to ensure that your costs are competitive with other similar facilities locally.

In a recent energy audit of community buildings by the Tipperary Energy Agency on behalf of STDC, there was a large variation in energy costs per SqM from €11 to €49 per annum suggesting that significant savings may be possible, even prior to considering a retrofit. (See Appendix 12).



Sources of Support

Financial assistance for your project can come from a number of different public and private sources (see appendix 11). Local development companies such as STDC (or equivalent in your area) are a good source of information. Public Participation Networks (PPNs) regularly issue newsletters with information about upcoming grants.

Work Placement Schemes

These schemes place people to work in community organisations for 19.5 hours per week, along with a small materials budget. Development Companies such as STDC manage the Tús and Rural Social Scheme, and Community Employment is managed via local sponsors under the remit of the Dept of Social Protection. Participation in these programmes benefits both the host organisation and the people involved.

3 COMMUNITY NEEDS

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.” – Jean Vanier

“Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much” – Helen Keller

“When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.” – Pat Wadors



IDENTIFYING YOUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

Many of the groups that participated in the research for this toolkit experienced varying levels of facility under-use. For many communities in South Tipperary, lifestyles, priorities and needs are changing, and this impacts on membership, usage, access to volunteers, finances, etc. In some cases, membership was dwindling.

However, the experience of COVID has highlighted the importance of community and volunteers in supporting and assisting those who were most vulnerable in the community. Tens of thousands of volunteers and thousands of community organisations volunteered in direct response to COVID. At the same time, many facilities remained closed, and the challenge now is to re-open and rebuild to identify and meet changed post pandemic community needs.

Community needs change all the time – in order that community facilities remain relevant to these changing needs, it is important to engage with the community to find out what their needs are.

Finding time to do this is a challenge, remember it need not be done alone – a number of community organisations could collaborate on a local needs assessment.



What do we mean by community?

Community can mean:

- People living in an area
- Groups with a common interest or association, even if they don't live in the same area (e.g. young people, Travellers, LGBTQI+, etc)
- People with similar interests – members, players of a particular sport, musicians, etc
- Organisations in the catchment area and beyond – such as schools, youth clubs, special interest groups, who may have use for the facility.

Your community needs will drive your activities, pricing policy, opening hours, and your future. This needs to be done on an ongoing basis – as community needs change.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Gather the relevant statistics

Statistical information

- Age profile
- Level of education attainment
- Degree of disadvantage in each of areas
- Household structure (% of lone parents, older people living alone, etc)
- Households living in local authority housing
- Level of car ownership
- Level of unemployment (male and female)
- Compare all the above with state averages
- Profile of specific communities (Travellers, new communities, people with disabilities, etc)
- Economic activity and profile information

Sources: Census 2016 and 2022 when published, CSO, LECP¹, Pobal maps²the County Tipperary Data Hub³.

Ask the community for their views

Ask your community about their needs and how your facility can meet these needs. You can do this by engaging with those who use your service and those who don't, for example by:

- Holding public meetings
- Talking to people where they congregate (outside schools, crèches, churches, matches, other events)
- Surveys with users and non-users of your facility

What to ask your community in a needs analysis

- What they want from their community facility
- What opportunities do they think there are for new activities or services?
- Are there any activities that they no longer want to access?
- Whether they want different opening hours

Make sure you talk to as many people in the community as possible, including those who may not currently participate in local activities. Further information and a sample questionnaire for carrying out a community needs assessment are in Appendix 10 and 11.

¹ Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) which are developed by local authorities.

² <https://maps.pobal.ie/>

³ www.tipperaryinfo.ie

A needs assessment means that your facility should remain relevant to the community, you may find new groups who need to use your facility (and therefore increase usage), and this may also lead to wider community involvement in your facility (this is discussed below).

Check that your facility is inclusive

An inclusive community – and community facility – is one that:

- Respects everyone, celebrates diversity, shares access to resources and promotes equal treatment and equal opportunity
- Works to eliminate all forms of discrimination and responds quickly to racist and other discriminating incidents.⁴
- Engages as wide a range of people as possible within its community in its decision-making structures.
- Is accessible for those with limited mobility or who have disabilities (ramps, accessible toilets, clear signage, hearing loops and accessibility tools).
- Works to remove barriers to participation in community activities, be they social, economic or cultural.

“Community facilities can enable social interaction and social events that benefit the local community – all social groups in your community should be encouraged to participate.”

Levels of inclusion

Check if you engage with your community at all levels within your organisation – so that that your community participates at all levels – from using your facility to making decisions about its future.

✓	CHECKLIST
	Is your board or committee representative of the community, and does it reflect its diversity?
	How many of your volunteers are from groups experiencing marginalisation and inequality in your community?
	Have you policies for priority access or reduced-price rates for groups within your community with the greatest need?
	Do you consult, survey or gather feedback from those experiencing marginalisation in your community?
	Do you know if your facility is accessed by all – including marginalised groups, and if so, to what extent?

STDC (or its equivalent in your area) may be able to support you to make your facility more inclusive via their social inclusion programmes, such as SICAP – Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.

4 <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/inclusive-communities/main>

4 USAGE OF FACILITY

24% of community facilities did not have set opening hours and were only available to the community on request or by appointment.

34% of community facilities provide less than three types of activities which suggest that these community facilities are being underutilised.



MAXIMISING THE USE OF YOUR FACILITY

This toolkit was commissioned because many community facilities are under-used, particularly during the day time, thus not fulfilling their potential as a resource. However, there can be a tension between increasing footfall and usage on the one hand, and making sure that the facility is available to members and the local community on the other.

For some organisations such as sports clubs, increasing use is directly linked to strategies for increasing membership.

This can often be done by collaborating with other groups and agencies – See Appendix 1.

“ We are under pressure from our members about making the hall available to non-members. Our members don't see the link between the need to generate income through hiring out the space, and the securing the space into the long-term for our members. ”

Committee member of community facility in South Tipperary

For others, maximising use can be about identifying the needs of target groups and others in the community and running activities to meet these needs.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

In order to maximise use, most community facilities run and initiate events in addition to providing space for others to run events. These may be events to increase community use of the facility, to meet a specific need within the community, or simply to generate income for the facility.

This need to become event organisers as well as facility managers can strain community facility management groups – particularly if they have few staff to manage this entire process.



Some events may be run in collaboration with other organisations (e.g. bingo nights). Others may require more hands-on involvement. Typical events are highlighted below.

TYPES OF EVENTS	
Bingo	Drama groups and shows
Blood donation clinics	Festivals
Bowls / boules / skittles	Film events
Car boot sales, craft and farmers markets	Sports competitions
Children's parties	Quiz nights
Choir	Carer, baby and toddler groups
Cards	Tai chi and yoga
Classes for children and adults	Workspace for remote workers
Dancing	Youth Club

The types of events should also be determined by the needs in your community, and amongst those who are marginalised. A demographic profile of your community as well as the community needs analysis should always inform events that are planned.

BRAINSTORMING TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL NEW ACTIVITIES

- Hold at least one planning session per year, to identify new activities to generate income, and to support and involve the community:
 - Invite users, members and supporters of your facility
 - Make sure that those in your community who are marginalised are invited
- Clarify that the session is solely about identifying new activities or income generation opportunities. Ensure that all are aware of the brainstorming aspect of the session, which means that every thought or idea is welcome; the more ideas the better, and there will be no judgements on any of the ideas – all will be listened to;
- Consider splitting attendees into groups of 4-6 to generate dialogue;
- Create an informal atmosphere to support brainstorming and to make people feel comfortable about presenting their ideas, for example:
 - take ensure seating is circular/ semi-circular
 - give time for people to talk before and after the session
 - identify a facilitator who is a good listener in each group who will recognise and support each idea – judging or critiquing ideas is not for the brainstorming session!
- Use a SWOT analysis during the session to identify viable activities;



- Document all suggestions;
- Consider establishing a sub-committee to identify and initiate new activities. This sub-committee will review all suggestions made and suggest a shortlist;
- Make sure that the committee or sub-committee identify a person responsible for leading each activity.
- Consider bringing in an external person to facilitate the session, so that everyone can participate equally – STDC or the development company in your area may be able to assist.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATIONS

No matter what types of activities you are running, you need to make people aware that they are happening. Social media tends to be the primary way that community facilities promote their activities (see case studies section in the appendices).

Be aware of what your community uses. Facebook is frequently used, but Instagram and Twitter can also be useful. Younger people use Snapchat or TikTok.

Encourage social media users to 'like' or 'follow' your pages and posts by running special promotions (for example, reduced price for activities, etc).

Facebook could also be used as a call for volunteers, and to publicise fundraising activities.

Remember, if you have a social media account, you need to keep it updated. Consider allocating the task to an existing volunteer, or better still, use it as a means of recruiting a new volunteer, with social media skills.

Don't forget other media such as the local paper, local radio, posters in shops, roadside signs, parish newsletter, local whatsapp groups etc.

If you intend to post photographs of people onto your social media account, make sure that you are GDPR compliant.¹ Finally, be mindful that not all groups in your community might use, or be familiar with, social media.

1 General Data Protection Regulation



5 VOLUNTEERS AND GOVERNANCE

“ Good governance involves putting in place systems and processes to ensure that your [community] organisation achieves its objectives with integrity and is managed in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent way. ”
– Charities Regulator Charities Governance Code



RENEWING YOUR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

“The Committee or Board must make sure the organisation has a clear long-term vision, that the appropriate controls are in place to ensure all the work is done safely and correctly and, at the end of the day, they are accountable for the actions of the organisation should questions be asked. They have overall responsibility for how the organisation operates today and what it achieves over the long-term.”

– The Wheel

Challenges in attracting volunteers are a particular struggle affecting all community organisations. It can result in low volunteer turnover. According to Benefacts¹ 24% of current directors/trustees have served for over nine years, and the average age of all non-profit directors and charity trustees is 57 years.

The people who volunteered with the community facilities who participated in the research for this toolkit tended to undertake day to day operations as well as serving on management committees, and so experienced an additional burden.

All volunteers engaged in the research for this toolkit were conscious of the need to increase voluntary participation and particularly to get greater diversity of people on board. In this section, we outline some steps that may help in recruiting all kinds of volunteers.

“We need to get more people involved on our committee – how do we attract young people?”

Committee member of community facility in South Tipperary

Examples of things that put people off getting involved

- The time commitment required
- The responsibility involved
- Poorly functioning committees (e.g. talking shop’ rather than decision-making, a weak committee, ‘groupthink’, etc) – see **appendix 4** for a checklist of things to avoid.
- Lack of clarity around roles (no induction, no clear information on role prior to recruitment).



¹ <https://analysis2021.benefacts.ie/governance/> Benefacts is a non-governmental organisation that provides free public access to extensive information about the entire non-profit sector in Ireland. <https://benefacts.ie/>

ATTRACTING VOLUNTEERS

According to the CSO (2015)², 28% of the population volunteer, so if you want to attract them, you need to look for the right people, look in the right places, and provide support for volunteers whether they are volunteering on a committee or undertaking day to day tasks. Your local Volunteer Centre may be able to help you.

This applies to all volunteers, whether they are needed for committees or day to day activities. Specific guidelines for working with youth volunteers are included in **Appendix 5**, and for new members in general in **Appendix 6**.

Step 1 – Decide what skills and attributes you need so you can target your recruitment³

Example for committee volunteer	Example for general volunteer
Commitment to community and voluntary ethos	Commitment to community and voluntary ethos
Knowledge of the needs of the community	Knowledge of the needs of the community
Leadership and analytical skills	Good interpersonal skills
Technical skills e.g. legal, accountancy / financial management, governance, property / facilities management, risk management, strategic / business planning.	Specific skills e.g. Maintenance, IT, social media, catering, etc



² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-vwb/qnhsvolunteeringandwellbeingq32013/>

³ See also the appendix 7 for a template.

Step 2 – Publicise and promote and ask people

- Current membership, or those who use the facility
- Word of mouth – approach people you know with necessary skill sets and speak to people about volunteering. Start them with small jobs.
- Networks and other relevant organisations in your area (e.g. Public Participation Network or Volunteer centre⁴.)
- TY students – may be interested as they have time, or get credit for Gaisce award for volunteering
- Notices & advertisements – including local media, newsletters and community notice boards (e.g. Activelink⁵)
- Boardmatch Ireland's⁶ online matching service for boards and volunteers
- Public events/ open days to raise profile of your facility & of volunteering opportunities, including as committee members.
- Volunteering Ireland's I-VOL online system⁷
- Your website

Step 3 – Good practice tips to support volunteers

- Give clear information (on the role, time commitment, number of meetings, activities etc)
- Facilitate those available for a distinct period (e.g. specific, task-based sub-committees)
- Try to have a diverse committee (age, gender, different backgrounds)
- Provide induction and other supports for new volunteers
- Consider a 'buddy' system of support
- Offer social interaction and benefits for volunteers (e.g., training, skills development)
- Make time to explore their interests and try to offer them a choice of volunteering activity
- Thank them for what they are doing

For more information see appendices.

4 <https://tipperaryvolunteercentre.ie/>

5 <https://www.activelink.ie/>

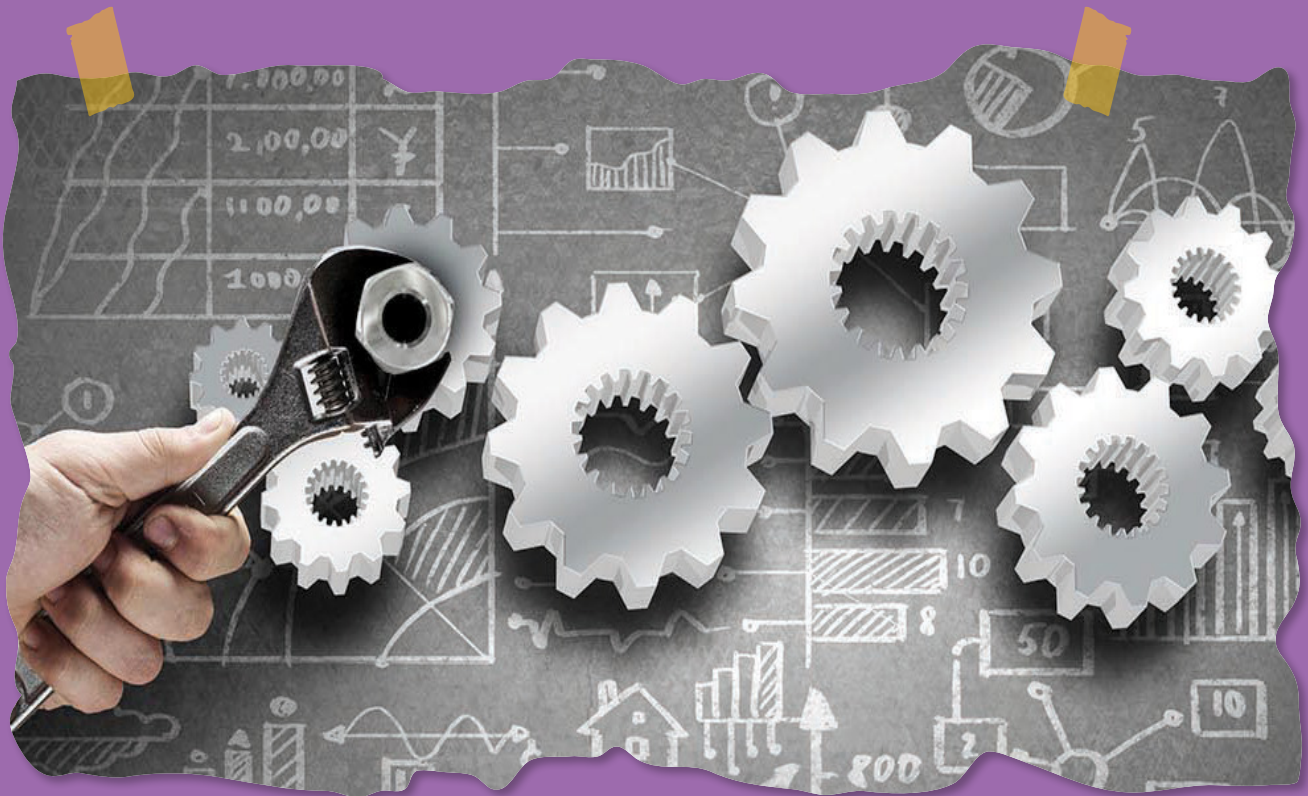
6 Boardmatch Ireland is a voluntary sector governance specialist organisation. <https://www.boardmatch.ie/>

7 There is also an online volunteer system I-VOL <https://www.i-vol.ie/post-a-volunteering-opportunity/>

6 MAINTENANCE AND INVESTMENT

“If maintenance is deferred, buildings and facilities can decay to the point that major capital outlay is required.”

“As a committee we hold our facility in trust for future generations, its our duty to hand it on in at least as good condition as we got it.”



MAINTAINING YOUR BUILDING / FACILITY

Unless ongoing maintenance is undertaken, a building's value can be undermined. Maintenance can be a big challenge for community facilities. Tipperary County Council's survey of community facilities in 2016 found that 48 percent of the facilities required refurbishment.

Most of the community facilities in South Tipperary (who took part in the research for this toolkit) had no paid staff to undertake maintenance work. Some had access to part-time workers on schemes (e.g. Tús, Rural Social Scheme, and Community Employment).

This section is intended to give guidance to community groups in maintaining community facilities, as well as guidance on how to budget for the long-term costs of managing your facility.

ESSENTIAL WORKS - 'MUST DOS'

The following is a checklist for items that should be attended to as a matter of urgency, to address any deficits in your facility. It is an indicative rather than a comprehensive list:

- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors everywhere they should be installed – in offices, in hallways and on every level of the property
- Purchase and install appropriate fire extinguishers for use throughout the building
- Replace old or faulty wiring. If the property is old remember that the requirements of modern loads may exceed the original loading
- Install or repair exterior lighting, for safety and security, using energy saving fittings where possible (aesthetics is just a bonus)
- Replace old unsafe appliances
- Have the boiler professionally serviced and repaired (or replaced with energy saving appliances)
- Repair unsecure or unsteady handrails
- Apply non slip decals to the bottom of baths and showers
- Eliminate mould and take steps to prevent re-growth
- Make any improvements – fit grab rails, ramps, widen doors, change door handles – any obvious works to improve the safety of elderly or physically challenged people in your facility.



An annual and seasonal maintenance checklist is outlined in the appendix 9.

CYCLICAL AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE

Cyclical maintenance is the long-term planned servicing of the building and improvement works to prevent gradual deterioration. Planned maintenance includes replacing and renewing parts of the building fabric.



Each type of improvement work will have its own timescale, and a schedule of works will be drawn up, based on i) standard practice, ii) minimum building standards and regulations, and iii) a stock condition survey. The following are examples of maintenance programmes that might apply.

The planned maintenance programme

External repairs & redecoration (e.g. gutters, soffits, fascia)	Reviewing/ upgrading insulation + energy efficiency measures
Kitchen refurbishments (e.g., every 10 years)	Window and door replacements
External boundaries (gates, fences)	Rewiring (e.g. rewiring every 20 years)
External areas (car park, playground) & green spaces	Boiler and heating installations (and servicing)
Internal surfaces (flooring)	Roof and slate replacement and overhaul
Bathroom refurbishments	Re-pointing
External paint programme (every 7 years)	Internal paint programme (every 5 years)

For details on funding for capital funding for community facilities, please see appendix 11.

ENERGY RETROFITTING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

As we face a combination of cost increases and climate change, facility management committees should consider an energy retrofitting programme. This could involve insulating your current building, replacing draughty windows and doors, replacing lighting with low energy LEDs (both indoors and for sports / recreation areas), installing rooftop solar panels or heat pumps. Advice about works and grants is available from your local development company such as STDC and from SEAI, www.SEAI.ie, energy agencies such as the Tipperary Energy Agency www.tipperenergy.ie, local Sustainable Energy Communities etc.

SINKING FUNDS

The 'sinking fund' is money set aside for the long-term costs of maintenance/replacement and major repairs over the lifetime of a building. It is not intended to cover day to day maintenance from wear and tear.

One method to calculate the sinking fund is to estimate the total costs of cyclical/planned maintenance and replacements over a timescale of 30 years, and then set aside an annual budget to meet the costs. This can be done by commissioning a **stock condition survey**, usually carried out by a quantity surveyor. This will set out the current condition of the building as well as set out the detailed maintenance activities over thirty years, based on good practice and life-expectancy of building items (see the **appendices** for life expectancy of key building items).

A stock condition survey usually involves an inspection of the interior and exterior of a building, including walls, roofs, floors, finishes (typically it is based on a visual inspection, and usually does not involve removing floors, cladding etc). It will report on the overall condition of the existing building fabric and will identify replacement costs of aspects of the building (e.g. boiler and heating systems, roof, electrical systems etc) based on accepted practice. This allows for a schedule of works to be established – usually over a thirty-year timeframe, and the costs attached to these. This allows for a budget to be established for the sinking funds over a thirty-year period.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – STAKEHOLDERS AND OTHER RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS

The research for this Toolkit involved extensive consultations which discussed alliances, joint initiatives, demand for use of facilities, funding and other supports. Below are some examples of organisations that community facilities could make contact with.

<p>Local Development Companies https://ildn.ie/ eg South Tipperary Development CLG https://www.stdc.ie/, North Tipperary Development CLG https://www.ntdc.ie/</p>
<p>County Councils (Arts Officer, Community & Enterprise, Heritage Officer, Library Service, etc). eg Tipperary Co Co https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/</p>
<p>Education and Training Boards https://www.etbi.ie/ Tipperary ETB – https://tipperary.etb.ie/</p>
<p>Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/f4022e-local-community-development-committees-lcdc/</p>
<p>Public Participation Networks https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/b59ee9-community-network-groups/ eg Tipperary PPN – https://www.ppntipperary.ie/</p>
<p>Volunteer Centres eg https://www.volunteer.ie/ Tipperary Volunteer Centre https://tipperaryvolunteercentre.ie/</p>
<p>Chambers of Commerce https://www.chambers.ie/ eg County Tipperary Chamber https://www.countytipperarychamber.com/</p>
<p>Finance Credit unions / Banks Community Finance Ireland https://communityfinanceireland.com/ or Clann Credo https://www.clanncredo.ie/</p>
<p>Farming community including Macra na Feirme, https://macra.ie/, dairy co-operatives, IFA branches https://www.ifa.ie/</p>
<p>Large employers and organisations with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes https://www.bitc.ie/</p>
<p>Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) https://www.localenterprise.ie/</p>
<p>Community groups national and local (e.g. ICA https://www.ica.ie/, Aactive Rretirement Ggroups https://activeirl.ie/, Muintir na Tíre https://www.muintir.ie/, Mens Sheds https://menssheds.ie/, Womens Groups https://nccwn.org/ etc)</p>
<p>Family Resource Centres and Community Resource Centres (re community needs and gaps, links with marginalised groups, and who may provide referrals for activities and for use of space)</p>
<p>Education Facilities Schools (primary and secondary) that may have use for space, 3rd level colleges may be interested in an outreach venue</p>
<p>Disability groups eg Disability Federation of Ireland https://www.disability-federation.ie/ Irish Wheelchair Association http://www.iwa.ie/</p>
<p>Cultural institutions, such as Cómhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann, Arts Centres, Galleries etc</p>
<p>Private Activity Providers Dance, music and drama schools, yoga teachers, fitness instructors, art teachers, alternative therapists, cookery etc</p>
<p>Renewable Energy Tipperary Energy Agency https://tippenergy.ie/, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, SEAI, https://www.seai.ie/</p>
<p>Tourism groups (Fáilte Ireland https://www.failteireland.ie/, Tipperary Tourism https://tipperary.com/, Munster Vales https://munstervales.com/ Tipperary Food Producers Network https://www.tipperaryfoodproducers.ie/</p>
<p>Sporting bodies including GAA, basketball groups, athletic clubs, badminton clubs, national tennis bodies, walking groups, etc</p>
<p>Sporting Ireland, Sports Partnerships https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/local-sports-partnerships/</p>

APPENDIX 2 – CASE STUDIES

These case studies illustrate how rural communities can innovate to meet community needs and achieve viability through grants, trading income and fundraising.

The Cottage, Loughmore, Co Tipperary

Where is it?	Loughmore is a village between Templemore (6Km) and Thurles (12Km) in Tipperary.
Background	The lack of a community shop provided the impetus for founders Maeve O'Hair and Mary Fogarty to establish The Cottage community shop and tea rooms. It opened in 2012.
Details	The Cottage acts as a meeting place for many who live alone in the rural community, as well as several clubs, associations and crafting groups. It provides employment and an outlet for over 50 local food and craft suppliers. In 2019, as a result of expanding demand, the Cottage moved to a larger premises, a renovated 19th Century farmhouse.
Structure	Community co-operative (Loughmore Community Co-Operative Society Limited).
Finances/ resources	The community backed the proposal by buying shares in the venture (offered at €10 per share). By 2015, the cottage had over 300 shareholders in the business. Funding was also received from Tipperary Co Council (on condition of 20% matched funding). Loans were also taken out to finance the project. The move to the new premises was supported by North Tipperary Development Company, Tipperary County Council and Clann Credo (social finance provider) and through local fundraising efforts: a 'Tip the Teapot' fundraising campaign raised €18,000 within a six-month period.
Marketing	No website but use Facebook. Winner of The Irish Times Best Tearooms in Ireland Awards in 2014.

Ballymacarbry Community Centre and Hostel, Co Waterford

Where is it?	Ballymacarbry is a village (approx 400 households) in Co Waterford between Clonmel and Dungarvan
Background	Community leaders came together to explore the potential for a multi-purpose facility and hostel (which would cater for hill-walkers in the Comeraghs and Knockmealdown mountains). A door-to-door community survey on the facility was undertaken in 2003 – indicating strong support: 85% of households signed up to the gym, donating €300 per year (or €6 per week). The survey did not explore the hostel but the committee were convinced of its viability so decided to proceed with it.
Facility details	A gym, fitness room (under-floor heating and sprung floor); sauna; sport hall (astro-turf surface); function room; meeting rooms and hostel accommodation for 25 people (https://www.ballymacarbry.com)
Structure	Company Limited by Guarantee without share capital (Ballymacarbry Community Centre CLG). Voluntary directors.
Finances/ resources	Construction costs were €1.7 million in 2006. This was financed by local fundraising (€55,000); Waterford Leader Partnership and National Lottery Sports Capital funding and mortgage finance (almost repaid as at 2019). The ongoing viability of the facility is supported by high levels of employment (Pinewood Laboratories located in the area). Voluntary labour and CE workers are critical to its sustainability. Fundraising is ongoing for organisational costs: in September 2019, €25,000 was raised in a community fundraising event.
Hostel target market	Market for hostel is mainly Irish (secondary schools, walkers, cycling groups (using Waterford Greenway). Occupancy rate during summer is approx 50% (1,000 users of hostel). Marketing for hostel via website, social media (Facebook) and word of mouth.
Challenges encountered (and addressed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing a site: however, a local person sold a site in a good location for a favourable price. • Age profile of volunteers: most are over the age of 40 years, which could affect succession. • Securing matching funding: however, the whole community was supportive and contributed. • Management and maintenance: no staff member, and the centre relies on voluntary input and two CE participants. When the mortgage is paid, they may employ a part-time manager. • No instructor in the gym curtails its use, but demand does not justify hiring an instructor.

Moycarkey-Borris Community and Sports Centre, Littleton, Co Tipperary

Where is it?	Littleton, Tipperary
Background	The group undertook a door-to-door survey of 800 households, in order to demonstrate (to state agencies) the support for the centre, and to gather the views and needs of the community.
Details	The centre is comprised of an indoor sports hall, gym, meeting rooms, a training room and a kitchen.
Structure	The community and sports centre is a business name of the Littleton Development Association Company Limited by Guarantee (company limited by guarantee without share capital)
Target markets	From day one, the centre has been open to everyone within the Moycarkey-Borris area, and undertakes activities and programmes for all ages, Travellers, and unemployed residents. A second survey undertaken identified activities the community wanted in the centre, including card nights; education / training programmes (e.g. IT classes), and table tennis. The centre is hired by sole traders for delivering classes, and the local athletics club do their winter training in the centre
Finances/ resources	The centre's construction cost €1.2million, which was met by grants (approx. 90%) and loan finance. The Tipperary Education and Training Board provide funding to run a local training initiative in the centre, which makes a significant contribution to the centre's financial sustainability. The centre operates on volunteer input (with some Community Employment cover at weekends).
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting volunteers to the management committee (currently six residents). • Ensuring the centre is financially sustainable. • Identifying activities to be held during the day.

The Hub, Kiltegan, Co Wicklow

Where is it?	Kiltegan is a small village (200-300 people) in west Wicklow, close to the Carlow border.
Background	An absence of a village shop and post office in Kiltegan led to its establishment. A working group (The Hub Community Shop and Cafe Working Group) of volunteers was established. Renovation was undertaken with the support of community organisations, volunteers, Community Employment (CE) participants and pro-bono labour from local professionals (e.g., electricians, plumbers, artists, auctioneers, painters, etc). The working group engaged in local fundraising and specifically sought donations of items of equipment for the shop/cafe.
Details	The cafe and shop opened in 2015, and opens six mornings a week (with longer opening hours on Thursday and Friday). It aims to combat social isolation. Community groups have access to the facility, free of charge, when the cafe and shop are closed. Activities in the facility include education programmes, crochet classes and health initiatives.
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It generates new connections and friendships in the community, promoted by a 'Book Swap' scheme, a children's play kitchen, a community notice-board, and a newspaper donation point for a local animal sanctuary. • It provides an outlet for local (HSE-approved) cake producers and bakers. • It serves as a collection point for grocery deliveries from Gillespie's SuperValu in Baltinglass, thus eliminating the need to travel and providing an environmental impact. • It provides an outlet for community and voluntary organisations' lottery tickets. This enhances solidarity between the Hub and these organisations.
Structure	Company limited by guarantee without share capital. The Hub Kiltegan Community CLG. Incorporated in 2016.
Finances/ resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of refurbishment was generated from local fundraising. • 15 volunteers (each commit to one day a week) and one CE participant operate the Hub. The Hub has enabled young people to gain experience of working in retail and food sectors • The Hub generates a small surplus annual income.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing enough volunteers to maintain the current opening times. • There is a shortage of space to operate other community initiatives. • The CE participant is crucial to the success of the Hub. It will be a challenge to secure a person of the calibre of the current incumbent. • A paid manager will be required if the opening hours are to be increased and to maintain a quality service. This will require additional income.

ACM Community Development Society Ltd, Co Limerick

Where is it?	Castleconnell village, Co Limerick (10Km from the city, and close to the Co Clare border)
Background	ACM (which stands for Ahane, Castleconnell and Montpellier) was established in 1998. Prior to the formation of ACM, the village had very few communal activities. This changed with the transformation of a residential home into a community centre. It provided the focal point and place for residents to meet. The organisation of a number of seasonal activities also attract new volunteers. The largest event is the 'Hallowe'en Fest', which attracts approx 1,500 people.
Details	ACM operates from the community centre and offers Typing and secretarial services · Meeting rooms · Community childcare (breakfast club, pre-school childcare, and after-school service) · Active Social Group (100+ members) · Evergreens (a monthly night out for singing and storytelling) · Sewing & Knitting Club (every Monday morning) · Yoga classes · Art classes · Cards · Youth service · Children's birthday parties · Day and evening courses such as healthcare and computer skills · Guest speakers on topics of interest. In total, between 700-800 people use the community centre each month. ACM has founded groups and established activities, as well as providing space. Groups founded by ACM include the Castleconnell Historical Society, Castleconnell Heritage Centre, the Village Singers and the Drama Group, and the Active Social Group (100 people aged 40-90 years). The Active Social Group was established in 2014, starting with a programme of weekly walks. The walks continue, but other activities have been added, including trips away and evening talks. Approximately 30% of the members are male. According to ACM committee members, it has performed a pivotal role in getting residents involved in volunteering in ACM initiatives.
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a focal point for the community, enabling residents to meet each other • Reduces isolation, particularly among older people • Enables new residents who move into the area to meet their neighbours • Enables the recruitment of volunteers on to other committees of ACM • Has acted as a catalyst for a range of social activities and groups achieving a multiplier effect.
Structure	It is a community co-op, registered under IPS law. Its membership has grown to over 500 members/ shareholders. Each member/shareholder of ACM has one vote and a management committee is elected each year at the ACM Annual General Meeting.
Challenges	The reliance on a small cohort of residents to co-ordinate the committee's activities.

APPENDIX 3 – SKILLS AUDIT TEMPLATE FOR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

These are skills commonly required in voluntary management groups.

This is probably best completed by each individual committee or board member and then collated rather than undertaken in a group setting.

Areas of expertise / skill	Present in group?	Needed in group?	How urgent? Prioritise from 1 to 3
Budgeting			
Risk analysis			
Chairing meetings			
Employment issues / HR			
Evaluation and monitoring			
Financial management			
Fundraising			
Legal matters			
Management / governance			
Media/PR, interviews			
Minute taking			
Networking			
Social Media			
Event management			
Knowledge of key policy areas			
Promotion and marketing			
Strategic & operational planning			
Company law			
Charity regulation			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

APPENDIX 4 – PRACTICES THAT CAN UNDERMINE GOOD GOVERNANCE

Consider whether any of the following affect your committee, and if so, how often does the issue arise. This exercise should be done on an individual and confidential basis, as some of these issues are sensitive.

Issues and practices that can undermine good governance	How frequently do they arise in your committee?		
	Always	Never	Sometimes
Lack of consensus about the vision and mission of the organisation			
High committee turnover			
Committee members do not fully understand their duties and liabilities			
Committee members have difficulty reading financial statements			
Unresolved conflicts on the committee			
Lack of understanding on officer roles, or how one gets to become an officer			
Not disclosing potential conflicts of interest			
Too many committees			
Manager-run committee			
Committee micro-managing the manager, or day-to-day activities			
Decision paralysis			
Lack of strategic direction and clear priorities			
The committee runs well but focuses on the wrong issues			
Committee members do not speak as a united front once they leave the board room			
Poor attendance at committee meetings			
Lack of preparation prior to meetings (reviewing materials, etc)			
The committee is not getting the right information in the right format			
Poor relationships with stakeholders			
Volunteer fatigue or burnout			
Domination by some committee members or lack of challenge of dominant members			
Other:			
Other:			

APPENDIX 5 – SUPPORTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Many organisations are keen to get young people involved – to bring a new perspective and energy and because it has been documented that people who volunteer when at school are more likely to volunteer throughout their lives. According to research undertaken in the inner city of Dublin¹, representatives of youth services stated that young people respond better to informal group settings, and when they are given the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. Their view was that young people prefer to become involved in organising activities, rather than to participate in management committees and other formal decision-making structures. They recommended that the following actions be taken at the beginning of any initiative to involve young people.

- Inform the young people of the level of commitment required, including the duration of the process and the amount of time that they would have to give over to it.
- Explain the purpose of the organising group/committee clearly to the young people.
- Spend time planning the meetings so that the experience is enjoyable for the participants.
- Inform young people of the level of 'power' vested in the group; failure to do this can result in frustration and a breakdown in trust between young people and adults.
- Agree a group contract, which will allow for issues which may arise to be dealt with constructively.
- Before inviting young people to get involved in decision-making structures, an organisation should be clear about why it wants to do so.
- The organisation's leadership needs to be committed to the young people's participation.
- Young people from different backgrounds, including from various class and ethnic backgrounds, should be invited to take part.
- Young people should be encouraged to participate in an induction process prior to attending their first meeting.
- The organisation should set time and resources aside for building relationships between young people and adults who are participating together in a particular committee. This activity should be valued by the organisation.
- The involvement of young people should be an intrinsic part of the organisation's development and should be worked on continuously.

In order for young people to respond best, meetings need to be:

- **interactive** rather than formal; techniques such as brainstorming can be used;
- **facilitative** rather than rigidly chaired;
- **timed** to take account of young people's other commitments, such as having to study for exams.

¹ Doherty, G (2008): *Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation*. Dublin: Inner City Organisations Network/North-West Inner-City Network

APPENDIX 6 – SUPPORTING NEW MEMBERS

People can be nervous about the idea of getting involved in a group or a committee for the first time. It is important to make it easy for people to take part, through some or all of the following.

Observing meetings

If someone shows any interest in joining a committee, then a good way to help them make up their mind is to let them sit in and observe a few meetings. If they do then decide to get involved, they're already used to the meetings, and better prepared all-round. If confidentiality is an issue, then the observer can stay for the parts that are not confidential or sensitive.

Induction

Once someone has decided to join a committee, they need to have as much information and support as they need to undertake the role.

Induction will involve:

- Written information about the organisation, the board, its role and procedures –including a role description for the committee member (have an up to date and well laid out induction pack)
- An induction meeting should take place with the chairperson
- If staff are employed, a meeting with the most senior staff member should take place to learn about the activities and operations
- A follow-up meeting after a few months to make sure they are settling in and finding their feet.

Tip – make sure that you give all new committee members a copy of your constitution or rules, and consider preparing a governance handbook. The handbook should provide an overview of the company, its objectives, governance policies and procedures, the roles and obligations of directors and the roles of decision-making structures in the organisation. .

Mentoring

A 'mentor' is an experienced and trusted person who guides a less experienced person through a process, acting as someone they can bounce ideas off and talk through issues with. An organisation can set up a 'mentoring' or 'buddy' system, so that experienced committee members offer support, information and advice to new members on a one-to-one basis.¹

¹ Doherty, G (2008) Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation. Dublin: ICON: NWICN.

APPENDIX 7 – RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering Ireland’s website includes a volunteer management ‘health check’ which offers general guidance to volunteer-involving organisations in identifying and putting the necessary items in place to manage your volunteer programme more effectively, improve volunteer retention, and ultimately enhance your reputation as an organisation where volunteers want to be involved.¹

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) recommend that their clubs’ devise and implement a retention strategy². It is comprised of three components: induction; support and recognition.

The process of induction should include:

- Meet new volunteers and make them feel welcome and appreciated from the outset.
- Arrange time exploring their interests, reasons for volunteering and expectations from the organisation.
- Make time to brief volunteers on the club/organisation’s goals and people who are involved.
- Identify any training needs.
- Provide a ‘buddy’ system for support.
- Provide support to new volunteers to gain experience in various roles.

The process of providing support should include:

- Maintain regular contact with volunteers.
- Show appreciation for a job well done.
- Provide any training that is identified.
- Strengthen links between volunteers

Recognition should be strengthened through implementing the following actions:

- Devise a volunteer recognition programme and publicise this to all members.
- Give organisation/club merchandise e.g. t-shirt.
- Present volunteer awards at AGM.
- Give complimentary tickets to special events and functions.
- Hold social events.
- Reimburse for out of pocket expenses.
- Display photographs of volunteers in the organisation’s facility.

1 <https://www.volunteer.ie/resources/factsheets-and-guides/>

2 <https://ladiesgaelic.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/LGFA-Volunteer-Toolbox.pdf>

APPENDIX 8 – LIFE EXPECTANCY OF BUILDING ITEMS

Item	Typical life expectancy
Oil boiler system	25 years
Gas fired boiler system	20-25 years
Electrical system	25 years
Mechanical ventilation (vents)	15 years
Fire alarm system – fire control panel	15 years
Fire alarm system - smoke heads	10 years
Car park (tarmacadam)	25 years
Roof (inter-locking concrete roof tiles or slates on pitched timber roof)	60-70 years
Floor covering (internal)	15 years
Flooring – vinyl style ¹	10-15 years
Internal decorative finishes (e.g. paint works)	5-7 years
Emergency lighting and illuminated directional signage	20-25 years
Kitchen	10 years

1 Polished concrete and terrazzo style flooring will be hard wearing, and their replacement will be significantly longer.

APPENDIX 9 – MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES AND CHECKLISTS

	Autumn/ winter	Spring	Annual
Adjust sticking doors		•	
Bleed radiator systems			•
Check and replace appliance lights, knobs etc.			•
Check first aid kit, fire extinguishers and all emergency kits			•
Check flashings and chimneys externally for any obvious signs of damage		•	
Check for and repair squeaky floors			•
Check for ease of access and keys to turn off various valves			•
Check fuel tanks			•
Check gas lines or power lines to appliances			•
Check gutters and downpipes for debris	•	•	
Check if a top up is required on the water gauge in the heating system			•
Check pipe insulation and tank insulation in attic	•		
Check septic tank, treatment plant and/ or foul drains.			•
Clean and degrease external concrete paths	•	•	
Clean any ventilation or drier ducts	•	•	
Clean around tanks, access routes and the like			•
Clean back of fridges and vacuum radiator coils at rear			•
Clean fridge gaskets and lubricate hinges			•
Clean stained plumbing fixtures	•	•	
Clean roof and look for any loose tiles, slates etc that could blow off in high winds	•	•	
Clean toilet cisterns and toilet jets			•
Clean, oil and store tools and garden equipment	•		
Drain hoses etc.	•		
Ensure areas around sinks and baths/showers do not leak, look for signs of leaks			•
Ensure that occupiers know where shut off valves are located			•
Fill cracks and nail pops			•
Inspect and test drains			•
Inspect attic for any signs of leaks		•	
Inspect exterior walls and roof for any sign of damage following winter		•	
Lubricate drawer glide rails if required	•	•	
Mastic seal door and windows	•	•	
Oil wooden decks		•	
Organise boiler service			•
Paint fencing		•	
Pressure wash and oil or repaint wooden fencing, decks etc.			•
Repair air leaks			•
Repair insulation			•
Repair mortar joints in brickwork, stonework ,etc	•		
Repair sagging ceilings			•
Repair/fill any obvious cracks in external walls	•	•	
Scrub and touch up finishes on walls, ceilings and cabinets			•
Seal and protect concrete and masonry surfaces	•		
Seal and protect tiles and grout			•
Test fire alarms/smoke alarms etc.			•
Test the boiler	•		
Tighten and oil door hinges, locks and knobs		•	
Vacuum smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors			•
Water test the roof and flashing for leaks	•		

APPENDIX 10 – IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Identifying Community Needs / Wishes is essential if a facility is to really serve its community. While time consuming, it brings great benefits. After carrying out a needs analysis, it is a good idea to provide some form of feedback to the community in the findings and how they will be actioned (or otherwise). People like to be asked for their opinion and see their suggestions happen.

Possible methodologies

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather very good information • Can encourage people to elaborate on answers • Helpful where there are literacy / language barriers • Can target specific groups who may not usually participate • Private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very time consuming • Needs skilled interviewers • People may tell you what they think you want to hear
Community meeting with small group sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather very good information • Can encourage people to elaborate on answers • People will generate new ideas by listening to others • Helpful where there may be literacy / language barriers • Can target specific groups who may not usually participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs skilled facilitation • May only attract people who are already engaged and using the facility • Some people may be embarrassed to give their views in a public forum
Paper questionnaire¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives community-wide coverage • Anonymous and confidential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can have poor response rate
Online questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be advertised widely via social media, etc • Can target key individuals (by email) if you have such a list • Can be easily analysed with free software packages – Survey Monkey, Google forms, etc • Anonymous and confidential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs some technical skill • It may exclude those in your community who do not have access to the internet and those not familiar with the technology

¹ If using a paper questionnaire, those completing it should be able to drop it back to a central location (e.g., community centre). A paper questionnaire could be distributed a number of ways (e.g. house-to-house, local shop, school, church, community centre etc).

The best results are achieved by a combination of all the above.

Remember, the most useful information will come from the people who disagree with you, so you need to seek them out!

SAMPLE COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

The sample questionnaire (below) could be used as a guide in any of the methods above. All questions should be tailored to the needs of the specific community and facility.

Introduction

<name of organisation/community group> is a voluntary organisation which aims to <mission statement>. We need your help to make sure that what we are offering really meets the needs of our <members/ community / locality>. Please answer this short questionnaire and give us your views on how we can all work together to make <name of facility or area> the best it can be for everyone.

1. What are **the three best things** about living in the community of <area>?
2. What **things would you like to see** in the community of <area>?
3. With regard to the <name of community facility>, please let us know **whether you participate in any of its activities** by ticking the relevant boxes below

<list activities here>	Not aware of it	Aware of it but don't participate	Participate occasionally	Participate regularly

4. Is there anything that **encourages you to participate** in <name of community facility>?
5. Is there anything that **discourages you from participating** in <name of community facility>?
6. What **specific activities would you like to see** organised in <name of community facility>
(You could also give a list of activities that you are interested in offering and gauge interest, and then ask if the respondent has any other ideas that they would like)
7. Would you be interested in helping out with / volunteering with an existing or new activity in <name of community facility>? **Yes** [] **No** []

If yes what would interest you?

8. Your details

Please indicate **your age** range by circulating the relevant option below

Under 12 years	12-17 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-55 years	55-64 years	65+ years
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Do you have **any special needs** (e.g. mobility, sensory, language, etc)? **Yes** [] **No** []

If yes, please give us more details

When are you most **available** to participate (please circle relevant answer)

Mornings	Afternoons	Evenings	Weekends
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APPENDIX 11 – SOME SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY-MANAGED FACILITIES

There are many funding schemes which can be used to support the development of community facilities. These can be accessed from central government, county and city councils, local development companies, such as South Tipperary Development Company, and from private and philanthropic sources. Local development companies can also support you to develop funding proposals, and by directing you to appropriate schemes.

Funding schemes change constantly, and often have defined opening and closing dates, so community groups need to be alert. The majority of grant schemes are advertised via the Public Participation Network (PPN), so it is recommended that every group managing a facility becomes a member of their local PPN, read their newsletters and check the PPN's website regularly for details of upcoming funding.

Source of information	Details
Local Development Companies	South Tipperary Development CLG 052 744 2652, https://www.stdc.ie/ or North Tipperary Development CLG 067 566 76, https://www.ntdc.ie/
Public Participation Network (Tipperary)	www.ppntipperary.ie
Activelink (Community Exchange)	https://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/funding
The Wheel's Fundingpoint	www.wheel.ie/fundingpoint

Each funding scheme has its own area of interest, requirements and levels of funding (from small grants to large capital investment). The majority of capital schemes require some match funding from the community (from 50% to 5%). They also require public procurement regulations to be followed when works are being undertaken (involving advertising tenders and obtaining quotations). Some key schemes capital schemes which are operated by the state include are outlined below.

Scheme	Details
Local Development Companies	LEADER – Funding for capital costs, feasibility studies and training. Grants are between €5,000 and €200,000. SICAP – Small grants re social inclusion.
National Rural Schemes	The Town and Village Renewal fund supports initiatives designed to rejuvenate rural towns and villages. It is funded via the Department of Rural and Community Development, and applications are made to local authorities. Grants are between €20,000 and €100,000. The Rural Regeneration Fund supports initiatives that target job creation, address de-population and support improvements in rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are via local development companies or local authorities. The minimum grant is €500,000 so the fund applies to large integrated projects of which community facilities could form a part. CLÁR ¹ provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered the greatest levels of population decline. For more information: https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c5849b-rural-funding/
County / City Councils	Specific grants eg Heritage, Festivals, Community Enhancement Programme, Tidy Towns etc are delivered locally via County / City Councils. Contact the community and enterprise section for more details.
Sports Capital Programme	The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is operated by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. For more information: https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d13385-sports-capital-programme/ Online registration and application details (OSCAR) https://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie/

1 Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais (CLÁR). The programme aims to support sustainable development in identified areas by attracting people to live and work there. The funding works on the basis of locally identified priorities.

APPENDIX 12 – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

Within a community facility there are several aspects of sustainability that can be addressed ie, Energy Conservation and Generation, Biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Waste Management. The following checklist items should be considered.

Energy Conservation and Generation
Conduct an annual or biannual energy audit of bills to check your spending. Identify areas of greatest energy usage. Regular switch of energy providers to lower costs. Install SMART meters
Make all facility users aware of their responsibility to conserve energy
Turn off socket switches when appliances are not in use and/or unplug devices. Power down TVs, PC's, photocopiers, and printers fully – do not leave in standby mode.
Turn off lights when not in use. Check external and sensor lights – could they be on less?
Use efficient lighting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LED light bulbs – including for sports and outdoor facilities - Automatic dimmers - Motion detected lighting systems - Skylight installation on new facilities for optimal natural lighting
Service your heating system regularly. Check that radiators are working properly. Install thermostats. Zone heating so as not to heat a whole building when only one room is being used. Have your heating on an easily programmed timer so that it only comes on when needed.
Keep windows and external doors closed when heating is on. Ensure vents etc are open for ventilation
Check thermostat on Hot water . Have it on a timer. Restrict showering time. Install energy efficient showers.
Increase your insulation. Check current roof and wall insulation and upgrade if possible. Upgrade to triple glazed windows. Info from http://www.seai.ie
Install a renewable energy system eg Solar Panels, small wind turbine, heat pump etc. Info from http://www.seai.ie
Install a community electric car charge point .

Waste Management
Reduce Waste: Avoid single use items such as bottles / cups / spoons / plates. Operate a deposit scheme to ensure return. If you must use single use items, make sure they are genuinely compostable. Avoid individually wrapped items eg biscuits, milk, sugar. Promote the use of reusable water bottles in sports. Avoid Plastic if at all possible.
Manage Food Waste: Try not to over cater. Keep portions realistic – you can always offer seconds. Have a plan for leftovers, be that freezing them, people taking them home or sharing others in the community who would appreciate it..
Proper use of waste disposal bins ie General waste bin, Recycling bin, Food waste / Compost bin Label each bin adequately and make sure they are used properly
Set up a repair café / upcycling project where people can come to repair or repurpose items rather than throwing them out.

Biodiversity and the Natural Environment
Choose environmentally friendly products for cleaning which limit the amount of toxic chemicals your facility releases into the environment. Avoid the use of chemical sprays / weedkiller etc.
Limit water usage by installing low-flow plumbing fixtures in bathrooms, kitchen etc. Install a rainwater harvesting system.
Install car parking mesh in grassed areas used for occasional parking.
<p>Manage your outdoor spaces for biodiversity eg</p> <p>Plant native trees and plants on land, window boxes, hanging baskets etc and trees in accordance with the National Pollinator Plan https://pollinators.ie/</p> <p>Leave some areas wild – eg field verges, hedgerows, waterways. Don't mow grass in May</p> <p>Install signage so that people understand what you are doing.</p> <p>Further ideas at</p> <p>https://www.leavenotraceireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Leave-No-Trace-Ireland-Biodiversity-Toolkit-for-Communities.pdf</p>
Consider developing a community garden or allotments

APPENDIX 13 – REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Publications

Doherty, G. and Doyle G. (2008) The Ballyhoura Community Inclusion Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Community Groups to Increase Volunteerism, Promote Equality and Support Long Term Well Being. Cork/Limerick: Ballyhoura Development CLG.

Doherty, G (2008): Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation. Dublin: Inner City Organisations Network / North West Inner City Network

Irish Council for Social Housing (2010) Collaboration Toolkit. Dublin: ICSH

Irish Social Enterprise Network (2017) Social Enterprise toolkit. Available online <https://www.socent.ie/blog/2017/12/12/social-enterprise-toolkit/>

South Leitrim Community Network (2015) Managing and Sustaining Community Buildings in County Leitrim

Tipperary County Council (2016) Report on Findings from a Survey of Community, Sports & Arts Facilities

Websites

Activelink and Community Exchange <https://www.activelink.ie/> Their Irish links page lists a wide range of community and local development organisations and their contact details. It is also a go-to website for job vacancies, volunteer and tendering opportunities. <https://www.activelink.ie/irish-links>

Boardmatch <https://www.boardmatch.ie/>

Department of Rural and Community Development¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/>

Irish Rural Link <https://www.irishrurallink.ie/>

National Rural Network <https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/>

Pobal Maps (free Geographical Information System) <https://maps.pobal.ie/>

Volunteering Ireland with information on contacting your local Volunteer Centre <https://www.volunteer.ie/>

Volunteering Ireland (i-vol) <https://www.i-vol.ie/post-a-volunteering-opportunity/>

The Wheel <https://www.wheel.ie/>

Local Development Companies such as STDC cover the whole country. Their websites give useful information on a wide range of community issues. A list can be found at <https://ildn.ie/directory/>

Public Participation Networks (PPNs) operate in each county, and provide up to date information for community and voluntary groups. A list can be found here <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c7c11a-public-participation-networks-how-to-contact/>



South Tipperary
Development CLG

Unit 2C
Carrigeen Commercial Park
Clogheen Road, Cahir
Co. Tipperary
E21 HV20
052 744 2652
info@stdc.ie



Rialtas
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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas



Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Áitiúil
Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary Local Community Development
Committee