



**OPEN CALL FOR FUNDING APPLICATIONS**

**FOR**

**MITIGATING AGAINST EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE FUND**

**Guidelines for Education and Training Boards**

**17 November 2020**

**V1.1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) aim is to provide funding to support educationally disadvantage learners in accessing and participating in community education.

These guidelines provide the following:

- The overarching principles of the Fund
- Conditions of Funding
- Application process and requirements
- Eligibility criteria for support
- Allocation of funding
- Reporting requirements

## **OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES OF THE FUND**

The purpose of the Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund (MAEDF) is to assist Education and Training Boards to increase their capacity and that of community education providers to address the decline in participation of disadvantaged learners particularly those on literacy and basic skills programmes at NFQ levels 1 to 3. The Fund places a strong focus on community education as a mechanism to continue to support and engage with disadvantaged learners. In addition, there is a focus on enabling the investment in building the digital infrastructure of providers and their capability to ensure that online learning can be delivered in a way that meets the complex needs of all learners.

## **CONDITIONS OF FUNDING**

### **Governance**

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) are responsible for the administration and management of funding allocated by SOLAS to the ETB under Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund. ETBs must satisfy themselves that any onward grants comply with all statutory, European Union and other obligations that apply.

### **Documentation**

The attached documentation must be used (ETBs may use additional documentation if they wish). All related documentation associated with this fund including applications not recommended for funding to be retained for audit purposes. SOLAS may request individual project initiative applications to be submitted.

### **Expenditure**

Approved funding allocation for any activity under the MAEDF must;

- (a) Be used for specific purpose intended.
- (b) Be expended for by 2020 year-end.
- (c) Not be used for any pay costs or costs of a recurring nature.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS**

ETBs to invite Managers of Community Education Provision (either internal to the ETB or external Community Education Providers to make application under the criteria above.

### **Provider Application Process**

Appendix 1 contains the '*Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund Application Form*' this form must be used by external applicants for funding under this grant. Appendix 2 contains the application form to be used for internal funding of initiatives under the MAEDF.

### **Review of Applications**

Each ETB to review applications received using the criteria for this funding to determine which applications ought to be funded. Successful applications recommended by the ETB for funding must also be prioritised for funding consideration by SOLAS. To ensure a fair disbursement of funding the prioritisation will be used by SOLAS where funding requests exceeds the funds available. The following factors should be considered when reviewing applications for funding

1. Does the project/initiative have a clear and demonstrable educational outcome?
2. Would funding this project result in the duplication of the work and funding of agencies whose specific remit is community development?
3. Would funding this project duplicate other SOLAS funding to the same organisation for the same purpose and same group of learners?

4. Can you demonstrate you have reviewed the project applications using set criteria?
5. Can the project/initiative outcomes be linked to beneficiaries on PLSS?
6. Have you satisfied all governance requirements and assurances on how this funding would be spent if approved?

Each ETB when reviewing MAEDF applications should consider from a good practice perspective using an internal review group.

## ELIGIBLE FUNDING CRITERIA

Listed as follows are four categories eligible for funding consideration. Applications should be considered for any one or more than one of the following

- 1) Digital Technologies
- 2) Learner Assistance Fund
- 3) Reach-out and/or Mentoring
- 4) COVID-19 Exceptional Circumstances

### 1) Digital Technologies

Supply of devices where deemed to be a barrier to learning. Consideration to be given to:

- The use of a laptop loan scheme (similar to that used by the HEA)
- A managed device service to ensure IT supports are available to providers to maximise the mitigation of barriers and ICT resourcing at local level
- Secure relevant software and systems to facilitate high quality learning and delivery.
- Secure CPD training as required.

**Note** please capital threshold is based on the cost of any item in excess of €1,000 including VAT. Capital items **cannot be funded** through this grant.

### 2) Learner Assistance Fund

The Learner Assistance Fund is available to help where appropriate with costs such as:

- books and class materials

- rent and other utility bills
- food
- essential travel
- childcare costs
- medical costs

The above list is not exhaustive however, it is important that the nature and appropriateness of the expenditure for which assistance is being provided is clearly identified.

### **3) Reach Out and/or Mentoring**

Re-engagement with Learners through Outreach, Engagement and Mentoring Fund is designed to assist with costs associated with activities such as:

- Awareness raising
- Services to promote re-engagement

The above list is not exhaustive however, it is important that the nature and appropriateness of the expenditure for which assistance is being provided is clearly identified.

### **4) COVID-19 Exceptional Circumstances**

COVID-19 Exceptional Circumstances Fund for Community Education to address educationally disadvantaged learners.

## **ALLOCATION OF FUNDING**

Requests for funding will be reviewed by SOLAS and to ensure a fair disbursement of funding the prioritisation detailed on the funding request will be used by SOLAS where funding requests exceeds the funds available. To facilitate timely allocation of funds two rounds are set for receipt of applications;

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

ETBs will be required to report on how the funds were utilised, the expenditure incurred, the benefits derived, and the number of learners that benefited from the funding. SOLAS will issue a report template for ETBs to complete by the end January 2021.