OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING LINKS PROGRAMME 2022 – 2024

Please see https://www.wheel.ie/training-links-programme-2022-2024 for full information. Contact Lauren Carroll on traininglinks2022@wheel.ie with queries.

1. Training Links: An Overview

Training Links funds community and voluntary organisations to form Training Networks — groups of organisations who come together to undertake training that they may not have the opportunity to do individually.

Since 2005, The Wheel's Training Links Programme has supported the training and upskilling needs of the community and voluntary workforce, including employees, volunteers and board members. To date, Training Links has supported and funded the establishment of 101 Training Networks involving in excess of 40,000 workers and more than 1070 community and voluntary organisations.

Who?

Community and voluntary organisations come together and form a 'network' in their region, sector, or community of interest. Networks will have a **minimum of ten** members and work together, over the course of the programme, to address a specific workforce training goal. Applications are welcome from **new networks, previously funded networks who have completed the programme, and previously unsuccessful networks.**

What?

Empowering community and voluntary organisations to identify and respond to their own training needs by designing innovative and tailored training solutions, based on priority areas (see Section 3).

Why?

To support community and voluntary organisations, and their workforce, to gain the skills needed to adapt and respond to the constantly shifting technological, social, environmental, economic, and cultural context in which the sector operates.

How?

Funding networks of community and voluntary organisations to design and deliver upskilling programmes to meet their own training needs, which they otherwise would not be able to do on their own. Training Links funds **up to 80%** of budget costs for funded networks.

When?

Over an 18-month period from **11 July 2022 – December 2023**.

Funder?

The programme is part-funded by the National Training Fund, under responsibility of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Fund manager?

The Wheel.

2. Training Links Programme Objectives

The **objectives** of the Training Links Programme 2022-2024 are:

1. To **build skills** amongst people working in community and voluntary organisations in specific priority areas (the priority areas for the 2022-2024 programme are outlined in **Section 3** below).
2. To promote and support a **cohesive and organisational-led approach to training and learning especially within small and medium organisations**, enabling increased awareness of and access to training options through the establishment of Training Networks across the sector.
3. To promote and encourage **collaboration** within and between networks of organisations so that ideas, initiatives and best practice in training and development can be identified and shared, resulting in cost-effective and innovative solutions to joint training needs.
4. To facilitate the provision of **quality customised training** that supports the evolving needs of the nonprofit workforce.

3. Call for Proposals for Training Links Programme 2022-2024

The Wheel is now inviting applications for funding under the Training Links Programme.

Training Links seeks to fund **innovative and tailored solutions** to the upskilling needs that Training Networks identify. Networks are encouraged to research training options that specifically target their needs, rather than off-the-shelf options.

Training Networks will develop, deliver, monitor and evaluate innovative training and development solutions in the **priority areas**:

- Fast-tracking digital transformation across all facets of organisational functioning.
- Enhancing leadership and management skills to increase organisational impact, including strong governance, well-formed strategy, and agile and effective management and planning.
- Driving the development of the Green Economy and the adoption of sustainable practices within organisations.
- Building skills as a means of responding to the challenge of Brexit.
- Developing new business models; new approaches to earning-income and fundraising; and new models for working with statutory funding partners.
- Achieving high-quality, impactful, consistent and responsive services, demonstrating impact, and communicating that effectively.
- Upskilling and reskilling to successfully accommodate the changes necessary to ensure safe and effective working environments in a COVID-19 context.

Applications focussed on these priority areas that also address the following cross-cutting challenges are especially welcome:

- Applications that build skills on a **regional basis**.
- A focus on **labour market inclusion**, particularly for those who are less likely to be included in employer-arranged training or to directly engage in training themselves.
- Embedding a culture of **lifelong learning** across the workforce.

The minimum amount that a Training Network can apply for is €10,000, the maximum is €50,000. The selection of networks will be made based on the quality and number of applications received. The overall fund available for this programme is **€270,000.00.**

A balance in the area of work of the Training Networks will be sought so that as wide a range of **sub-sectoral** areas as possible will be covered.

Additionally, to ensure that the funding is spread appropriately across the country, a **geographical** and **regional** spread will be sought in terms of where the members of each Training Network are based.

Any community and voluntary sector organisation based in the Republic of Ireland is welcome to apply as the Lead Organisation for the Training Networks programme. The Lead Organisation must have consulted and agreed **with at least 9 other organisations** (giving a minimum 10 organisations) to be named as network members in the application document. **All network members must be based in the Republic of Ireland.**

Completed application forms must be submitted to traininglinks2022@wheel.ie by **5pm on Friday, 29 April 2022.**

4. **What is a Training Network?**

A Training Network is a group of independently run and governed community and voluntary sector organisations who decide to come together as a group to undertake training that they may not be able to do individually. The term 'community and voluntary' in this instance includes: **registered charities, social enterprises, independently run nonprofit organisations who are not charities, and incorporated entities**.

- Training Networks require a minimum of **ten members.** There is no maximum number of organisations that can be members of a Training Network, however, the network must be a manageable size for the Network Coordinator.
- The **Lead Organisation** is the main applicant for the Training Links funding. It will have overall responsibility for meeting the Training Network's objectives, coordinating Training Network activities, monitoring progress and targets, and evaluating the training programme. The Lead Network is also responsible and accountable for the funding, as well as reporting to The Wheel.

- All Training Networks must nominate a **Network Coordinator** who will have the capacity to undertake the work associated with the programme and who will also act as the main point of contact for The Wheel.
- All Networks must have a **Network Committee**. The committee's role is to oversee the development of the training plan and the work of the Training Network. A representative from each member of the Training Network should sit on the Network Committee.
- The member organisations of the Training Network must be stand-alone organisations, independently run and governed and **located in the Republic of Ireland.** The full network **cannot be branches of an organisation.**
- Training Networks may be from the same town or area (**regional**); may be involved in similar activities (**sub-sectoral**); or may all be involved in a specific topic (**theme**).
- Training Networks can be **new networks, previously funded networks who have completed the programme, and previously unsuccessful networks.**

5. What is a Training Grant?

A training grant is funding awarded to successful applicants, to help their networks address identified and approved training programmes and interventions for their network members.

- The Wheel will provide Training Network grants in the range of €10,000 to €50,000, on a phased basis, over an eighteen-month period from **11 July 2022 – December 2023.**
- As there is a total fund of **€270,000.00** available, Training Networks may receive a grant that is less than they applied for. If this is the case, the Training Network will be required to submit a revised training plan, including revised outcomes, and revised budget for approval.
- This grant is for the development of the Training Network, the creation, implementation and evaluation of its training plan and fulfilling all other programme requirements.
- Successful applicants will contribute matching funding of at least 20% which may be cash or in-kind (such as providing staff support to the Training Network).
- Advice, support and guidance from The Wheel will be available at all stages to the Training Networks.
- Payment of the grant to successful Training Networks is subject to the receipt of ongoing funding from the National Training Fund through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

6. **Application Process**

Applications are welcome from **new networks, previously funded networks who have completed the programme, and previously unsuccessful networks. Training Networks involved in the 2021 – 2023 programme are not eligible for funding and should not apply.**

The process:

- The Lead Organisation must make the application to The Wheel on behalf of the Training Network using the Training Links application form. The form can be downloaded on https://www.wheel.ie/training-links-programme-2022-2024.
- Application forms should be completed in full with due regard to the information provided in the application pack.
- Completed application forms and supporting documents must be submitted to traininglinks2022@wheel.ie by **5pm on Friday, 29 April 2022.**
- Following an eligibility review carried out by The Wheel, an assessment by an independent panel of expert assessors (not including staff of The Wheel) will be done in line with the selection criteria (Section 8).
- There is an appeals process in place.
- All applicants will be notified about their result by **Monday, 27 June 2022.**
- A timetable of key dates is available in Section 10.

7. **Eligibility Criteria**

Detailed below are the eligibility criteria necessary for applications to be considered for funding under the Training Links Programme. If an application is deemed to be 'not eligible', the Lead Organisation will be advised, following completion of the eligibility review process.

- The Lead Organisation is an **independently run and governed, incorporated, community and voluntary sector organisation based in the Republic of Ireland**. The term 'community and voluntary' in this instance includes: registered charities, social enterprises, independently run nonprofit organisations who are not charities, and other relevant incorporated entities.
- The Lead Organisation in the network application has relevant **incorporated** legal status, e.g., Company Limited by Guarantee; Co-Operative / Friendly Society etc. While the Lead Organisation must be incorporated, other organisations within the training network do not have to be incorporated.
- Each member organisation of the network must be able to demonstrate that it has its own governance in place.

- A Training Network comprising of branches of an organisation is not eligible, even if they are independently constituted.
- Each member organisation must be based in the Republic of Ireland.
- A Network Committee is in place for each network.
- A Network Coordinator in place for each network.
- The application includes matched funding from the proposed Training Network of at least 20% of the total project budget, which may be cash or in-kind.
- The minimum number of members involved in the network must be **at least ten.**
- The application form has been completed in full with due regard to the information provided in the application pack, the Training Links programme objectives, the priority areas and the cross-cutting challenges.

8. Selection Criteria

The Selection Criteria is divided into four areas.

1. **Strategic Criteria.** Has the rationale, intended impact and learning outcomes of the proposed training programme been clearly articulated? How well does the application meet the objectives and priority areas of the Training Links Programme 2022-2024?
2. **Thematic Criteria.** How well does the proposed training plan align to the need(s) identified in the application? Is training need aligned to the cross-cutting challenges listed in Section 3?
3. **Operational Criteria.** This criterion looks at the process and methods of achieving the networks strategies, including cost-effectiveness, network management and evaluation factors.
4. **Wider Impact.** This area focuses on what is developed and/or delivered by the network. What is shared as well as what can be continued after the Network's Training Link funding ceases.

Selection Criteria	Sub Criteria	Weighting
Strategic Criteria	- Clarity of alignment of proposed training to the Training Links programme objectives in Section 2. - Clearly demonstrates advancement in promoting and supporting one or more priority areas outlined in Section 3. - Clarity about the proposed learning outcomes for participants.	40%

Thematic Criteria	▪ Extent to which the proposed training plan is an effective solution to the identified need. ▪ The extent to which the training plan also focuses on the additional cross-cutting challenges. ▪ Impact on upskilling and employability in the chosen priority area(s) is evident.	25%
Operational Criteria	▪ Evidence that Training Network member organisations have been consulted / had input to the application. ▪ Relevancy of training activities to members of the Training Network. ▪ Capacity to deliver, manage, report and evaluate the Training Links project (considering such risks as COVID-19 restrictions). ▪ Financial efficiencies, degree of matched funding, and value for money in training and financial management. ▪ Clarity of application form and coherence of proposal. ▪ Evidence of previous successful project delivery and performance.	20%
Wider Impact	▪ Dissemination of training to a wider group or audience within and/or outside of the network. ▪ Sustainability of training programme and programme results.	15%
Total		**100%**

9. Supports for Training Networks

In addition to the financial grant, The Wheel will offer ongoing support throughout the application, development, implementation and evaluation phases of the project. This will involve the following:

- **An online workshop** for Network Coordinators and/or a suitable representative from Training Networks. A representative from each Network must be present.
- A **Microsoft Teams channel** will be set up for Network Coordinators, as well as network members, to network and request support throughout the programme.
- **Network monitoring visits** where The Wheel's representative will connect with each network to review the network's progress, achievement of training and financial targets, network coordination, and to provide guidance and support
- **Other supports** include ongoing support over Microsoft Teams, telephone and video calls.

10. Training Links Timetable of Activities

Dates are subject to change:

Date	Action
28 Feb 2022	Applications open (9 weeks)
29 April 2022, 5pm	Applications close
2 May – 24 June 2022	1. Stage 1 - Eligibility review (2 – 6 May 2022) 2. Eligibility appeals process (9 – 13 May 2022) 3. Stage 2 - Independent assessment (16 May – 3 June 2022) 4. Stage 3 - Confirmation of selection (6 – 10 June 2022) 5. Inform unsuccessful networks (6 – 10 June 2022) 6. Selection appeals process (13 – 17 June 2022) 7. Final decision on results (20 - 24 June 2022).
27 June 2022	All applicants informed about their result.
27 June - 8 July 2022	Final changes/adjustments (if required) to network revised training plan, including revised outcomes, and budget for approval.
8 July 2022	Contracts signed, bank details and administrative details received from successful Training Networks.
11 July 2022 – December 2023	Training Networks Operational Period.
11 July 2022	Online Network Coordinator kick off meeting.
15 July 2022	20% grant.

31 December 2022	20% grant.
30 June 2023	40% grant.
19 January 2024	Completion of final report. Final financial and narrative report, and the network evaluation must be submitted to The Wheel.
26 January 2024	Final 20% grant.
Monitoring and evaluation.	