



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



CREATIVE
CLUSTERS

Creative Clusters

Guidelines 2024

The purpose and aims of Creative Clusters

The purpose of this scheme is to demonstrate how the creative practices can support clusters of schools to work together to address common learning challenges over a two-year period. It aims to:

- Promote new ways of working and collaboration between schools and the arts and cultural sector
- Improve teaching and learning
- Provide an opportunity for clusters of schools to experiment, innovate and collaborate on the design, implementation and evaluation of a bespoke creative learning project
- Develop the creativity of learners and teachers
- Understand, whether clustering schools at different stages of their journey in using the creativity in the classroom and in developing longer term partnerships is an effective model for developing and embedding practice in schools.
- The Creative Clusters scheme provides schools with access to creative people, skills and resources and supports them to draw on their own skills and experiences and those within their wider communities.

Background

Creative Clusters is an initiative of the Department of Education led by and in partnership with the 21 full-time education support centres (Education Support Centres Ireland - ESCI) and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund – Creative Clusters Initiative.

Creative Clusters is key initiative of the Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027 which focuses 'on providing young people with opportunities to learn and develop the key skills and competencies of collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. These skills are encouraged through engagement with creativity and through access to a creative education in a range of formal and informal settings.' Creative Youth 2023-2027 is part of the Creative Ireland programme and is led by the Department of Education supported by the Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

What is a Creative Cluster and how many schools are involved?

A Creative Cluster will typically consist of between 3 and 5 schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative creative learning project which supports them to address a common issue or challenge. Creative Clusters will include schools at different stages of their journey in using creativity in the classroom. Clusters can consist of primary schools only, post-primary schools only or a combination of primary, post-primary schools, special education schools and Youthreach organisations.

Clusters can be drawn from existing networks or result from the creation of new ones.

Each cluster must nominate a lead school. The lead school must identify a Creative Cluster Coordinator who would normally be a member of the school's teaching or senior leadership team. Substitution will be provided for one representative from each school to attend the Cluster Workshop and Cluster Meetings. It is recommended that the same representative attend these events throughout the life of the Cluster. The Lead School Coordinators will receive an additional 2 days' substitution cover to work on the Cluster project in Year 1 and in Year 2 of the initiative. If the application is successful, the co-ordinator will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the project and will act as a single point of contact during the duration of the project. The other schools in each cluster must nominate a representative to participate in the project.

How many Creative Clusters will there be in 2024?

It is envisaged a further 42 year 1 clusters will be established in 2024.

How long will the Creative Clusters scheme run for?

Clusters established in 2024 will operate for two years.

What is the application process?

Creative Clusters is a national programme of local projects and the 21 full-time education support centres across Ireland are lead partners in the initiative. They will have a key role in identifying and supporting a Creative Cluster for their local area. Individual schools, existing networks of schools and potential clusters of schools must apply using the online Creative Clusters 2024-2026 Application Form only (link below) by 5pm on Friday, 10th May 2024. The List of full-time education support centres and associated contact details are attached in Appendix 1. Following the application process, the local Education Support Centre will assess and score applications using the criteria outlined below. The local education support centre will then inform the successful clusters in their area. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified [The list of full-time education centres and associated contact details are attached in Appendix 1]. The application deadline is 5pm Friday, 10th May 2024.

Which schools are not eligible to apply to lead or participate in a Creative Cluster?

The following schools **may not apply** to participate in Creative Clusters:

- Fee Paying Schools i.e. Schools not in receipt of capitation grants from the Department of Education / education and training boards and are not in the free- education scheme
- Schools that are already participating in Creative Clusters 2023/25 (Year 1 commenced in September 2023).
- Schools that are already participating in Creative Schools 2023/25 (Year 1 commenced in September 2023).
- Schools cannot simultaneously participate in Creative Clusters and Creative Schools.
- Schools who have participated as a cluster previously, cannot reapply for Creative Clusters unless they lead a combination of schools new to the initiative.

¹The Creative Schools initiative is an initiative led by the Arts Council that supports individual schools to develop & begin to implement their own Creative Schools plan.....

The following schools **may apply** to lead or participate in a Creative Cluster:

- Schools that have not yet participated in Creative Clusters.
- Schools that have not yet participated in Creative Schools and those who will complete Creative Schools Year 2 in the 2023/24 school year.
- Schools that will complete Creative Clusters Year 2 in the 2023/24 school year. However, they must apply as part of a cluster who have not yet participated in the initiative. In this instance, it is required that this school applies to lead a cluster of schools that are new to the initiative.

What support is provided to Creative Clusters?

Selected clusters can expect support to include the following:

- An initial one-day regional workshop event for Creative Cluster Coordinators and at least one representative from each of the schools in the cluster. This will provide an opportunity for schools in the individual Creative Clusters to work together to develop and progress the focus for their cluster work.
- A specially trained Creative Cluster Facilitator who will support the cluster for up to three local creative cluster meetings over the 2-year lifetime of the cluster. The Creative Cluster Facilitator will work with the Cluster to develop, implement and evaluate an arts and creative learning project which helps participating schools to address a common school issue or development need. The Cluster will have flexibility in how they wish to schedule these meeting times and days, in consultation with their local education support centre. Paid substitution will be provided for the regional cluster workshop event and two/three local cluster meetings per school year.
- Networking opportunities with other schools including other Creative Clusters and schools participating in other Creative Youth initiatives to share learning

What funding is available to each Creative Cluster?

Funding has been set aside for the following:

- Each Creative Cluster will receive funding of **€3,000 per school in each cluster** over a two-year period to implement their project in the 2024–2026 school years (e.g. a cluster of 3 schools would get €9,000 over two years while a cluster of 5 schools would receive €15,000 over two years). Schools in a cluster are expected to collaborate on how this funding is allocated and spent to support the implementation of their project. Clusters will receive 50% of the total funding in Year 1, with the second 50% being provided in Year 2.

Do clusters have to have a project idea?

Schools make their application on the basis of a common theme or learning challenge. This idea can change, grow and evolve during the cluster's 2-year journey. Clusters that are selected to take part will begin their journey as a Creative Cluster by participating in a regional Cluster workshop day. On this day the schools in each cluster will spend time getting to know the members of their cluster and the schools in their professional learning community.

Assessment and Selection

Creative Cluster applications will be assessed by the local education support centre. Applications will be assessed and scored against the following criteria.

1. The rationale for the application

This includes the extent to which the school(s) involved have identified a clear rationale for applying to be a Creative Cluster and their initial ideas of common issues or learning challenges they could address

2. Benefits to teaching and learning

This includes how participation will support improvements in teaching and learning, in the development of the arts and creativity and in areas of the curriculum

3. Capacity and commitment of all the schools in the cluster to participate

This includes the extent to which the senior leaders in each of the schools are committed to the cluster and to mobilising their school community to

engage and how schools in the cluster, that are at different stages of their journey in using the arts and creativity in the classroom, see themselves supporting each other

4. Children and Young People's Voices

This includes the extent to which the application demonstrates a clear plan for ensuring children and young people play a central role in developing, implementing and evaluating their Creative Cluster project. The project may also specifically support children and young people with least access to creativity or who might fall within the 'seldom heard' cohort ([Seldom Heard Toolkit](#) p.7).

Creative Clusters Application Link & Preview of Questions

Creative Clusters 2024-2026 Application Form apply here: <https://forms.gle/kGAcKgGeHXJ2DQvu8>

Please note only online applications will be accepted.

Outline of the online Creative Clusters 2024-2026 Application Form

General information

- Your Local Education Support Centre
- Information required for all schools in the Cluster
 - a. School Name
 - b. School Roll Number: use this link to find participating schools' Roll Number & Eircode: <https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/495b8a-schools/>
 - c. School Address & Eircode
 - d. School Email Address
 - e. School Contact Number
 - f. School Type: Primary, Post-Primary, Special Education School, YouthReach Centre, Primary/ Post-Primary School with Special Education Classes DEIS, Gealscoil, Rural, Girls Only, Boy Only, Co-Educational,
 - g. School Principal's Name
 - h. Lead School Co-Ordinator's / School Representative's Name

- i. Lead School Co-Ordinator's / School Representative's Email
- j. Lead School Co-Ordinator's / School Representative's Contact Number

Your Creative Clusters Application

Please tell us why your Creative Cluster wants to be involved in this Creative Youth 2023-2027 initiative. What benefits do you hope to gain from participation? How can Creative Clusters support your school in embedding creativity in children and young people's school lives? What role will children and young people play in the planning, design and evaluation of your Creative Cluster? All schools in the Cluster must support the development of this application but the Lead School must submit on behalf of all the schools in the Cluster. Your application will be assessed using the Creative Clusters Scoring Criteria outlined in the Creative Cluster 2024 Guidelines. Please read these and the questions and answers carefully.

1. Learning Theme/Challenge of the Creative Cluster

- o What will be the learning theme or challenge for your Creative Clusters? (50 words maximum)

2. Rationale for Application

- o Please tell us your rationale for applying to be a Creative Cluster. (50 words maximum)

3. Capacity and Commitment

- o Tell us about what benefits your schools hope to gain from participation in Creative Clusters, including the capacity and commitment of all schools in the Cluster to fully participate. Please comment on how senior leaders in each of the schools will support the Cluster and mobilise their school community to engage. How will the Cluster support schools in developing creativity in the classroom and support each other during the journey? (500 words maximum)

4. Connecting Creative Clusters to Teaching and Learning

- o How will your Creative Cluster support improvements in teaching and learning and embed creativity in curriculum? (500 words maximum)

5. Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making

- o How will your Creative Cluster ensure that children and young people play a central role in developing, implementing, and evaluating your Creative Cluster? See Participation Framework | Hub Na nÓg (hubnanog.ie) for support. Does your project aim to specifically support children and young people with the least access to creativity or those who might fall within the 'seldom heard' cohort ([Seldom Heard Toolkit](#) p.7)? (500 words maximum)

Creative Clusters Scoring Criteria

Creative Cluster Assessment and Scoring: 0 = Not Met, 1 = Potential to Meet, 2 = Met - Satisfactory, 3 = Met - Strong, 4 = Met - Outstanding, 5 = Met – Exceptional, Total Score (Max = 20)

Criterion 1: Theme/Challenge & Rationale: Clear rationale for Creative Clusters demonstrated that aligns with the learning theme or challenge.

Criterion 2: Capacity and Commitment: Anticipated benefits of Creative Clusters, active support of school leadership and ethos of mutual support is outlined.

Criterion 3: Connecting to Teaching & Learning: Strategy for linking Creative Clusters to developing and embedding creativity in teaching and learning is demonstrated.

Criterion 4: Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making: Plan for children and young people's central role in developing, implementing, and evaluating the Creative Cluster is outlined. The project aims to support children and young people with the least access to creativity or those who might fall within the 'seldom heard' cohort.

Creative Clusters Timeline

Opening date for applications	6 th February 2024
Closing date for applications	10 th May 2024
Announcement of Successful Creative Clusters	Late May 2024
Regional training for Creative Clusters	Late September 2024
Detailed project planning and implementation work begins	Early October 2024
Initiative completion and review	Late May 2026

Appendix 1 – List of full-time education centres and associated contact details

Education Centre	Address	Phone	email	Website
Athlone	Moydrum Road, Athlone, Co Westmeath	090 6420400	info@athloneeducationcentre.com	www.athloneeducationcentre.com
Blackrock	Kill Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin	01 2365000	bec@blackrockec.ie	www.blackrockec.ie
Carrick-on-Shannon	Marymount, Old Dublin Road, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim	071 9620383	office@carrickedcentre.ie	www.carrickedcentre.ie
Clare	Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co Clare	065 6845500	reception@clareed.ie	www.clareed.ie
Cork	The Rectory, Western Road, Cork	021 4255600	office@cesc.ie	www.cesc.ie
Donegal	2/3 Floor, Pier One, Quay Street, Donegal Town, Co Donegal	074 9723487	admin@donegaledcentre.ie	www.donegaledcentre.ie
Drumcondra	Drumcondra, Dublin 9	01 8576400	info@ecdumcondra.ie	www.ecdumcondra.ie
Dublin West	Old Blessington Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24	01 4528000	reception@dwec.ie	www.dwec.ie
Galway	Cluain Mhuire, Wellpark, Galway, Co Galway	091 745600	info@galwayec.ie	www.galwayec.ie
Kildare	Friary Road, Kildare Town, Co Kildare	045 530200	office@eckildare.ie	www.eckildare.ie
Kilkenny	Seville Lodge, Callan Road, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	056 7760200	kecsec@eckilkenny.ie	www.eckilkenny.ie
Laois	Block Road, Portlaoise, Co Laois	057 8672400	info@laoisedcentre.ie	www.laoisedcentre.ie
Limerick	1st Floor Marshall House, Dooradoyle Road, Limerick, Co Limerick	061 585060	info@lec.ie	www.lec.ie
Mayo	Westport Road, Castlebar, Co Mayo	094 9020700	eolas@mayoeducationcentre.ie	www.mayoeducationcentre.ie
Monaghan	Knockaconny, Armagh Road, Monaghan, Co Monaghan	047 74000	info@metc.ie	www.metc.ie
Navan	Athlumney, Navan, Co Meath	046 9067040	info@ecnavan.ie	www.ecnavan.ie
Sligo	Ballinode, Sligo, Co Sligo	071 9138700	info@ecsligo.ie	www.ecsligo.ie
Tralee	North Campus, Dromtacker, Tralee, Co Kerry	066 7195000	info@edcentreralee.ie	www.edcentreralee.ie
Waterford	Newtown Road, Waterford, Co Waterford	051 311000	info@wtc.ie	www.wtc.ie
West Cork	The Square Shopping Centre, The Square, Dunmanway, Co Cork	023 8856756	info@westcorkeducationcentre.ie	www.westcorkeducationcentre.ie
Co. Wexford	Milehouse Rd, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	053 9239100	info@ecwexford.ie	www.ecwexford.ie

