

# **THRIVE Scheme - FAQ**

Version 4 - Last updated 25/03/2025

- 1. *The building in the Strand 2 project would require a significant extension to bring it back into use. Are costs associated with the construction of an extension eligible?***

**Answer:** Section 3.2 of THRIVE Application Guidelines does not prohibit the construction of an extension, LAs need to be mindful of the impact this may have on the scoring of your proposal. The more “significant” the extension, the greater the need to provide justification for same. This is a competitive call and not all projects will be funded. Please see Section 5.2.2 of the THRIVE Guidelines which sets out the assessment criteria in more detail.

- 2. *Is planning permission required for a Strand 2 application? What happens if the planning application process is being considered but not fully granted by the deadline for applications?***

**Answer:** The assessment Criteria (Table 2) state that ‘Strand 2 Projects should be at a sufficient stage of readiness for capital investment’. If planning permission is required and not in place, then this will be scored accordingly.

- 3. *The heritage building we have in mind has already been identified in a County Development Plan. If we apply for Strand 1, do we still have to create an Integrated Urban Strategy and if so, how much detail is required for the strategy/plan to follow the Town Centre First Framework/model.***

**Answer:** Applicants for Strand 1 do not have to create an Integrated Urban Strategy if they already have one in place that fully meets the criteria set out in Section 2.2 of the THRIVE Application Guidelines (including the detailed footnote) and they have identified the heritage building within that plan. However, if the plan fails to fully meet these criteria or it doesn’t identify the heritage building, Local Authorities are invited to apply for Strand 1 support to create a new plan or to enhance the current plan. This includes any additional steps required to follow the Town Centre First Framework / Model. Applicants are reminded that they will be competing for Strand 2 funding based on the Strand 2 Assessment Criteria in Table 2 of the Application Guidelines. These include how the project “will complement the delivery of Town Centre First”, how it demonstrates a “participatory approach (involvement of citizens and stakeholders) and community participation in design and implementation” and how it will “embed NEB Values” of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion.

- 4. *The building we are proposing for a Strand 2 application has already received funding for renovation through another fund. We feel the project meets the criteria for THRIVE, can we still apply for THRIVE funding to bring the project to completion?***

**Answer:** Projects which have previously received funding will be considered, however THRIVE cannot double fund project expenditure. If the project received funding from another source, the accounting systems would need to demonstrate a clear separation of activities and no duplication of expenditure. Applicants are reminded of the importance of visibility under the THRIVE scheme.

**5. For the citizen, community local engagement, how much engagement is required and what evidence is required for a Strand 2 application?**

**Answer:** Within the assessment Criteria (Table 2), 30% of marks are allocated to “*IMPACT: Compatibility with New European Bauhaus (NEB) values and principles in being transformative and encouraging a cultural shift to sustainable place-based living*”, therefore Local Authorities should ensure they have carried sufficient evidence of engagement to meet this criterion. Further guidance on citizen, community local engagement will be provided at the Workshop for New European Bauhaus. Appendix 2 within the Application Guidelines also provides Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making, Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal, February 2023. [https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2023/04/Guide-to-Incl.-Community-Engagement\\_2nd-Edition\\_Oct23\\_Final-2-1.pdf](https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2023/04/Guide-to-Incl.-Community-Engagement_2nd-Edition_Oct23_Final-2-1.pdf)

**6. Does the building have to be vacant or derelict? What is the definition of underused? We have an existing building which is used by the public/community but is need of renovation and upgrade of facilities.**

**Answer:** The heritage building for a Strand 2 application needs to be vacant, derelict or underused. Strand 2 is targeted at projects that bring vacant or derelict heritage buildings located in urban centres back into use to assist in revitalising our cities and towns, and the enhancement of heritage assets that have fallen into redundancy. Local authorities will be required to provide confirmation that an eligible building or buildings is vacant, derelict or underused and to clearly demonstrate that the building/s rehabilitation and reuse has potential to drive significant town centre regeneration. The Application Guidelines do not explicitly define underused but underused could be a proportion of the building or it could be the capacity for use is restricted due to the condition of the building and the local authority will need to justify this in their application.

**7. For Strand 1, when does the Integrated Urban Strategy have to be complete? We are not sure if it could be complete by the end of the year, if Strand 2 applications open at the beginning of 2025?**

**Answer:** While there is no strict deadline for Integrated Urban Strategies, it is envisaged they would be complete by the end of 2024 in advance of a Strand 2 application.

**8. How are the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway & Waterford defined and what are the boundaries for these cities as designated settlements under THRIVE?**

**Answer:** Appendix 1 of the Guidelines listed the five cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. A footnote advised that “this means the existing built-up area of urban settlement of all sizes as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and designated in the NPF and RSES.” For clarification purposes we wish to advise that this footnote should have read as “The existing built-up area of urban settlements of all sizes as defined by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and designated in the NPF **or** RSES.” On this basis, the cities are defined under the CSO and NPF as cities and suburbs as follows:

- Dublin City and suburbs
- Cork City and suburbs
- Limerick City and suburbs
- Galway City and suburbs
- Waterford City and suburbs

We have amended Appendix 1 of the THRIVE Application Guidelines to reflect these clarifications, updated same on the website of the Southern Regional Assembly and the Northern & Western Assembly and written with this clarification to all local authorities with cities as designated settlements.

If cities wish to see a visualisation of their city and suburbs please go to <https://visual.cso.ie/?body=entity/ima/cop/2022&boundary=C04160V04929&guid=739df133-c111-4a17-97ad-f08902aa08b0> and make sure the year is 2022, Areas is Towns and Single are is highlighted. Then insert the name of your city and suburb under pick an area and the CSO map will be generated for you.

9. **Can I confirm that the timeframe for completion of a Strand 1 is 2024 and Strand 2 is much longer allowing for the whole project cycle to be included. i.e., Detailed Design, Planning, Construction/Delivery.**

**Answer:** That is correct, we envisage projects under Strand 2 will be completed over a 4-year period.

10. **Strand 1 – is this for the development of a strategic plan or is it for the pulling together of projects to make a coherent strategic plan or is it to allow projects come to shovel ready status?**

**Answer:** Strand 1 funding can be for any of 4 following activities:

**Development of a new integrated urban strategy** that will meet the criteria set out in Section 2.2 of the Application Guidelines which requires all integrated urban strategies to use a Town Centre First Framework which promotes a multi-disciplinary, participatory and community led approach that tackle town centre regeneration, vacancy and dereliction. See footnote 5 on Page 9 of THRIVE application guidelines for further details.

**Enhancement of an existing integrated urban strategy** that will meet the criteria set out in Section 2.2 of the Application Guidelines – It may be that you already have an integrated urban strategy (Local Development Plan, County Development Plan, etc.) but this may not currently meet the THRIVE definition of an Integrated urban strategy and you may therefore wish to enhance this plan but taking a more Town Centre First Framework approach or adding further citizen engagement or explore further the development needs or potential of the area etc.

**Identification of projects that promote the conservation and adaptive reuse of our built heritage stock while reducing vacancy and dereliction in town centres.** – Under this area you may wish to explore further either internally or through the use of an external consultant or through capacity building activities how you could better address conservation, built heritage, historic character assessments etc.

**Prioritisation, development, and specification of project proposals** to create a pipeline of investment-ready built heritage refurbishment, renovation and adaptive reuse projects, bringing one of them to a stage of readiness where it can be included in a Strand 2 application. Under this area you may wish to undertake some environmental consultancy to support you in a climate proofing or Do No Significant Harm assessment, undertake enabling or investigation works, progress planning application, undertake a survey or contract a specialist to create a sustainable and viable for the end use of the building etc.

**11. Do buildings need to be in Council ownership/control AND on list of protected structures to be eligible?**

**Answer:** Yes, heritage buildings included in a Strand 2 project must already be in local authority ownership and/or the local authority must have a property transfer or property sharing agreement in place with another state body prior to submitting an application. Following regeneration, the properties will remain in public control or ownership for a period of not less than 5 years from the final payment to the local authority under THRIVE Strand 2 (or within the period set out in State aid rules, if relevant). Heritage buildings do not need to be on the list of protected structures, they can be heritage buildings that are a proposed protected structure or will contribute significantly to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area as defined under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

**12. With regard to “Public control or ownership”, the guidance states that “The heritage buildings included in a Strand 2 project must already be in local authority ownership and/or the local authority must have a property transfer or property sharing agreement in place with another state body prior to submitting an application”. To what extent does the property transfer need to be at?**

**Answer:** If a property transfer or property sharing agreement are required between the public body who currently own the property and the Local Authority, then this needs to be in place prior to submitting the application for funding under Strand 2.

**13. How will the goal of citizen involvement in proposing projects be achieved?**

**Answer:** THRIVE promotes a citizen-centred community-led approach to planning and design under the Town Centre First framework and will fund projects that embrace the core values of the New European Bauhaus – sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion and are conceived and developed with a reinforced citizen and stakeholder engagement. THRIVE places citizens and their communities at the heart of the development of integrated urban strategies, the reimagination of town centres and the creative and sustainable reuse of vacant or derelict heritage buildings in public control or ownership. This is one of the main assessment criteria for the THRIVE scheme.

All strategies under Strand 1 will need to demonstrate the integration of the New European Bauhaus principles and values ensuring inclusivity, a multi-disciplinary integrated and participatory approach with the involvement of citizens and stakeholders and community in the design and implementation of the Integrated urban Strategy. This integrated urban strategy will identify the projects to be regenerated and be put forward for Strand 2 funding. All projects put forward under Strand 2 will also be assessed on how the project demonstrates a “participatory approach (involvement of citizens and stakeholders) and community participation in design and implementation”. For both Strand1 and Strand 2, community is defined as “partners, stakeholder and citizens should include citizens, regional, local, urban & other public authorities, economic & social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society including marginalised citizens and those who have specific accessibility/mobility needs and research organisations and universities where relevant.”

Given this is a significant assessment criterion within a competitive call, strategies and projects that do not embrace citizen involvement will score significantly lower than other project submissions. Applicants are required to take a Town Centre First Approach which requires a multi-stakeholder team to be set up – Driving TCF delivery through a team of local business and community representatives and other stakeholders – Please see Section 2.9 Page 22 of

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/215052/3402995b-3045-4e7a-b839-12ca21a02611.pdf#page=null> which outlines the need for community engagement to involve Local Community Development Committees, PPN's, community and voluntary sector and local development organisations in decision making for town centres. This also provides case studies of restoration in Ramelton - Co Donegal and Athlone – Co Westmeath. We have not been prescriptive on how this process is managed by the local authority, but we do allocate a significant proportion of the marks under Strand 1 and Strand 2 for this multi-disciplinary Integrated and participatory approach. Therefore, the more involvement of citizens and community in the decision-making process the higher the evaluators will score the application.

**14. Who will adjudicate and approve applications: Regional Assemblies or a government dept?**

**Answer:** A Steering Committee will be established to oversee project evaluation, to recommend awards of ERDF funding to selected projects, to oversee project delivery, and to address any significant issues that arise during implementation. The Steering Committee will comprise representatives of the Regional Assemblies, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and any other representatives to be agreed by the Member State and Managing Authority. An evaluation panel will be formed to oversee project selection and funding awards comprising members of the Steering Committee and an independent chairperson to be nominated by agreement of the Managing Authority and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage.

**15. Has there already been outreach to officials in local authorities to promote engagement with THRIVE?**

**Answer:** A formal invite to the Chief Executives in all Local Authorities has been sent out. Invites to apply for funding have been sent to Town Regeneration Officers, Heritage Officers and Conservation Officers in Local Authorities. THRIVE was promoted at the recent AIR Regions in Focus Training and Seminar Event in Adare, Limerick 8<sup>th</sup> February where the scheme was launched. Presentations have been made to each of the Assemblies, CCMA and TCF Network. We will also be promoting THRIVE at the Urban Heritage enhancing the liveability of Irish towns conference in Kilkenny on 4/3/24 and we continue to promote THRIVE on the Regional Assemblies social media platforms and website.

**16. Are there info sessions/roadshows/meetings being planned/considered to promote awareness' knowledge and capacity building?**

**Answer:** Information Sessions and capacity building online training is scheduled to be undertaken to assist local authorities to prepare their applications over the coming weeks. Training and information will also be provided on the THRIVE scheme, Communication & Visibility for ERDF funding, Conservation Principles, New European Bauhaus values and principles, Human Rights and Equality requirements, Green Public Procurement, Sustainable Development including the requirements to Do No Significant Harm & Climate Proofing. These in the main will be online sessions but we will also have a half day workshop in each region focused on THRIVE and Sustainable Development. (all online sessions have been recorded and are available on the managing authority website)

**17. Which local authority depts/ roles would you see that should be involved?**

**Answer:** This will be dependent on the local authority structure, but we envisage the TCF Officer, Town Team, Heritage/conservation Officer, Senior Planners and Urban Regeneration Officers will be involved in the Multi-Disciplinary Team from the Local Authority. The applications also require a commitment of senior management in the Local Authority.

**18. How should grass roots citizens/groups engage, and with whom (LA's or Managing Authorities) if they have a heritage building in mind that would be eligible that would benefit from significant funding to revamp it and bring it into increased community usage?**

**Answer:** Citizens should engage directly with their Local Authority and join the Town Team which should be set up in each local authority.

**19. Can you confirm Strand 1 funding (e.g. for an urban masterplan, which among other things could identify buildings that could be put forward for strand 2 funding – where it seems the real tangible benefits will emerge) is available for each designated settlements in each local authority? Can you confirm that Strand 2 funding is available for only one building in one of the settlements – and that it's possible that this submission might not be successful because there is no guarantee that every LA will get strand 2 funding?**

**Answer:** Each local authority can apply for funding for each of their designated settlements under Strand 1 but must select only one project to submit for funding under Strand 2. The decision on which project to submit will be made by the Local Authority. Strand 2 funding is expected to be highly competitive and not all projects will be funded.

**20. Who decides what selection process applies in relation to picking which building in which key town/city in a local authority is put forward for strand 2 funding?**

**Answer:** This is a decision for the Local Authority who should select the building and project that will score highest based on the THRIVE assessment criteria as this is a competitive call.

**21. Can Strand 2 be used for multiple small buildings in an area?**

**Answer:** Please see page 13 of THRIVE application guidelines – Footnote 16 – “Strand 2 projects should generally be limited to single or adjoining buildings. In exceptional circumstances, funding may support a collection of buildings that share the same public realm or form part of the same street. Strand 2 funding is not intended to support multiple building projects on separate streets in a town centre. “

**22. What is the implication for a local authority without a specific town centre first officer?**

**Answer:** There is no specific requirement for a TCF Officer to be in place under the THRIVE scheme. However, the approach must be in line with the Towns Centre First Framework and must have an integrated approach that is transdisciplinary and demonstrates citizen and stakeholder involvement in the design and implementation of the strategy or project. For further information please refer to the assessment criteria in Table 2 on page 29 of the THRIVE Applicant Guidelines.

**23. Was there any consultation conducted with Local Authorities in relation to the selecting the designated settlements for THRIVE funding? How were the designated key towns decided upon for the THRIVE Scheme?**

**Answer:** The THRIVE scheme funding is through the ERDF Regional Programme and will be managed by the Regional Assemblies. Consultations and negotiations in relation to the design and development of the THRIVE scheme were conducted with the European Commission and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The THRIVE scheme is co funded by the European Regional Development Fund and due to the relatively limited budget available the Commission require that the funding is focused on a limited number of significant projects which can have the greatest impact on town centre regeneration for the greatest number of citizens. We also needed to ensure that we did not cross over or duplicate other funding that is available under the Town Centre First Framework, in particular Croí Cónaithe which is available for smaller settlements. It was on this basis that the Key Towns, Regional Growth Centres and Cities & Suburbs as set out in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies were chosen as the designated settlements for the THRIVE scheme.

**24. Are the Thrive applications limited to the designated towns or can applications for other settlements be submitted?**

**Answer:** Applications are restricted to the designated settlements outlined in Appendix 1 of the THRIVE Guidelines.

**25. Are direct staff costs covered under strand 1 but not strand 2? Would this be new staff, regeneration officer, or consultant fees? Secondments possible to assign fulltime staff members? Do you know if there are outstanding opportunities for appointing TRO's to city councils?**

**Answer:** We confirm that staff costs are covered under Strand 1 but are not eligible under Strand 2. The staff costs funding under strand 1 is to cover the costs of staff eligible undertaking activities as outlined under Section 2.2 of the THRIVE application guidelines. This could be existing or new staff. While there is no strict deadline under Strand 1 it is envisaged to be complete by the end of 2024 which may have implications for employing new staff. Please refer to the definition in footnote 10 for staff costs as these are separate from consultant fees, which are also an eligible cost under Strand 1. The decision on using secondments should be determined by the local authority. The Regional Assemblies are not involved in the appointment of TRO's, if you require further information in this regard please contact the National Town Centre First Coordinator at [tcf@lgma.ie](mailto:tcf@lgma.ie)

**26. Is the intention for Strand 1 that it's for an integrated urban strategy for a particular designated settlement/geographical context and looking at all the opportunities within that for potential projects? I.e. Expected to identify a number of potential opportunities and not focus immediately on one particular project? Would it be possible to reduce scope of strand 1 to explore feasibility of 1 project depending on costs awarded?**

**Answer:** In short, the answer is yes, this is one of the activities that can be funded under Strand 1. However, funding can also be made available under Strand 1 for the following activities:

- Development of a new integrated urban
- Enhancement of an existing integrated urban strategy
- Identification of projects that promote the conservation and adaptive reuse of our built heritage stock while reducing vacancy and dereliction in town centres.
- Prioritisation, development, and specification of project proposals

Please see 2.4 above where you could undertake a feasibility study for a specific project provided this project was identified in an existing integrated urban strategy.

**27. Can you clarify timelines and requirements for strand 2 application stage in terms of project readiness i.e. planning and prelim design completed? 1 opportunity for Strand 1 funding with a deadline of 5<sup>th</sup> April. Call 2 for Strand 2 is Jan 2025. What is the timeframe for applying for Strand 2 and completing/drawing down funding? Does this all have to be done within the 4 year lifetime of the scheme? (subject to any future amendment/extension of the scheme).**

**Answer:** Strand 2 applications should be at a sufficient stage of readiness for capital investment and 30% of the scores will be for "Delivery", please see assessment criteria in section 5.2.2 of the THRIVE application Guidelines. In addition, consents, planning & preliminary design costs are eligible costs under Strand 1. Strand 1 will only have 1 call which is now open with a deadline for application submission of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024. Strand 2 will have 2 calls, one which is now open with a deadline for application submission of 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 and a further call will open in December 2024/January 2025. We envisage projects under Strand 2 will be completed over a 4 year period with final drawdown and payment of funding within the following 6 months.

**28. Must applications for Strand 1 include the budget for strand 1 only? Or also estimated budget for strand 2? Presume detailed costing for strand 2 only apply for strand 2 application?**

**Answer:** Yes, only the budget for Strand 1 should be included in the application for Strand 1. Detailed costings for Strand 2 are only required for Strand 2 applications.

**29. Tech support provided for either strand 1 or strand 2 or both i.e. for setting up dedicated webpage etc? or do we include in our costings if we need to consult out?**

**Answer:** All technical support costs required for either Strand 1 or Strand 2 applications should be included/detailed in your costings within these applications.

**30. Can two projects be submitted by a local authority for funding under Strand 2 or does the local authority need to choose the project to submit for funding?**

**Answer:** Please refer to Section 3.1 page 13 of the THRIVE Guidelines which advises the following:



- Strand 2 applications will be restricted to one application for one eligible designated settlement per local authority.
- Local authorities are responsible for selecting the project that is included in an application for Strand 2 funding.
- Local authorities that are responsible for more than one designated settlement may not submit projects for more than one designated settlement, they are required to select one project from one of their designated settlements.

**31. Can you advise on the community engagement piece here and the emphasis is on an application for an integrated plan, will the County Development Plan suffice given its large engagement across the county?**

**Answer:** See responses to Questions 5 and 13 above. See also Section 2.2 of the Application Guidelines. Applicants are reminded that community engagement is both a requirement in respect of integrated urban strategies, and a key enabler of the Town Centre First approach and the New European Bauhaus.

**32. You mentioned 120 m and then 90m can you explain?**

**Answer:** The overall funding Nationally is €120 million under THRIVE. This is broken down between the two regional programmes. €90 million under the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme and €30 million under the Northern & Western Regional Programme.

**33. Does a building within a zone of archaeological potential meet the criteria?**

**Answer:** See Section 2.2 of the Application Guidelines. For the purposes of THRIVE Strand 2, heritage buildings are structures that form part of the architectural heritage and are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. Save in exceptional circumstances, it is expected that a heritage building will be a Protected Structure, a Proposed Protected Structure, or will contribute significantly to the character of an Architectural Conservation Area, each as defined under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. These buildings may include a mix of typologies ranging from large-scale institutional or industrial buildings, such as schools, barracks, churches, convents, castles, etc. to other historic landmark buildings such as banks, post-offices and courthouses. Applicants are reminded of the importance of carrying out a professional assessment of the character of the Settlement's historic built environment.

**34. Can you give timeline for decision/ approval for Strand 2?**

**Answer:** Strand 2 deadline is 3/5/24 and we expect to have advised applicants of outcome of their applications in early June to allow sufficient time to put in place the necessary grant agreements to allow for projects to commence in early September.

**35. What is the timeframe for spending Strand 1 monies?**

**Answer:** It is anticipated that Strand 1 funds will be expended by the end of 2024/early 2025.

**36. Under Strand 2, only one application per local authority not one application per designated settlement. Is this correct?**

**Answer:** Yes. See Section 3.1 of the Application Guidelines.

**37. Can you only apply for Strand 2 if you already have an integrated strategy?**

**Answer:** Yes, the local authority must have an integrated urban strategy and the local authority must have selected one project from a list of potential projects that have been identified in that integrated urban strategy. Strand 2 applicants must submit a copy of their Integrated Urban Strategy with their application.

**38. Is Jan 25 not very tight to get a Part 8 through at 26 weeks for process?**

**Answer:** Yes the timeframe is tight but the hope is that local authorities may already have this process underway and can meet this timeframe. The reason for the tight timeframe is to allow sufficient time to complete the projects within the timeframe of the ERDF Regional Programme programming period.

**39. What will be the closing date for the Jan 2025 call? The time frame from June to December to have a Strategy/ Plan (including public consultation and input) and completion of a Part 8 (typically 3 to 4 months) is very tight.**

**Answer:** The closing date will be 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025 for Strand 2 Call 2. Yes we know this timeframe is tight but we need to ensure that all capital projects are allowed sufficient time to be completed with the timeframe of the ERDF Regional Programme programming period.

**40. Will the recording be up on web and can you circulate exact link when available for the Human Rights & Equality information session?**

**Answer:** Yes the recording and slides for all the information sessions will be available on the Southern Regional Assembly and the Northern & Western Regional Assembly websites soon. Please also see link to recording here:

THRIVE Introduction Recording <https://youtu.be/zVhvwM55cE0?list=PL-eSl5ji041ygwuf4N7Tzv8cBN6b6gDSU>

THRIVE Human Rights & Equality Recording <https://youtu.be/m6Rh0DualiA>

**41. Where do we find the link to the Human Rights & Equality E-Learning?**

**Answer:** The e-learning link is [www.ihrec.ie/elearning](http://www.ihrec.ie/elearning). This could assist applicants to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring their THRIVE strategy or project adheres to the requirements under Human Rights & Quality by confirming that X number of staff working on the multi-disciplinary team working on THRIVE have completed this training or will complete this training within X months of the award of funding.

**42. Can you give some examples of the sustainable end-use of the building (strand 2 project)?**

**Answer:** Section 3.2 of the guidelines 'Sustainable end-use of heritage buildings' outlines examples of the possible end-use. This list of examples is not exhaustive but gives local authorities an idea of some possible options to be considered, including a mixed end-use. We would encourage Local Authorities to utilise the citizen and community engagement process to help inform and determine a sustainable end use for the building.

**43. Can we budget for communication activities in our application form, including the cost of a plaque/sign or a temporary billboard during construction?**

**Answer:** Yes, you should assign a budget for communication activities. Communication activities directly linked to the project, and which acknowledge the support from the Programme (Government of Ireland and European Union) are eligible costs. Communication that promotes community/citizens engagement would also be eligible. Specific guidance on communication requirements, with appropriate programme statements and emblems/logos will be provided to all local authorities.

**44. If we have an existing Urban Strategy, does it have to stipulate the building/project that will be proposed in strand 2?**

**Answer:** Yes the heritage building that would be proposed in a Strand 2 application would need to be identified as a project or priority for redevelopment in an Integrated Urban Strategy/Plan. The Strategy/plan should meet the criteria set out in Article 29 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. Applicants are reminded that Strand 1 funding supports development of new strategies or enhancement of existing strategies, including project identification, scoping, planning, etc.

**45. Can a local authority go straight to strand 2 to application for a project without first having submitted a strand 1 application?**

**Answer:** This is permitted as long as the project is identified and selected within an existing Integrated Urban Strategy. A copy of this Integrated Urban Strategy identifying the project is required to be attached to the application for Strand 2 funding.

46. ***Can a local authority submit a strand 1 application to fund a plan for one relevant settlement, and also a strand 2 application for funding for a project in a different relevant settlement [without having mentioned that strand 2 project in a prior strand 1 application)?***

**Answer:** Yes, It is possible for a local authority to submit an application for Strand 1 funding for designated settlement X and then to also submit a Strand 2 application for designated settlement Y. Given they are two separate designated settlements there is no need to refer to the Strand 2 application in the Strand 1 application or vice versa.

47. ***Will there be a second window of opportunity to submit a Strand 1 application similar to how there's expected to be a second phase of Strand 2 funding?***

**Answer:** It is not intended to have any further calls under Strand 1. The second call under Strand 2 is to allow local authorities who are not currently ready to apply for Strand 2 to have an opportunity in the future to apply for capital funding for their project.

48. ***Do you have a graphic showing the deadlines for applications for strand 1 and strand 2 along with showing dates for decision making on applications?***

**Answer:** The deadline for Strand 1 is 5/4/24 with the outcome of the call to be announced in early May and grant agreement to be put in place very soon thereafter. The deadline for Strand 2 call 1 is 3/5/24 with the outcome of the call to be announced in early June and grant agreement to be put in place in June/July and projects to commence in September 2024. The deadline for Strand 2 call 2 is 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025 with the outcome to be announced in early August and grant agreement to be put in place in September and projects to commence in October 2025.

49. ***If a local authority that was awarded €7 million of strand 2 funding in the recent round can they apply again for more strand 2 funding in the next round for a different project in another otherwise eligible location in its area?***

**Answer:** Unfortunately, if a local authority is approved funding under Strand 2 Call 1 then they are not eligible for any further funding under THRIVE.

50. ***If a local authority has not yet applied for THRIVE strand 1 funding, will there be another opportunity to do so?***

**Answer:** Unfortunately, there are no further Strand 1 Calls under THRIVE proposed.

**51. Question: Would a provision for the 1% for Art be considered to be eligible expenditure under this THRIVE Strand 2?**

**Answer:** The Per Cent of Art scheme is designed for Nationally funded schemes and does not apply directly to THRIVE as it is ERDF co-funded and has its own specific eligibility requirements and eligible expenditure as outlined under Section 3.3 in the THRIVE Application Guidelines.

As you will see from these guidelines there is a budget heading for Other Direct Costs in the budget template. Any items included under Other Direct Costs would need to be intrinsic to the objective and delivery of the project and demonstrate how their inclusion contributes to the overall objective of the scheme which is the refurbishment, renovation and adaptive reuse of vacant or derelict heritage buildings in line with the Town Centre First approach and the values and principles of the New European Bauhaus. A local authority may therefore include a budget for specific artworks linked to the project delivery under Other Direct Costs. To support the work of the evaluation panel, this budget should be itemised and explained rather than simply relying on the general heading of Other Direct Costs.

**52. Question: What, for the purposes of submitting an application under THRIVE, would be considered sufficient in terms of documentary evidence, to demonstrate a “property transfer”?**

**Answer:** Depending how far into the process you are with the property transfer – the following documentation will suffice:

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Letter of Intent
- Pre- Contract Agreement
- Memorandum of Sale
- Exchange of Contracts
- Solicitors letter or Conformation
- Sale Agreement
- Approval Documents

**53. Question: Could I confirm please that mixed use developments with commercial end uses (such as a café) that would be run by private individuals / companies will be eligible for Strand 2 Call 2 Funding?**

**Answer;** The relevant extracts from the Guidelines. The key phrases are highlighted below.

**Section 3.2 Eligible Activities**

Sustainable end-use of heritage buildings

Projects will be required to identify sustainable viable end use/s of the heritage buildings. This might include utilisation for public services/administration, education or training, community and youth activities including arts/gallery, culture, tourism, sports and leisure. There may also be a mixed use for these eligible buildings, which may include residential, commercial, or other appropriate mix of uses for the enhancement of town centres e.g., café, retail shops, theatre or SMEs, subject to compliance with State aid rules.

It may be that the inclusion of a café in your development with a private end user supports sustainable viable end use/s of the heritage buildings. If this is the case, it will form part of your business plan. But you need to make absolutely sure that you comply with State aid rules.

**54. Question: If the local authority does not currently own the building and cannot provide evidence of ownership will a memorandum of agreement be sufficient to supply under THRIVE?**

**Answer:** A memorandum of agreement between the local authority and the private owner of this building will suffice in this case. However, the local authority should ensure to include, if this is not outlined in the memorandum of agreement, the timeframe for completion of the sale of the property and factor this into local authority timeline for completion of the regeneration. By this I mean if the local authority sign a grant agreement in say September 2025, then the sale will need to be completed before the local authority can commence the timeline for developing final design, procurement of consultants, procurement of main contractors etc.

**55. Question: can you please provide some advice on the design stages that are listed under Delivery on page 2 of the THRIVE Application Form?**

**Answer:** Please see link to document that explains the design stage - <https://assets.gov.ie/94044/b84df9e1-46bb-40d5-a199-0ecd6c8f60f6.pdf>

**56. Question: is there a Phase II Climate Proofing Template available if we have identified medium or high climate risks on our project?**

**Answer:** Please refer to section 3.3.2 of the Commission Technical Guidance for details of the requirements and how to undertake the Phase 2 Climate Resilience – Climate Change Adaptation Detailed Analysis - [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2021%3A373%3AFULL#ntc66-C\\_2021373EN.01000101-E0066](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2021%3A373%3AFULL#ntc66-C_2021373EN.01000101-E0066) This should assist you in undertaking the risk assessment, identifying adaption options and mitigation measures that should be incorporated into your project.

**57. Question: As the application form and supporting documents will be very large can we use ShareFile to share these documents, or do you have a specific sharing system available?**

**Answer:** You can use ShareFile, SharePoint or We Transfer to share your documents with us.

**58. Question: In relation to Appendix 7 included as a template in the Application form, we note that the first years expenditure column is 2025. As the project started back in 2024 there has been significant expenditure to date in relation to Enabling Works to allow for Safe Access, Site Surveys, Design Team Fees, etc. is it acceptable for us to insert a column for the costs incurred in 2024 as part of this Funding Application.**

**Answer:** Costs are only eligible under THRIVE Strand 2 for activities undertaken and approved for successful applicants from the closing date of the call which is 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025. No costs for activities undertaken prior to this date are eligible under THRIVE Strand 2. All other costs for enabling works etc should have been applied for under THRIVE Strand 1.

**59. Question: With regards to the terms “Public Realm works ” included throughout the Application form can we confirm that this includes external works that would be within the site boundary and are not solely related to works on a public road or footpath as there does not appear to be any other section where the costs or descriptions for these works can be included?**

**Answer:** Yes this is for all external works within the site boundary and can include hard and soft landscaping, biodiversity measures etc.

**60. Question: We have issued Stage 1 and Stage 2A Order of Cost Estimates to the Client which come in report format and included an Appendix with a detailed breakdown of the construction costs, will this be sufficient?**

**Answer:** Yes this is sufficient however, please remember this is a competitive call and there will be applications that are further along the design process. In the previous call we had applications that were at Stage 2(b) and Stage 3. The further along the design process the project is, the higher it will be scored by the Evaluation Panel.

**61. Question: Can you please advise if THRIVE funding becomes available on an annual basis?**

**Answer:** We wish to advise that this is the final call under THRIVE and we believe that all funding will be allocated in this call. If your project is not ready to be submitted by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025 then maybe you need to consider submitting the a different or smaller application. We will accept applications for between €2 million and €7 million under THRIVE.

**62. Question: Can you apply for funding under THRIVE for a Level 3 town as outlined in the RSES?**

**Answer:** No we are sorry but THRIVE is restricted to designated settlements as outlined in Appendix 1 of the call documents.

**63. Question: Can I ask if you're aware when the NEB self-assessment tool might be available online?**

**Answer:** There is an event on to launch this tool on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April. As soon as this is released we will forward same to all applicants.

**64. Question: Can we confirm that fit out costs can be included as per Section 3.3 of the guidelines which states that “Fit-out costs including furniture, fixtures & equipment & final finishes & painting etc.” Is there a maximum percentage of the overall costs that can be attributed to fit-out costs?**

**Answer:** Yes fit out cost are eligible under THRIVE. However, be mindful of the % of the costs allocated to fit out as the Evaluation Panel will be considering value for money and THRIVE is predominately to bring vacant, derelict and underutilised buildings back into use.

**65. Question: Do you have any specific examples or training with regards to DNSH and Business Cases or expectations as to what is required, will these be standalone documents / reports or is a statement / Do No Significant Harm table sufficient?**

**Answer:** We have provided capacity building for both these topics. If you go to our website at the following link: <https://southernassembly.ie/erdf-priority-3/thrive/> and scroll down you will see Capacity Building Recordings and Capacity Building Slides.

There are number of recordings that might be useful:

9. THRIVE Info Session on Sustainable Development, DNSH, EIA and Climate Proofing

10. THRIVE Workshop on Sustainable Development, DNSH and Climate proofing

There are some slides that might be useful:

Lessons Learned and Good practices – Contains details of what is required in the business case

THRIVE Sustainable Development, DNSH and Climate3 Proofing

The Business case will be a standalone document and the DNSH can also be a standalone document but the table in the application should still be completed for DNSH. What is most important is these elements are then brought into the main body of your application.

**66. Question: When does the construction need to be completed to be eligible under THRIVE Strand 2?**

**Answer:** Under THRIVE Strand 2 your projects should be completed by 31/12/2028 at the latest. This includes your defects period, handover, final account and all costs paid from Local Authority bank account. This will give you sufficient time to submit your final payment claim and progress report during the eligibility period for funding under THRIVE.