



Coimisiún
na Meán

Digital Transformation Scheme

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This document contains information regarding the **Digital Transformation Scheme** including:

- a) The Scheme's objectives;
- b) The parameters of the Scheme; and
- c) How it will operate.

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Coimisiún na Meán

Coimisiún na Meán (“An Coimisiún”), Ireland’s commission for regulating broadcasters, online media and supporting media development, is committed to ensuring a thriving, diverse and creative media landscape.

An Coimisiún, further to its Media Development function, develops and operates funding schemes to support the creation of content for Irish audiences that reflects and shapes Irish society, and which aims to support the media sector and strengthen its plurality.

To this end, Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport Mr. Patrick O'Donovan TD has allocated a total of €3m for the Digital Transformation Scheme for 2025. The Scheme is being established on an administrative basis and the broad parameters have been informed by the recommendations of the Future of Media Commission (FoMC).



1. Foreword

The Report of the Future of Media Commission recommended that the Broadcasting Fund, currently provided for under Part 10 of the Broadcasting and Other Media Regulation Acts 2009 & 2022 and which supports the Sound and Vision and Archiving Schemes, should be converted into a Media Fund to provide funding on a platform-neutral basis to the wider media sector. An overarching aim is to support a range of funding schemes for Public Service Content Providers on a phased basis including: -

- Support for Digital Transformation;
- Local Democracy Reporting Scheme;
- Courts Reporting Scheme;
- News Reporting Scheme;
- Access and Training Scheme; and,
- Community Media Scheme.

Following the rollout of the Local Democracy and Courts Reporting Schemes in 2024, it was decided that the next Schemes to be progressed would be the Supports for Digital Transformation and the News Reporting Scheme.

The establishment of the Digital Transformation Scheme aims to address the 'specific need to support innovation and digital transformation in Public Service Content Providers (PSCPs)' as recommended by the Future of Media Commission ('FoMC'). The Scheme will aim to upskill the existing work force with the requisite digital skills and incentivise technological innovation thus assisting media organisations in the continued provision of high-quality public service content that serves to inform the public, maintain integrity and preserve trust.

In light of the FoMC recommendations, €10 million was allocated in Budget 2025 to the Media Fund on an administrative basis, for the continuation of the Local Democracy and Courts Reporting Schemes as well as for the administering of a Digital Transformation Scheme and a News Reporting Scheme. Approximately €3 million has been allocated for the Digital Transformation Scheme.

The Digital Transformation Scheme presented below has been informed by the FoMC report findings and recommendations, research and consultative work undertaken by the Department of Culture, Communication and Sport and the FoMC Implementation Working Group in addition to further comprehensive research conducted on behalf of Coimisiún Na Meán.



2. Introduction

The Digital Transformation Scheme (“the Scheme”) is a digital transition support scheme operated by Coimisiún na Meán (“An Coimisiún”) and funded through exchequer funding. The key objective of this Scheme is to support Public Service Content Providers (Community, Local, Regional and National) to transition to a sustainable digital model ensuring the long-term viability of independent, trustworthy, accessible and diverse high-quality public service content.

In this context, it aims to support the digital upskilling of the existing workforce with the requisite training to thrive and compete in the national and global digital media sector whilst funding the essential modernisation of infrastructure and digital tools for business development. This is the first iteration of the Scheme.

This document sets out the key elements of the Scheme in terms of the role of An Coimisiún, the objectives, scope, available funding, and the operational processes. An Coimisiún will publish supporting documentation for potential applicants on funding rounds and any associated development measures regularly over the lifetime of the Scheme.

3. Role of An Coimisiún

An Coimisiún is responsible for the management of the Scheme, including corporate governance and the disbursement of the funds. The level of funding will be determined by the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport, Mr. Patrick O'Donovan. The funding allocated covers both the administration of any scheme, or schemes, and funding grants.

3.1. Legislative Context for the Digital Transformation Scheme

3.1.1. Establishment of the Scheme

Section 7(5)(b) of the Broadcasting and Other Media Regulation Acts 2009 & 2022 empowers the Minister for Culture, Communications and Sport to enter arrangements with An Coimisiún to set up schemes to ‘stimulate the provision of high quality, diverse and innovative news and comment on current affairs’. In addition, Section (7) (3) (g) states the Commission shall ‘encourage research, promote or endorse educational and training initiatives and activities... in relation to matters connected to its functions.’

Further, the ‘FoMC’ (3.2 Recommendation 6-3 ‘Establish supports for digital transformation’) recommended the development of a scheme to provide support to sustainable media organisations (Community, Local, Regional and National) in need of help to innovate and transition to the digital information environment.

In this context, An Coimisiún will prepare and submit to the Minister a scheme for the granting of funds to support all or any of the following:

- a) Digital Upskilling programmes designed to future proof and empower the current media workforce.
- b) Technological infrastructure initiatives enabling optimum digital-first content creation and distribution.
- c) Digital Transformation projects designed to boost the prominence, engagement and sustainability of public service media content.
- d) Digital initiatives advancing accessibility, the Irish language while embedding sustainability into future-ready digital content ecosystems.

The scheme will be implemented in accordance with EU State Aid Rules specifically within the framework of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) and Di Minimis. The funding will only be allocated to projects that seek to drive the delivery and availability of high-quality public service content through upskilling

workforce digital capabilities, modernising infrastructure and maximising content distribution by digital means as set out in a) to d) above and thereby fulfil the objectives of the scheme.

3.1.2. Definition of Digital Transformation

For the purpose of this scheme, Digital Transformation is defined as ‘The strategic deployment of digital technologies to modernise content creation and distribution, enhance operational efficiency, advance accessibility and enable data-driven, audience-centric business models.’ In the context of this scheme Digital Transformation will encompass the adoption of digital upskilling, technologies and workflows to modernise the creation and distribution of trustworthy, high quality inclusive and accessible public service media content thereby maximising audience reach.

3.1.3. Scheme Objectives

The objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

- **Support Sector Training Needs:** Address identified digital capability and skill gaps by equipping media professionals with future-ready digital first skills through targeted training and reskilling.
- **Support Sector Technology Needs:** Support the modernisation of media infrastructure and use of innovative tools to adapt to the digital landscape and meet the needs of media consumers and assist the financial sustainability of the media sector.
- **Prominence:** Increase level of prominence and ‘findability’ of public service content through digital transformation measures thereby assisting audiences in accessing trustworthy, reliable and accurate information.
- **Irish Language:** Support the digital transformation of Irish language public service content providers.
- **Plurality:** Encourage and increase digital capability and activity across a diverse range of sources thereby promoting a resilient and representative media landscape in Ireland.
- **Use of New Technology:** Enable equitable adoption and ethical utilisation of productivity-enhancing tools, including AI, that serve to enhance accessibility, efficiency and engagement while preserving editorial integrity with human oversight and safeguarding media sector employment. (e.g. Analysing and personalising audience engagement, Transcription, Subtitling, Assistive social media monitoring, Sifting large datasets)
- **Accessibility:** Support digital accessibility training and enhance technology to incorporate features such as transcription, text-to-speech and Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation to advance accessibility.
- **Youth Engagement:** Support the development of innovative and sustainable digital approaches to engage diverse and younger audiences meeting youth where they are, across the platforms, channels and formats they actively use.
- **Collaboration:** Foster greater collaboration and leverage economies of scale in the development and implementation of new training and technologies.
- **Sustainability:** Encourage digital solutions with low environmental impact and long-term viability. Incorporate best green practices in digital content delivery (e.g. renewable energy usage, sustainable streaming, green server hosting, reduced data centre usage.)

3.2. An Coimisiún's Approach to the Implementation of Funding Schemes

In implementing any funding scheme, An Coimisiún adopts a broadly strategic approach to the implementation of such schemes based on the following priorities:

1. Establish structures that focus on the primary objectives of the legislation and ensure the effective distribution of funding.
2. Build strong links and establish mechanisms for dialogue with the media sector and with other public sector agencies in order to gauge trends in media and in relevant areas, and inform such decisions as the number and structure of schemes;
3. Maintain flexibility within the structures of schemes to ensure the efficient administration and management of the fund in order to respond effectively to the needs of the media sector and to ensure that the objectives of the schemes are realised.

There are core values that underpin An Coimisiún's approach to the task of operating a scheme. An Coimisiún obligates to be:

- **Fair** – in our processes, procedures, and decisions.
- **Independent** – operating as an impartial regulator.
- **Expert** – by informing ourselves through engagement, research, and a commitment to professional learning.
- **Accountable** – in our decisions, our governance, and our resources.

4 Scope of the Digital Transformation Scheme

4.1 Supporting Digital Transformation: Training and Technology Needs

The core aim of the Digital Transformation Scheme is to enable the essential modernisation of infrastructure and digital tools for business development and to support digital upskilling, equipping the media sector with the requisite skills, training and knowledge to thrive and compete in the digital media sector. Supporting the activities of media organisations through digital transformation is essential to the survival and resilience of the media sector and its vital democratic role in providing high-quality trustworthy public service content to audiences across platforms. The purpose of the Scheme is to help accelerate digital transformation by meeting the most pressing needs of the media sector by incentivising investment in technology and skills, thus safeguarding the future of an innovative, robust and agile media industry equipped to serve the growing needs of digital audiences in Ireland.

4.2 Subject Matter

The Digital Transformation Scheme offers funding support for projects and initiatives that seek to protect and amplify the creation and distribution of public service media content thereby reaching a wide and cross-generational audience through the following core strands.

- a) **Training:** Reskilling and upskilling the media sector in areas including but not limited to digital journalism and ethics, digital accessibility, curation, preservation, audience engagement, AI, data analytics and multi-platform storytelling.

- b) **Technology:** Technological initiatives to enhance the quality, efficiency of delivery and distribution of digital media content reaching audiences in new ways including diverse and youth audiences.

4.3 Eligibility Criteria

Applications to the Digital Transformation Scheme may be submitted by media service providers on a platform neutral basis. The eligibility criteria set the minimum standards which must be achieved to be eligible to apply for funding.

a) **Compliance**

Broadcast media will be required to demonstrate a track record of compliance with Coimisiún na Meán broadcasting codes and standards.

b) **Membership of a Regulatory Body**

Newspapers and online publications must provide evidence of both a membership of a relevant self-regulatory body i.e. the Press Council, and a track record of compliance with same.

c) **Public Service Content Producer**

Applicants must be entities that produce and distribute public service content, such as news, culture, and community-focused programming. This includes broadcasters, newspapers, and online platforms.

d) **Digital Transformation Commitment**

An Coimisiún will expect applicants to provide a Digital Transformation project outline and detail how it forms part of future business activities.

e) **Demonstration of Need**

Applicants must demonstrate a clear need for digital transformation, outlining how the funding will enhance their ability to deliver public service content to audiences more effectively and efficiently.

f) **Meet Scheme Objectives**

Applicants must clearly demonstrate the Scheme objective(s) to which their proposal aligns.

Exclusions: Funding will not be available to finance:

- Projects that do not have a clear digital transformation component.
- Direct production of content.
- Routine or business as usual upgrades of digital systems already in use.
- Paid-for software trials with technology vendors. Assessments from technology platform or software providers, external digital experts must be solution agnostic.
- Consultancy, training and other activity unrelated to digital transformation and to the objectives of the scheme.
- Projects where the objective is to develop or upgrade systems for the monetisation of content (e.g. paywalls, subscription systems, advertising technology).
- Funding for creating permanent positions for Digital Transformation.
- Projects solely aimed at achieving environmental/sustainability outcomes.



5 Funding

5.1 Allocation of funds within the Digital Transformation Scheme

The awarding of funds will correlate with digital transformation projects that seek to accelerate the delivery and dissemination of digital content, improving access to high-quality trustworthy public information through upskilling the media sector and implementing the requisite technologies to optimise engagement thereby appealing broadly to contemporary society.

In this regard, An Coimisiún shall endeavour to allocate grants on a platform neutral basis to a diverse range of applicants, subject to the achievement of the required standards and in deciding on any grant amount, regard will be given to a number of factors including but not limited to, innovation through training and infrastructure, digital accessibility, Irish language and plurality. Consideration will be given to the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider and in this context, An Coimisiún may take appropriate measures to limit the overall level of funding awarded to any one media service provider that has a number of media outlets, including across all platforms.

5.2 Grant types

An Coimisiún shall have the flexibility to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate approach to the allocation of funding to grant applicants and has the discretion to award funding, as it sees fit, inter alia in any of the following ways:

- **Skills Development and Training Grants:** Reskill and upskill the media sector, address skills gaps in areas such as but not limited to, digital journalism and ethics, digital accessibility, curation, preservation, audience engagement, AI, data analytics/Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and multi-platform storytelling.
- **Digital Infrastructure Grants:** Implement, or make significant upgrades to, essential business and IT infrastructure to better serve audiences in areas such as but not limited to CMS, servers, cloud services, apps, AI tools.
- **Partnership and Collaboration Grants:** Foster greater collaboration and leverage economies of scale in the development and implementation of digital transformation projects in areas such as but not limited to training and technology.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion Grants:** Support digital accessibility training and enhance technology to incorporate features such as transcription, text-to-speech and Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation to advance accessibility.
- **Digital Consultancy Grants:** Support the media sector with strategic digital transformation challenges and opportunities and help organisations to identify and introduce best practice digital training, technologies & solutions to optimise content prominence.
- **Digital Innovation Grants:** Support the delivery of new digital-first or multimedia public service content and encourage novel approaches to engage with changing media consumer preferences.

The Scheme shall require that any Grant contract entered between a media organisation and An Coimisiún will not exceed a period of 12 months.

Guidance documentation will be published for each funding round and will include detailed information on the grant award levels and budget templates setting out the permitted costs under the Scheme.

5.3 Maximum Percentage of Funding Available

In general, Coimisiún Na Meán will allocate grants under the Scheme that represent between 50-70% of the eligible costs. Applicants are required to provide full details regarding the level and source of any other funding for all aspects of the budget. The following matrices provide an example of the possible percentages to be allocated:

Grant Category (Refer to Grant Types in this scheme Document)	Minimum Grant	Maximum Grant	Grant awarded will not represent more than the following percentage of the total budget
Digital Infrastructure	€10,000	€350,000	50%
Digital Skills Development/Training	€5,000	€300,000	Up to 70%
Digi Partnership & Collaboration	€20,000	€250,000	50%
Accessibility & Inclusion Projects	€5,000	€250,000	50%
Digital Media Consultancy	€5,000	€200,000	50%
Digital Content Innovation	€10,000	€200,000	50%

*Max percentages based on SME applicants/Variance for Larger Entities. For further info: [GBER State Aid](#)

Grant Aid for the purposes of smaller scale Digital Transformation projects (up to 100% of the project cost up to a maximum of €100,000) may also be sought pursuant to the De Minimis Regulation (EU) 2023/2831. Applicants must declare all other De Minimis Aid received during this period to ensure compliance. For further info: [De Minimis Aid](#)

5.4 Obligations under EU State Aid Rules

An Coimisiún must operate the funding scheme for Digital Transformation in compliance with EU state aid rules, specifically within the framework of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER).

The compliance requirements include full transparency such as the publication of funding awards on Coimisiún na Meán's website and inclusion of the Scheme in a report submitted annually to the European Commission. Individual awards exceeding €100k must be reported to the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport and then declared by the Department on the EU Commission's Transparency Award Module. The Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment are the lead on this report and the Department will co-ordinate the return of information from An Coimisiún in this respect. An Coimisiún must retain all required information regarding a funding award for the both the funding period and subsequently, for ten years afterwards to ensure that the EC can inspect a grant or grants to determine whether the compensation granted is compatible with GBER Regulation. From 1 January 2026 onwards all aid granted under De Minimis will need to be reported on the EU Commission's Transparency Award Module.

5.5 Funding Rounds

An Coimisiún will allocate funding using a contestable funding rounds system. The number of funding rounds will depend on a range of factors, including availability of funding and operational imperatives for An Coimisiún.



5.6 Acknowledgement of Funding

Applicants in receipt of funding from An Coimisiún are contractually required to formally acknowledge this support in a format acceptable to An Coimisiún. An Coimisiún reserves the right to issue applicants with guidelines specifying precise requirements in this regard.

6 Application, Assessment and Awards

6.1 The Application Process

An Coimisiún will publish information on upcoming funding activities and will include: details on how to make submissions, eligibility information, application timeframes, details of assessment criteria and other supplementary information as deemed appropriate.

6.2 The Assessment Process

The assessment process for the Digital Transformation Scheme consists of the following potential four phases and includes assessment by suitably qualified independent and expert assessors at the Qualitative phase:

6.2.1 Preliminary Evaluation

This phase ensures that an applicant is eligible for funding under the scheme. The focus here is to ensure that minimum criteria have been met and all required documentation has been submitted. Any applications which do not pass the preliminary evaluation stage are disqualified and are not subject to further consideration.

6.2.2 Qualitative Assessment

Each application is assessed on its own merits in the context of the assessment criteria. These criteria are set out in An Coimisiún's guidance documentation published to inform and support potential applicants when making a submission to the Digital Transformation Scheme.

6.2.3 Strategic Assessment

In instances where there are more qualifying applications than funds available, An Coimisiún will have a second evaluation phase. This focuses on achieving a balance in the overall package of funded projects across all applications in the context of the scheme objectives. The recommendations from the qualitative phase are also considered here. Final recommendations are then submitted to the Commissioners for ratification.

6.2.4 Formal Ratification

The final stage sees Coimisiún na Meán ratifying the overall package of applications recommended for funding and this includes regard to fulfilling the objectives of the funding round.

6.3 The Award Process

Where An Coimisiún has approved an application for funding the following steps apply:

- I. An Coimisiún informs the applicant of the decision, setting out any condition(s) attaching to the offer.
- II. An Coimisiún will make public a list of the funding offers ratified by the Commissioners.

- III. The successful applicant must confirm their acceptance of the offer of funding and any condition(s) attached thereto by An Coimisiún.
- IV. A successful applicant is required to enter into a contractual agreement with An Coimisiún, on terms to be specified by An Coimisiún. Such terms include a schedule relating to the drawdown of funds by an applicant.

Funds are administered by An Coimisiún in accordance with the terms of the contractual agreement. For this pilot scheme, the term of the funding contract should (or shall) not exceed a period of twelve months. Where An Coimisiún has rejected an application for funding, applicants are notified individually and provided with feedback on the performance of their application in the assessment process.

An Coimisiún will develop a standardised points system to inform the evaluation of applications and the feedback provided to an applicant.

7 Review of the Digital Transformation Scheme

As provided for under the FoMC Report, the Digital Transformation Scheme is being established on a pilot basis for an initial period of twelve months and An Coimisiún will review the operation, effectiveness, and impact of the Scheme on completion of this pilot phase and make a written report to the Minister on the review.

The evaluation of this pilot scheme will inform policy development of future iterations of the Scheme.