BIM Ireland's Seafood Development Agency

European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

Young Fisher Scheme 2026

Guidelines for Applicants

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Arna chomhchistiú ag an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the European Union

Contents

Contents 2
Eligible Beneficiaries - Who can apply for this Scheme 3
Eligible expenditure 3
Ineligible Expenditure 3
Amounts Grant Aided 4
Submission Deadline 4
Application and Approval Process 5
When will you hear from BIM 5
Evaluation Scoring Criteria 6
General guidance 7
Documentation checklist 7
Further Information/Clarifications 8

The scheme seeks to encourage younger fishers to enter balanced fleet segments through the purchase of their first vessel.

Eligible Beneficiaries - Who can apply for this Scheme

The scheme is open to individuals, or legal entities* wholly owned by one or more individuals:

- Who are each under 40 years of age;
- Who each has worked for at least 5 years as a fisher and is fully qualified to operate the vessel being purchased; and
- Who is tax resident in Ireland, and has the right to live in Ireland.

*A legal entity is a company or partnership that has a bank account in its name

Eligible expenditure

Acquiring ownership, in full or in part (at least 33%), of an applicant's first fishing vessel. The eligible expenditure covers the vessel cost and licence/capacity costs, proportionate to the applicant's vessel shareholding.

- The vessel must:
    - Have a length overall (LOA) of less than 24 metres;
    - Be equipped for sea fishing;
    - Have been registered in the Union fleet register for at least five years (three in the case of SSCF) and less than thirty calendar years preceding the year of submission of the application for support; and
    - Belong to a DCF fleet segment that is identified as balanced in the most recent Irish Fleet Annual Report submitted to the European Commission (at present all segments are reported as in balance).
- On payment, the vessel must be registered in the Irish Register of Fishing Boats
- There is a grant aid cap of €250,000
- Only one application can be made for any one vessel

Ineligible Expenditure

- Only vessels registered and purchased from within the EU are eligible for grant aid. Vessels imported from any third countries (including the UK) are not eligible for grant aid under the scheme
- Gear cost
- Where the transfer of ownership occurs within the same family up to the second degree

Amounts Grant Aided

Scheme aid intensity will be 40% of the cost of vessel acquisition, proportionate to the applicant's shareholding in the vessel.

The calculation of the grant aid will involve 3 steps:

1. Apply the 40% grant aid rate to the total eligible expenditure
2. Multiply this amount by the percentage of the vessel that the applicant will own.
3. If this amount exceeds the grant aid cap, apply the cap. Otherwise, the amount calculated in step 2 will be the amount offered to the applicant.

Example 1
The applicant is a 29 year old fisher who intends to purchase a vessel. The applicant's shareholding in the vessel will be 100%. The eligible expenditure (vessel cost + capacity cost) is €200,000

1. A grant of 40% on €200,000 is €80,000
2. The applicant's shareholding is 100% so the potential grant amount would be €80,000
3. This does not exceed the grant aid cap, so the amount offered would be €80,000

Example 2
The applicant is a 35 year old fisher who intends to purchase a vessel with 2 others who are over 40 years of age. The applicant's shareholding in the vessel will be 50%. The eligible expenditure (vessel cost + capacity cost) is €2,500,000

1. A grant of 40% on €2,500,000 is €1,000,000
2. The applicant's shareholding is 50% so the potential grant amount would be €500,000
3. This exceeds the cap, so the cap would be applied and the amount offered would be €250,000

Example 3
The applicant is a legal entity (wholly owned by two fishers under 40 years of age) who intends to purchase a vessel. The applicant's shareholding in the vessel will be 33%. The eligible expenditure (vessel cost + capacity cost) is €1,000,000

1. A grant of 40% on €1,000,000 is €400,000
2. The applicant's shareholding is 33% so the potential grant amount would be €132,000
3. This does not exceed the cap, so the amount offered would be €132,000

Submission Deadline

This scheme will be open for applications from 30th September 2026 until 5pm on 13th January 2027.

Eligibility checks and evaluation will be carried out as applications are received but offers will not be made until after the call closes and all applications have been assessed. Should there be any budget limitations, offers will be made to the highest-ranking applications.

Any applications which have not passed all eligibility checks by 10 February 2026 may be closed. If the applicant can address the reasons that they failed eligibility checks in advance of the next call under the scheme, they will be free to apply again under the next call.

Applicants are free to incur expenditure for their project from the point that they submit an application, **but this is entirely at the applicant's risk**. As noted above, an application may be closed, or an offer of grant aid might not be made.

All applications are to be made through BIM's grants management system.

Application and Approval Process

This flow shows the steps involved in getting from application preparation to receiving a Letter of Offer.



- The applicant prepares their application in BIM's Grant Management System.
- When the application is submitted, an acknowledgement email is automatically sent. This is the date of acknowledgement (any expenditure incurred before this date will not be eligible for funding).
- BIM carries out a series of eligibility checks, to ensure that all required information has been provided and shows compliance with scheme rules.
- A financial review is then carried out, and a BIM panel meets to score the application.
- All eligible applications which meet the minimum score are presented to a Project Approvals Board. Applications are appraised having regard to the objectives of the scheme and the quality of the proposal.
- If the Project Approvals Board approves the application for funding, a Letter of Offer will be issued.

When will you hear from BIM



1. When you submit your application, you will receive an automated email acknowledging receipt. If you do not receive this email, it is because the application has not been successfully submitted. Please check your spam folder in case the acknowledgement of receipt has been directed there. *Please note that an acknowledgement of receipt email is not a confirmation of grant aid. At this point the application is being processed only.* Your application will be assigned a unique reference number, and you will be notified of this in the acknowledgement email. The unique reference number should be used in any subsequent correspondence or enquiry with BIM.
   Any expenditure incurred *after* the date of this email <u>but</u> *before* a Letter of Offer would be considered eligible in any claim, but such expenditure is entirely at the applicant's risk since an offer of grant aid may not be made.

2. All applicants will hear from us at the end of this stage, but some applicants may have their form returned if it is incorrect/incomplete:
   i. You will hear from us if there is an issue with your application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure a full and complete application is submitted. If, during eligibility checking, it is discovered that information is missing, or is incorrect, your application may, if time allows, be returned to you describing the issue(s). You will be given a deadline by which all corrections must

be made and the grant application resubmitted. If it is still incorrect or incomplete on resubmission it may be deemed ineligible.

ii. Once eligibility checks are completed all applicants will be updated as follows:
    i. If our checks show that the application is not eligible for the scheme, or if we could not validate your eligibility based on the information provided, your application will be rejected, and the reason provided.
    ii. If our checks show that the application is eligible for the scheme, an update will be provided letting you know that this stage has been passed.

3. Following evaluation, BIM will inform you of the Project Approval Board's decision by issuing a Letter of Offer or a Letter of Rejection.

The more complete your application is when first submitted, the more likely it is to proceed smoothly through all stages with minimum delays. We encourage all applicants to take the time to fully understand the application form, and the evaluation criteria, so that they submit a quality application.

Evaluation Scoring Criteria

Each application which passes eligibility is scored against the following evaluation criteria. It is recommended you take the time to understand this so that you can provide sufficient details in your answers which will allow you to score highly.

Scoring guidance	If….	…then score in the range:
Evolution of, and risks to, business	The applicant has ***clearly*** demonstrated that they have considered how their business will evolve over 3 years, the risks the business might face and how those risks might be mitigated. Value for Money has been demonstrated, with the purchase price of the vessel **very much** in line with market prices for tonnage and capacity.	30-40
	The applicant has ***somewhat*** demonstrated that they have considered how their business will evolve over 3 years, the risks the business might face and how those risks might be mitigated. Value for Money has been demonstrated, with the purchase price of the vessel **somewhat** in line with market prices for tonnage and capacity.	15-29
	The applicant has ***not*** demonstrated how their business will evolve over 3 years, the risks the business might face and how those risks might be mitigated. Value for Money has **not** been demonstrated, with the purchase price of the vessel **not** in line with market prices for tonnage and capacity.	0-14
Operating costs	The applicant has demonstrated a ***deep*** understanding of their operating costs, given the age of the vessel, and when compared to average operating costs in the most recent Annual Fleet Report for that vessel fleet segment	20-30
	The applicant has demonstrated ***some*** understanding of their operating costs, given the age of the vessel, and when compared to average operating costs in the most recent Annual Fleet Report for that vessel fleet segment	10-19
	The applicant has demonstrated ***little*** understanding of their operating costs, given the age of the vessel, and when compared to average operating costs in the most recent Annual Fleet Report for that vessel fleet segment	0-9

Maximise returns	The applicant has demonstrated a ***deep*** understanding of their market outlets and how to maximise the value of their catch	20-30
	The applicant has demonstrated ***some*** understanding of their market outlets and how to maximise the value of their catch	10-19
	The applicant has demonstrated ***little*** understanding of their market outlets and how to maximise the value of their catch	0-9

General guidance

Things to note before starting your application.

- Applicants are advised to check that their application includes all the relevant information, as it will be evaluated based on the submitted content.
- The primary communication method used in the administration of this scheme is email. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that BIM is on their safe list of contacts, and that they regularly check their email for any updates or deadline requirements.
- All applications must be made in euro.

Documentation checklist

You will need the following documentation to complete an application:

- Proof of your age (birth certificate, in-date passport, or in-date drivers licence)
- If your training was not carried out with BIM, copies of certificates
- Statutory Declaration (template is available through the grants management system)
- Proof of funding e.g. loan approval or bank statements
- Financial projections (template is available through the grants management system)
- Cashflow forecast (template is available through the grants management system)

Eligibility Checks
BIM will check the evidence provided by the applicant to ensure that all eligibility criteria set out are met, and that all required documentation has been provided

Claim Deadline
All projects must be completed with a claim submitted by 29 October 2027.

Quotes Guidance
BIM provides guidance on Quotes click here to view.

Offers/Rejections
BIM will issue a Letter of Offer or Letter of Rejection as appropriate.

Appeals
Per BIM's standard policy and procedures click here to view.

Click here for BIM's Grant Privacy Notice.

Further Information/Clarifications

Requests for further information/clarifications should be addressed, by **email**, too grantshelpdesk@bim.ie. Where appropriate, responses to requests for further information/clarifications will be made available to all interested parties via the BIM website.

A dedicated feedback email address has been established to collect input from applicants on their experience of the grant's application process, and we would very much welcome your feedback, please contact us grantsfeedback@bim.ie