

Tús – Community Work Placement Initiative

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This is divided into three sections.

Section A deals with questions of a GENERAL nature.

Section B deals with question that might arise from the prospective PARTICIPANTS

Section C deals with questions and replies that may be raised by representatives of COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY Organisations.

Introduction

- The provision of *Tús* was announced in the Budget of December 2010 and launched by Minister Ó Cuív on 21st December 2010. The aims of *Tús* are to provide short-term, quality work opportunities for those who are unemployed and to provide certain services of benefit to communities.
- While responsibility for the operation of *Tús* rests with the Department of Social Protection, it will be managed at a local level, on the Department's behalf, by the Local Integrated Development Companies and in the Gaeltacht by Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- Community & Voluntary Organisations will be able to develop and deliver services locally and benefit from the skills and experience the unemployed person can bring.
- Participants will benefit by being involved in work.
- Those who participate will improve their work readiness and will be able to apply their skills and learn new ones.
- *Tús* will provide a new outlet for the reinvigorated processes being rolled out under the National Employment Action Plan.
- It will support the control and management actions of the Department of Social Protection by identifying those not genuinely interested in work or those operating in the black economy.

It has both an urban and rural focus and is built on the proven architecture of the Rural Social Scheme.

SECTION A – GENERAL

1. What are the aims and objectives of *Tús*?

- This is an activation initiative for those who are unemployed and on the Live Register. It will support the work readiness of those who participate.
- The initiative will provide short-term quality and suitable working opportunities for people who are unemployed while at the same time carrying out beneficial work within communities, and
- It will contribute to the management of the Live Register and act as a deterrent to those not eligible for welfare benefits

2. Who can participate on *Tús*?

- Participants will, in the first instance, be identified by the Department of Social Protection by satisfying the following conditions:
 - A person who has been continuously unemployed for at least 12 months and “signing” on a full-time basis, and
 - In receipt of a jobseekers payment from the Department of Social Protection for at least 12 months, and
 - Currently in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance.

3. Does this mean that the Department will be contacting people?

- Yes.
- The Department’s local offices will contact people who satisfy the criteria.
- However, not everyone who meets the criteria will be contacted, as limited places will be available locally.

4. How many places will there be on the Initiative and how will they be allocated?

- The Government has allocated funding to provide for the phased placement of 7,500 people in the community and voluntary sector in the delivery of local services in both Urban and Rural areas. The places allocated will be based on the number of persons recorded as meeting the criteria for *Tús* within the area of operation of each Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta.

5. How quickly will the places become available?

- The first placements in Community & Voluntary Organisations became available during Quarter 1/2011 and thereafter were rolled-out on a phased basis, subject to the completion of preliminary preparations (i.e. recruitment, vetting, related processes etc.).

- *Tús* became operational relatively quickly and currently has over 6,500 placements in 2013.

6. What is the selection process for the Initiative?

- The Department of Social Protection will identify and contact persons on the Live Register who satisfy the criteria and offer them the opportunity to be considered for local placement as opportunities arise.
- When those identified agree to participate, they will be referred to the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta operating in their area for interview and consideration for placement.
- The Local Development Companies/Údarás na Gaeltachta will maintain a panel from which persons will be recruited.
- As placement opportunities arise, those on the panel will be matched with the work and recruited.
- Prior to being offered a placement, it will be necessary to ensure that a person's general suitability for the work involved and their experience of similar work is established. This will be done at local level by the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Community & Voluntary Organisation.

7. What type of work will be undertaken?

All types of work can be offered and details of the jobs available will be provided at your interview with the Implementing Body. Work will be community based and attempts will be made to match your skills and location to available work placements. The types of projects carried out are likely to fall into the following categories:

- Environmental Services (e.g. conservation & maintenance of National Walkways)
- Caring Services (e.g. childcare, care of the elderly)
- General Community Services (e.g. newsletter/information provision for communities)
- Heritage and Cultural Services (e.g. information officer in local heritage project)
- Para-educational Services (e.g. community playgroups)

8. Will the Initiative cover urban and rural areas?

- Yes, both urban and rural areas will be allocated places on the basis outlined in Question 4.

9. Will the RSS/CSP and CE Schemes stay the same?

- This initiative will not impact on the Rural Social Scheme (RSS), the Community Employment (CE) or the Community Services Programme (CSP).

SECTION B – PARTICIPANTS

10. What are the eligibility requirements?

- **To be eligible and selected to participate, a person must:**
 - Have been continuously unemployed for at least 12 months and “signing” on a full-time basis, and
 - Be in receipt of a jobseekers payment from the Department of Social Protection for at least 12 months, and
 - Be in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance.

11. Will it be possible to apply to participate on *Tús*?

- Given the nature of *Tús*, contact will be made by the Department of Social Protection to those on the Live Register that satisfy the criteria.

12. What are the rates of pay for participants?

- The *Tús* rates of payment will be equivalent to your existing Jobseeker’s Allowance plus a €20 top-up with a minimum payment of €208 (there are some exceptions to this). These rates are effective for all new participants commencing on/after 17th September 2012.

13. How will participants be paid?

- All participants will be paid directly into their bank accounts (EFT).

14. Will participants have to pay PAYE, Universal Social Charge and PRSI?

- An ‘A’ PRSI contribution will be paid in respect of all participants.
- All wage payments to participants are assessable for Income Tax (PAYE) purposes. However, the actual amount payable by an individual will depend on his/her circumstances.
- Participants on *Tús* will be exempt from paying the Universal Social Charge.

15. How long will this placement last?

- Participation will be for a continuous period of one year (52 weeks).

16. What happens after the year's placement?

- On completion of the year's placement, the participant should contact their local Social Welfare Office to establish their entitlements. It should also be noted that a participant cannot re-participate on this Initiative for a minimum of 3 years.

17. Will participant be entitled to be paid for Bank Holidays?

- Yes, participants who are due to work on a Public Holiday are entitled to a paid day off on that day.
- Participants who are not due to work on a Public Holiday are entitled to be paid time-in-lieu at one-fifth of their weekly hours or four hours.

18. Will Annual Leave be allowed on *Tús*?

- Yes, the entitlement will be 10½ days based on the statutory minimum of 20 days per annum which applies to other full-time employment.
- All participants are entitled to annual leave totalling 8% of their total hours worked over a 12 month period.
- Pro-rata annual leave entitlements apply to periods worked of less than 12 months duration within the leave year.

19. Will Fuel Allowance continue to be paid while on *Tús*?

- Yes, a Fuel Allowance will be paid to those who fulfil the qualifying fuel conditions on joining *Tús* and will continue to be paid while an entitlement to the Fuel Allowance exists. This will be paid with your weekly payment into your bank account. Entitlement to fuel allowance cannot be established after you commence on *Tús*.

20. Are participants entitled to retain their Medical Card and other Secondary Benefits?

- Entitlement to any of the above benefits will be subject to the usual assessment processes operated by the appropriate Scheme Area of the Department of Social Protection or relevant Authority
- Participants on *Tús* will still be required to meet the terms and conditions attached to the secondary benefits, as set out in order to continue to qualify for any such payments.
- The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for Medical Cards and entitlement is dependent on personal circumstances.

21. What happens if a person is offered a place and they don't avail of it?

- It is obligatory to respond to any offer made to participate on **Tús** by the Department of Social Protection as all recipients of Jobseeker's support must engage with the processes set out in the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP).
- A person in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance must also be genuinely and actively seeking employment to ensure their continuing eligibility for this payment.
- If a person refuses a work opportunity, without good cause, that person will be referred to the Department of Social Protection for follow up activity.
- Failure to take up a work opportunity can lead to loss or reduction of social welfare benefits as provided for in the Social Welfare Acts.
- If a person's social welfare payment is reduced or terminated unreasonably, as a result of their refusing a place on **Tús**, it is open to them to appeal this decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office within 21 days.
- The Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 provided for sanctions, subject to commencement, in the case of unemployed persons on the Live Register unreasonably refusing to co-operate with the NEAP and/or with appropriate training, education and employment interventions.

22. Can a participant's spouse participate instead of the person selected by the Department?

- No. Only the person who fulfils the eligibility conditions and is selected can participate.

23. Can the participant do other work while participating on **Tús?**

- While on **Tús**, participants will be able to consider commercial employment and will be supported to pursue this. However, any such work must not interfere with the participant's work on **Tús** or the times they are expected to work on **Tús** as this will be the participant's principal work/income and they must undertake to contact the Revenue Commissioners with regard to any other work undertaken to ensure tax compliance etc.
- While participating on **Tús**, it is open to participants to terminate their contract if they are offered alternative commercial employment or training.

24. What work will participants be undertaking?

- The work to be undertaken by participants on **Tús** will fall into a broad category of community work as set out in Question 7.
- The Local Development Companies/Údarás na Gaeltachta will play the lead-roll in identifying Community & Voluntary Organisations and work opportunities. Selected work opportunities must:

- Not displace existing commercial activity or duplicate service provision by another agency
- Be of sufficient quality
- Make a meaningful contribution within communities, and
- Support voluntary effort

SECTION C – COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

25. What will the role of Community & Voluntary Organisations be?

- Their key role will be to propose and provide work placements that will provide participants with valuable working opportunities in good quality work settings.

26. How are participants assigned to Community & Voluntary Organisations?

- Community & Voluntary Organisations with a work placement opportunity should register this with the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta operating in their immediate area.
- They will then be required to submit a detailed work proposal outlining the work to be undertaken, number of participants requested etc. for consideration by the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- Following assessment, the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta will contact the Community & Voluntary Organisations advising them of their decision.

27. Will there be costs involved for Community & Voluntary Organisations?

- This will depend on the nature of the work and the number of participants assigned.
- All Community & Voluntary Organisations will be required to make a contribution, which will be assessed on a case by case basis.

28. Will funding be provided to cover costs?

- As a general rule, Community & Voluntary Organisations will be responsible for the costs that *Tús* is unable to cover.
- Funding will be provided in specific circumstances from a materials budget maintained by the Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta in each area.

29. How many hours will participants have to work?

- Participants must work 19½ hours per week and hours of work will be subject to work placement. Work can be provided over the full week and over a full working day, included extended hours.
- While not always possible, participants may be able to work their hours in a flexible way, subject to agreement of local management.

30. Will there be a limit on the number of placements available to each Community & Voluntary Organisation?

- The number of placements will relate to the work to be undertaken and the working environment in each Organisation.
- As per Question 26, each work placement will be assessed by Local Development Company/Údarás na Gaeltachta on a case by case basis and will be reviewed annually.