



SuperValu 

Tidy Towns

Caring for our environment



General Information




SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Introduction

Welcome to the TidyTowns Competition Handbook. The introductory section will give you a greater understanding to the background of the competition, how to go about setting up a TidyTowns group in your area and how to go about entering the competition. The competition is adjudicated across a total of eight categories and in addition to this section of the handbook, there is a dedicated section for each of those categories.

These individual sections have been prepared by the TidyTowns unit of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltach with input from the national panel of TidyTowns Adjudicators. You are encouraged not to read each section in isolation from the others. Landscaping has an important role to play in the adjudication of categories including; Streetscapes & Public Places, Residential Streets & Housing Areas and Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes. The area of Tidiness & Litter control, likewise will be looked at in a number of categories. We would encourage you therefore to refer to all categories regardless of the project or initiative being undertaken.

This entire handbook series aims to inform work activities in innovative and environmentally sensitive ways. It will also be useful to all community and voluntary groups working to manage and improve their local areas who wish to use the broad based TidyTowns environmental programme to assist their efforts.

Competition Background

The SuperValu TidyTowns competition has a unique place in Ireland's culture. The competition commenced in 1958 and has since become Ireland's best-known sustainable and environmental initiative. In its first year the competition received 52 entries but has grown year-on-year reaching a record of 924 entries in recent years.

Right from the start, the primary focus of TidyTowns was to encourage communities to improve their local environment and make their area a better place to live, work and visit; this creates a 'sense of place' for those living in the area. TidyTowns groups all over Ireland, contribute to their communities in

practical and creative ways to improve their towns and villages.

The competition is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and has been proudly sponsored by SuperValu since 1991. The competition is divided across a total of eight categories and the Adjudicator looks at projects or initiatives undertaken by the group in a competition year. This usually runs from June 1st to May 31st the following year.

To enter the Competition, the entrant must be a group entering on behalf of a town, village, island or stand-alone area ("town") and should be working towards being broadly representative of all sectors residing or working in the area.

Please refer to the scoring sheet to see the marks for each category.

Note: TidyTowns groups and volunteers are reminded that their safety and welfare must always take priority. In order to ensure the safety of volunteers, TidyTowns Groups are encouraged to seek the advice of An Garda Síochána prior to undertaking projects on roads, roadsides and road verges.

Let's get started

This section of the Handbook is structured by activity with additional information on setting up & running a TidyTowns Group, completing an entry form & submitting a map of your area together with some of the administrative best practice that should be applied within your group.

We will look at;

- **Setting up a TidyTowns group**
- **Structure of your group**
- **Meetings & Position Holders**
- **The group and the wider community**
- **Networking with other TidyTowns groups**
- **Public Participation Networks (PPN's)**
- **Finances**
- **Insurance**
- **Social Media**
- **Entering the competition**
- **Completing the entry form**
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)**
- **TidyTowns Plan**
- **TidyTowns Map**
- **Special Awards**
- **Competition Closing Date**
- **TidyTowns Unit & Website**

SETTING UP A TIDYTOWNS GROUP

Ideally, the most effective Groups are the ones with the broadest representation from the community involving residents, businesses and public bodies. While the creation of such broad-based Groups is the ultimate TidyTowns' objective, it is by no means an absolute requirement to participate as the TidyTowns programme, can itself be used to galvanise local interest and develop Group structures as time progresses.

Getting started is the most important issue, and this can begin with a sub-group of an existing body or simply concerned individuals coming together with a common or shared purpose to improve their place.

As shown throughout the country in towns, villages and neighbourhoods of all sizes, the actions of a local group participating in TidyTowns and similar initiatives can greatly improve the sense of community, quality of people's lives and local environments.

It is important to remember that environmental improvement is a vital part of economic regeneration. The area that looks good has a better chance to thrive – as well as being a nice place to live. The very act of environmental improvement can help to sustain and create employment, raise property values and stimulate the local economy.

A TidyTowns group can also share information, ideas and experience, and spread the workload so one or two individuals do not carry the entire burden. A group can gain more credibility than individuals acting on their own and are able to network with other organisations and to share in their experience.

Hold an Information Meeting

To test the level of interest among local people in setting up a TidyTowns group, organising an information meeting is a great way to start. You can do this by talking to a few friends or local people you know who might be interested in helping to get the group started. Once they are on board, you

can start organising an information meeting.

There are a few things to consider:

- Location – Where will you hold the meeting?
- Agenda – What will you talk about? The structure is important here.
- Invitations and advertising – How will you let people know about the meeting? Flyers, Social media posts are some ideas to think about.
- Running the meeting – Bill the meeting as ‘Would you be interested in setting up and/or being part of a TidyTowns group? Do not commit until you know there is clear and tangible interest.

Form a working group

Once you have a group of interested people involved you will want to figure what type of TidyTowns group, will best respond to the area you represent?

Established TidyTowns groups are great networkers therefore you should contact your nearest group regarding starting a TidyTowns group in your area and they may be able to give you some valuable information. Whilst it is a competition, there is wonderful support network among the TidyTowns family.

There are now close to 1,000 registered TidyTowns groups in Ireland so you should find one relatively close to you, check our website www.tidytowns.ie for more information. Meeting people who have already travelled the road you are setting out on will be very informative and could help you to avoid some potential obstacles along the route.

Try where possible to have members from different parts of the community and from different backgrounds and age groups to become involved. Every year an effort should be made to attract some new members/volunteers into the group. This will ensure that the same people are not expected to drive activities all the time and it

also renews the energy and commitment of the participants as well as providing an opportunity to broaden representation where possible. Each member of the community have something to add, perhaps a skill in IT, they could help with your social media, some might be artistic, they could help with the map etc.

This first meeting should decide some important basics, such as:

- Is a new group needed? Are there any existing groups through which the people could work to achieve their aims?
- Is the group to undertake one clear cut project, or is it to have a number of different purposes?
- Does the group intend to complete its work in a limited period (e.g. a ‘short-life campaign’) or is it likely to last for a long time?
- Are the people at the meeting all agreed broadly on the purpose of the group and willing to work together to get the group up and running?

It is important that the meeting discusses and agrees the main aims right at the start, so that everybody works together with a common purpose.

What makes a successful group?

- Being clear and realistic about what you want to do and achieve.
- Team effort working with new or existing community members.
- Securing resources to help achieve one’s aims and objectives.
- Understanding legal and other responsibilities.
- A voluntary or community group provides the proper structure to enable these types of activities to take place.
- Characteristics of a voluntary group is that it is run on a not for profit basis.
- Its work should help to provide economic,

social and environmental benefits to its community.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GROUP

Consideration should be given at an early stage as to whether formal structures are needed, particularly for legal reasons. There are typically three methods of organisational structures.

Ad-hoc structure – many small groups are initially happy to have informal arrangements where activities are organised by agreement in a friendly co-operative atmosphere. While this may appear to suit in the early stages, as the group becomes more and more successful at attracting investment and generating interest, its ad-hoc structure may not provide sufficient legal protection to members and not guarantee the transparency many members of the public will expect. It therefore may not be able to attract a high level of support from public or corporate bodies in the long term.

Constitutional Structure – writing a short constitution agreed by all members at a general meeting that outlines the objectives of the group, the roles of members and the way in which it will keep its accounts provides a higher level of transparency and accountability. This structure offers some protection to individuals where they can show they act with common purpose. This is the option chosen by many community associations and may be sufficient to draw down grants and other forms of public funding and support.

Company Structure – the creation of a company limited by guarantee is the most credible structure as it creates a legal entity for the group beyond the individuals involved. It also brings group activities under legal controls with the requirement for audited accounts and other directorial

responsibilities. Most charities in Ireland adopt this approach and there are potential tax benefits.

Legal advice on the appropriateness or otherwise of these and other options should be obtained.

MEETINGS & POSITION HOLDERS

The structure chosen will to some extent direct how meetings are to be held and the need to elect officers such as;

- **Chairperson/Assistant Chairperson**
- **Secretary/Assistant Secretary**
- **Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer**
- **PRO/Assistant PRO**
- **Liaison Officer**

A group must have a chairperson, secretary and treasurer as this is standard procedure. A good chairperson will ensure that all members will get a say in all matters. The appointment of a liaison officer to work with the schools and the local authority and to gain wider support from the community should also be considered by the group.

However, even an ad-hoc group should have a management committee with identified members taking on specific responsibilities. As well as the standard officers referred to above, these responsibilities should include liaising with the Local Authority and local schools, generating broad community support, fund-raising, setting up task forces or obtaining materials.

Any new group should have an inclusive and welcoming philosophy which would be helpful in attracting new members to support its future activities.

Letter writing and lobbying are important parts of the group's job. If these are required to get

a project 'off the ground' they should appear as immediate tasks on your to do list. Putting "Thank you" notices in the various forms of the local media is a very good way of acknowledging both patron and sponsor inputs and supports.

The most reliable method of reaching decisions is by consensus. If everyone has had their say and agreement is reached, it is more likely that everyone will do their share of the work. Consensus building is a process where participants work together to try to reach a result which has benefits for all, a win-win outcome.

However, consensus is not always possible or practicable, so agreement should be reached on whether a simple or a two-thirds majority is required to carry a decision.

The group may wish to hold monthly meetings during the year. Holding meetings at a regular time and place makes it easier for people to remember to turn up. In general it is helpful to divide the TidyTowns year into two periods, particularly where the group has entered the competition and wants to take account of adjudication between June and September.

Meetings from March to June may consider focussing on specific actions whilst meetings from October to February may focus on research, planning and consultation with other bodies and consolidation of work done during the year.

An autumn meeting should feature a review of and a discussion on the TidyTowns Adjudicator's Report where the group has entered the competition. This report is an external assessment of work done to date with tips on how to improve in the coming years and as such is a useful objective guide on how to plan future activities. The basis of a "To Do" list for the following year should stem from your adjudication report.

THE GROUP AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Remember the group should represent the local community. Determine the arrangements for

reporting to the community. Be sure that they are clear and agreed.

Contact your local Citizens Information Centre or Local Authority Community Liaison Officer to see what public organisations are operating in your area, such as LEADER or Partnership groups. Arrange a meeting to see how your activities dovetail with their objectives and seek to make use of their existing community networks. This will help with community development exercises to bring out a shared vision for the community. Ownership of your plans by the local community will be one of the main ways to secure wide motivation for your efforts.

NETWORKING WITH OTHER TIDYTOWNS GROUPS

It is a good idea to set up a network with other TidyTowns groups in the county. A network can exchange experiences, ideas and expertise, organise visits to successful schemes and plan joint projects and fundraising.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORKS

You should also make contact with your local Public Participation Network (PPN). This is a network that allows Local Authorities to connect with community groups within their county. The PPN is the 'go to' for all local authorities who wish to benefit from community and voluntary expertise in their area.

Community groups register to join the PPN in their local authority area. PPNs give citizens a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities. Our democracy is made stronger, by allowing diverse views and interests to be considered as part of the decision making process of local government.

Each PPN has its own website. See: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/c7c11a-public-participation-networks-how-to-contact/>

FINANCES

You may need to set up a bank or credit union account for funds you may have from grants, fundraising or donations and hopefully very soon, TidyTowns cash prizes. We recommend that at least two people are responsible for this account to ensure clarity and accountability. Accounts should be prepared and presented at annual general meetings. These may also be required if applying for any grant funding to demonstrate the group's financial stability or its position to provide match funding if required to support any grant aid application.

INSURANCE

Insurance for TidyTowns committees is a matter for the group themselves and while we strongly recommend that TidyTowns groups have insurance, the TidyTowns Unit within the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht are not in a position to make any recommendations.

TidyTowns groups should contact their local authorities as there is a community insurance scheme available for voluntary community groups

TidyTowns groups and volunteers are reminded that their safety and welfare must always take priority. In order to ensure the safety of volunteers, TidyTowns groups are encouraged to seek the advice of An Garda Síochána or any other relevant authority prior to undertaking projects on roads, roadsides and road verges etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is a great way of communicating your message to your community and is increasing in popularity each year, it is also a very sustainable way of contacting your members and volunteers and spreading your message and raising awareness in a very cost effective way. There are a few different types available

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)

We recommend that at least two people have responsibility for posting on and maintaining any of your social media accounts and hold the passwords for the accounts. It would be advisable to agree a protocol on what posts will be displayed and responses or comments should represent the opinion of the entire group and not just one individual.

The TidyTowns unit have a presence on both Facebook and Twitter and we would encourage any groups on these sites to follow us and keep up to date with any information we may be sharing. Please see links to our social media pages on our website at this link <https://www.tidytowns.ie/contact-us/>

ENTERING THE SUPERVALU TIDYTOWNS COMPETITION

The ultimate goal of the group should be to enter the SuperValu TidyTowns competition where its structure and ongoing assessment will not only help shape and focus your activities, but also provide a platform to attract greater interest from the community and assist participation in other local initiatives. The basic entry requirement involves simply filing in the entry form available at www.tidytowns.ie

When entering the competition you should include with your entry form, a copy of your 3-5 year TidyTowns plan and your TidyTowns Map. The entry form provides an important opportunity for you to highlight the progress your Group has made throughout the year and to outline your future plans. The entry form of course is an essential document for the Adjudicator as it outlines under the category headings what work has been undertaken during the period under adjudication.

COMPLETING THE ENTRY FORM

The entry form is divided into specific sections and asks you questions about your group, your work and the local area in order to give the visiting Adjudicator an impression of the place and its community. It is designed to encourage the group to think through and plan its activities.

Consider allocating the task of completing the entry form to a number of members of the group. The answers should be discussed and agreed first and then clearly outlined for the Adjudicator. Consider allocating different categories to members based on their experience or expertise.

First impressions count so make sure your form presents your group and your town in a good light. Keep your answers concise and to the point. Explain to the Adjudicator what you did, why you did it and what the end result was. The use of links to videos or websites or social media is encouraged and also the use of photographs. Before and after images are very important, the Adjudicator needs to see what you started with and by seeing that, they can appreciate the efforts that went in to achieving the end result.

The first section of the form is entitled “About You” and seeks to gather contact information about your group. This information is required so we can maintain your details on our database. After this section we have eight specific categories. The first is “Community – Your Planning and Involvement”, which looks at your group’s makeup, number of committee members and volunteers and information on groups you engage with and how you communicate with your volunteers and wider community.

The other categories, all listed above, ask you to list any projects you have completed, maintained or plan to develop into the future in each of the relevant categories. Information is key here, so please tell your Adjudicator all you have been doing and what your future plans are.

The Adjudicator is interested in the variety of projects you are engaged in and will consider and evaluate a variety of project types that fall within the various category headings. It is important that you have an even balance of mini projects across these category headings. The Adjudicator will consider and evaluate the jobs that you have completed and also ones that are work in progress.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG'S)

In September 2015, 193 UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Transforming our World”. The centrepiece of this Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which reflect economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Throughout the entry form, you will see where many of these goals are aligned to the different TidyTowns categories. Please identify, if applicable, under each category where your projects or initiatives aim to address one or more of the sustainable development goals.



TIDYTOWNS PLAN

The cornerstone of the TidyTowns programme is the preparation of a plan by Groups outlining their actions and intentions for the forthcoming number of years. The duration of the plan can vary but is normally a three-year or five-year plan depending on the size of the area and the complexity of the work involved. The Group’s plan should represent a shared vision of what the TidyTowns programme can achieve for a town, village or urban area.

The plan can be simple in format and should be carried out in line with a survey of your area, awareness of what can or should be done in your area should be listed in the plan. The plan is just that, if you do not get to achieve items contained in it, you will not be penalised, make sure to advise your Adjudicator of any issues that arose that prevented you from progressing a particular project.

Further information on the creation of your TidyTowns plan is contained in the “Community – Your Planning and Involvement” section of the handbook.

TIDYTOWNS MAP

A good town or village map is essential to your entry. A hand drawn map is perfectly acceptable if a formal printed map is not available or suitable. The map should be of a manageable size, A4 or A3 depending on the layout of your town or village. On the map please name all streets and roads as necessary and mark the key public buildings and landmarks. You are advised not to use Google mapping as this is often unclear/inaccurate. You may find the Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) Urban (or Rural as applicable) ‘Place’ Maps most useful. A clear legend is an essential part of a map and you are recommended to include a legend on the map sheet itself.

When numbering projects, your first project under Streetscape & Public Places should be numbered 1, and carry this numeric sequence into subsequent categories. Please ensure you include a legend with your map outlining all your projects and classifying them as new (N) maintenance (M) or future projects (FP). There is a space in the entry form for groups who wish to draw a map of the town or village. A specific graph template is also available at www.tidytowns.ie to assist you if submitting a hand-drawn map.

Please remember that your Adjudicator may not have visited your town or village before and therefore local knowledge assumptions should not be made when completing the Entry Form and Map. Absolute clarity is of key importance. You may wish to plan a route for your Adjudicator, this is entirely up to you but it is good practice to identify local facilities such as parking, toilets etc.

SPECIAL AWARDS

Each year the competition includes a number of individual special awards. There is no obligation for groups to enter any of these awards but they do add a nice dimension to the competition. We only bring special awards into the competition where they align with one or more of the adjudication categories, therefore, groups will not have to undertake any additional work in order to enter one or more of these special awards. If you are entering a special award, please notify the Adjudicator under the relevant category. Closing dates for these awards may vary from the main competition so please check the sponsor's website or the TidyTowns website at www.tidytowns.ie for further details.

COMPETITION CLOSING DATE

Make sure to pay close attention to the competition closing date and make sure that the Entry Form is signed by a designated member of the Committee. Late or incomplete entries may not be accepted. It is advisable to retain copies of all information submitted and retain any electronic material. Groups should visit the TidyTowns website www.tidytowns.ie to ensure that their entry has been received and registered for the competition.

THE TIDYTOWNS UNIT & WEBSITE

The TidyTowns unit of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht who administer the competition are here to help in any way we can. Please see the contact details for the TidyTowns unit on our website at this link

<https://www.tidytowns.ie/contact-us/>

The TidyTowns website can be visited at www.tidytowns.ie, here you can find more information on the competition, the current entry forms, adjudication reports going back to 1995 and competition results books from previous years. You can also access the TidyTowns newsletter which contain valuable information on all aspects of the competition at this link on our website

<https://www.tidytowns.ie/about-us/newsletters/>

The competition terms and conditions can also be viewed on the website.

Please note we will not pass on any details of TidyTowns Committees to any third parties unless we first of all request and obtain your permission in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines.

We hope you find the material contained in this section and the associated sections of the TidyTowns Handbook of assistance. We would encourage all groups to continue to engage with the competition and encourage those considering forming a group, entering for the first time or perhaps returning after a break to familiarise themselves with the competition.

On behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and our Sponsors SuperValu, we want to acknowledge the wonderful work done by TidyTowns groups over the decades and we wish each of you and your volunteers the very best of luck in your endeavours.

NOTES

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