



# LEADER

## Rural Development Programme 2014-2020



Comhshaoil, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development: Europe  
investing in rural areas.



Ireland's EU Structural and  
Investment Funds Programmes  
2014 - 2020  
Co-funded by the Irish Government  
and the European Union



Department of  
**Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine**  
An Roinn  
**Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara**



**pobal**

government supporting communities

### **What is LEADER?**

The LEADER Initiative (Liaisons entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale - *Links between actions of rural development*) was established by the European Commission in 1991 and is a method of mobilising and delivering rural development in local rural communities. LEADER uses a 'bottom-up' or community led local development approach to rural development. Through the framework of local development strategies with all funding decisions being made at a local level by Local Action Groups (LAG) LEADER can and does make a real difference to the daily lives of people in rural areas.



### **What is the Rural Development Programme?**

The Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 as a whole includes a range of both on and off farm support measures to support the sustainable development of rural Ireland. The programme is administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government administers the LEADER element of the Programme which aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to encourage diversification of economic activity in rural areas. It seeks to bring about positive change helping to support and sustain rural areas for the better.

### **What is a Local Action Group?**

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are made up of public and private partners from the rural area, and must include representatives from different socio-economic sectors such as local development expertise, local authorities, community and voluntary organisations, etc. The LAGs are selected by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government through an open and transparent selection process to implement local development strategies in their area. In line with the 'bottom-up' approach the LAG has the task of identifying and implementing a local development strategy, making decisions about project funding and managing and accounting for their expenditure.

### **What is the “Bottom –up” or “Community Led Local Development” Approach**

Local people are involved in developing the LEADER Local Development Strategy (LDS) and selecting the priorities for their area. This includes members of the general population, economic and social interest groups as well as representatives of public and private institutions. All projects selected for funding must be in line with the Local Development Strategy.

### **What is a Local Development Strategy?**

In the context of LEADER, the LDS is a plan developed by the LAG through consultation with their rural communities. LDSs are designed through a “bottom-up” process facilitating participation by any member of the rural community and taking full and comprehensive consideration of not just local

needs but also local potential. An LDS should examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that face a particular area and outline the types of actions to be supported to address those.

***How will Local Development Strategies be selected?***

Ireland is conducting a two stage process for the selection of Local Development Strategies. Under stage one of the selection process, any entity who wished to be considered as a Local Action Group was invited to submit an expression of interest. For the purposes of LEADER 2014-2020 there are 28 sub-regional areas in Ireland and 45 separate expressions of interest were received. A single expression of interest was received in 19 of the 28 areas and at least 2 expressions of interest were received in the remaining 9 areas.

An Independent Evaluation Committee was established to evaluate the expressions of interests and the Local Development Strategies. Those who were successful in the first stage were notified in July 2015 and have been invited to submit a Local Development Strategy for their area. A minimum of 6 months will be allowed for the preparation of Local Development Strategies.

***How much is available?***

There is an overall programme complement of €250 million for the 2014-2020 period which is made up of €235 million in respect of the main element of LEADER coupled with €15 million for two Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine artisan food schemes.

***What projects will be eligible?***

It is expected that LEADER will fund:

<b>LEADER Theme</b>	<b>Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation</b>	<b>Social Inclusion</b>	<b>Rural Environment</b>
<b>LEADER Sub Theme</b>	Rural Tourism	Basic Services targeted at hard to reach communities	Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources
<b>LEADER Sub Theme</b>	Enterprise Development	Rural Youth	Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
<b>LEADER Sub Theme</b>	Rural Towns		Development of Renewable Energy
<b>LEADER Sub Theme</b>	Access to Broadband		

It should be noted that LEADER is delivered through the medium of Local Development Strategies and that specific projects funded will depend on the individual needs and objectives identified in the area’s approved Local Development Strategy.

***What grant rates will be available?***

This has yet to be finalised but it is expected that it will be up to 50% for private promoters and up to 75% for community organisations. Training activities may be funded up to 100%. Benefit in kind may also be used.

***What areas will be covered?***

In the overall draft Rural Development Programme for Ireland the 5 main cities of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick have been excluded. After that it will be a matter for the Local Development Strategies to determine the area to be covered within the sub-regional area.

***Will the Local and Community Development Committee be the Local Action Group for the new LEADER Programme?***

The process for the selection of Local Development Strategies has been open to all qualifying groups. Where a Local and Community Development Committee is successful in having its Local Development Strategy selected for delivery through that process it will act as the Local Action Group.

***Will Local Authorities decide how funding will be allocated under the new LEADER Programme?***

Having regard to their role in the management and development of sub-regional areas, local authorities may form part of the membership of a Local Action Group. In some instances and only where there is local agreement, local authorities may provide support for the management and administration of the LEADER elements of the programme at a local level. However, all decisions regarding the allocation of LEADER funding however will be made by the Local Action Group as a whole. The local authority has no role in relation to the decisions of the Local Action Group.

**Further Information**

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/EURuralDevelopment/RuralDevelopmentProgrammeLEADER2014-2020/>

**A basic guide to the LEADER approach**

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/EURuralDevelopment/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,29632,en.pdf>

**European Commission DG Agri**

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm)

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