

# European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

## Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 Ireland

### LEADER

#### Stage Two: Frequently Asked Questions



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



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



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2014 - 2020

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



government supporting communities

## Question and Answer Categories

1. LEADER Policy Context .....	2
2. LEADER Theme / Sub-Theme.....	2
3. Sub-Regional Area.....	2
4. LDS Budget.....	2
5. Community-Led Local Development .....	3
6. Preparatory Costs / Sub-Measure .....	3
7. Animation and Capacity Building Supports / Sub Measure .....	4
8. Implementation of Projects under the LDS / LEADER Sub Measure .....	6
9. Implementation of Co-operation Projects / LEADER Sub Measure .....	7
10. LEADER Monitoring Framework.....	8
11. LEADER Publicity Requirements.....	8
12. LEADER Operating Rules.....	9
13. LDS Section 1: The LAG.....	9
14. LDS Section 2: Area Profile.....	10
15. LDS Section 3: Participative Planning .....	11
16. LDS Section 4: LDS Action Plan.....	12
17. LDS Section 5: Strategic Integration .....	13
18. LDS Section 7: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation .....	13
19. LDS Section 8: Financial Plan.....	13
20. LDS Section 9: Additional Information .....	15
21. LDS Section 10: Form of Declaration.....	15
22. LDS Section 11: Appendices.....	16
23. Format of the LDS.....	16
24. Submission of the LDS.....	17
25. LDS Appraisal and Selection Process .....	18
26. Provisional Timeframes.....	18
27. Supports for LDS Development .....	19
28. Article 28/48 Checks.....	20

## 1. LEADER Policy Context

## 2. LEADER Theme / Sub-Theme

### Question #: 2.1

Is there a national allocation of a budget for each individual LEADER theme i.e. is there flexibility for a Local Action Group (LAG) to select one theme over another?

### Answer #: 2.1

LAGs have the flexibility to choose the LEADER themes and sub-themes that are most appropriate for the Local Development Strategy (LDS) boundary area, based on the needs identified as part of the LDS.

### Question #: 2.2

Is there flexibility for the reallocation of funding across LEADER themes?

### Answer #: 2.2

Yes, there is such flexibility - this is a matter for the Local Action Group (LAG).

## 3. Sub-Regional Area

## 4. LDS Budget

### Question #: 4.1

It has been suggested that an increase in the allocation of funding for each sub-regional area may be considered mid Programme. Should the Local Development Strategy (LDS) be submitted with a higher budget than what has been allocated (as advised by DECLG)?

### Answer #: 4.1

The allocations available to each sub-regional area are those already outlined and detailed in the Expression of Interest (EOI) documentation. Budgets submitted with the LDS must be based on this allocation.

### Question #: 4.2

In a scenario where there are more than two Implementing Bodies in the Local Action Group (LAG) how will the decision be made on the amount of funding that is allocated to each Implementing Body?

### Answer #: 4.2

The LAG is responsible for making a decision on the amount of funding that is allocated to each Implementing Body - this should be based on the needs of the local area.

**Question #: 4.3**

**Can the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) that was used to inform the allocation of funds to each LEADER sub-regional area be made available?**

**Answer #: 4.3**

The RAM was only one of the objective criteria that was used in determining the allocation of funding for each sub-regional area. The RAM was developed specifically for the LEADER Programme by Trutz Haase. Further information on the development of RAM is available on the DECLG website.

## 5. Community-Led Local Development

**Question #: 5.1**

**According to the 'Working Group Report on Citizen Engagement with Local Government' the Public Participation Networks (PPN's) have been formed with the view to enable "the public to take an active formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority's areas of responsibility". As LEADER is a community-led programme and the autonomous Community & Voluntary Forums which were previously the Government's 'suggested' source of LAG representation have largely been dissolved, can Local Action Groups (LAGs) (in addition to the option of approaching the PPN) seek to add to their community representation by developing their own community structures e.g. co-opt suitable individuals and/ or secure representatives from other community-led organisations in civic society?**

**Answer #: 5.1**

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) is underpinned by a Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach. It is important that LAGs develop a process to enable the ongoing participation of the local community and relevant stakeholders in both the development and roll out of the LDS. This could be facilitated through national participation processes, such as the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and the development of other community structures that include representation from appropriate individuals and organisations in the sub regional area.

## 6. Preparatory Costs / Sub-Measure

**Question #: 6.1**

**Can an indicative release date be given for the allocation of preparatory support funds for those Local Action Groups (LAGs) who have been invited to submit a Local Development Strategy (LDS)?**

**Answer #: 6.1**

DECLG will be communicating with relevant entities regarding the allocation of funding for preparatory support during the week commencing 10th August 2015.

**Question #: 6.2**

**At what stage in the process can Consultants be appointed to assist in the preparation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS)?**

**Answer #: 6.2**

Once the preparatory costs are approved by DECLG.

**Question #: 6.3**  
**When will additional feedback be provided on the individual Expressions of Interest (EOI's) that were submitted?**

**Answer #: 6.3**  
DECLG is managing the Stage 1: EOI Process and will be providing feedback on the EOI submissions shortly.

**Question #: 6.4**  
**In a sub-regional area where there are no competing Local Development Strategies (LDSs) and the final LDS has already been submitted to Pobal, can the preparatory support be used to cover other costs associated with preparing for the implementation of the LDS i.e. Implementing Bodies staff costs?**

**Answer #: 6.4**  
Preparatory costs are eligible during the iterative process of LDS assessment and evaluation. Article 35 of 1303/2015 states "costs of preparatory support consisting of capacity-building, training and networking with a view to preparing and implementing a community-led local development strategy". If the allocation for preparatory support is not fully drawn down the balance will be returned to the sub-regional allocation.

## 7. Animation and Capacity Building Supports / Sub Measure

**Question #: 7.1**  
**Is expenditure for project animation eligible in the new LEADER Programme as was the case in 2007-2013?**

**Answer #: 7.1**  
As detailed in the 'Stage 1: Local Action Group Expression of Interest' documentation for 2014-2020 the regulatory framework allows for funding to support both running costs and animation costs of Local Action Groups (LAGs) - see page 4 of the document at the following link.  
<http://www.environ.ie/en/media/Media,40932,en.pdf>

**Question #: 7.2**  
**Is it reasonable to animate a project that will be funded from another funding source?**

**Answer #: 7.2**  
Animation activities that are undertaken with support from the EAFRD/LEADER must only be carried out on behalf of LEADER projects.

**Question #: 7.3**  
**Are there any restrictions/limits as to what can be spent as part of the Animation / Administration budget?**

**Answer #: 7.3**  
As per the regulations, the limit that can be spent on Animation/Administration is 25% of the overall Local Development Strategy (LDS) budget. Article 35 of the CPR outlines the costs that are eligible under this element of LEADER. Please refer to the below extract from Article 35 that specifically relates to Administration and Animation costs:

(d) running costs linked to the management of the implementation of the community-led local development strategy consisting of operating costs, personnel costs, training cost, costs linked to public relations, financial costs as well as the costs linked to monitoring and evaluation of that strategy as referred to in point (g) of Article 34(3);

(e) animation of the community-led local development strategy in order to facilitate exchange between stakeholders to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries with a view to developing operations and preparing applications.

2. Support for running costs and animation as referred to in points (d) and (e) of paragraph 1 shall not exceed 25 % of the total public expenditure incurred within the community-led local development strategy.

**Question #:7.4**

**Animation and training is referred to as a sub-theme in the draft LEADER *Operating Rules*. Does animation and training have to be defined as a sub theme under each of the three LEADER themes or can they be included in the Local Development Strategy (LDS) as a part of a strategic action under a sub-theme as there is no specific area to breakdown these costs.**

**Answer #: 7.4**

Animation and training should not be defined as a sub-theme. The LEADER themes and sub-themes relate to:

- Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation (Sub-themes - Rural Tourism; Enterprise Development; Rural Towns; Broadband).
- Theme 2: Social Inclusion (Sub-themes - Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities; Rural Youth)
- Theme 3: Rural Environment (Sub-themes - Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources; Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity; Development of Renewable Energy).

Animation and training can be captured as part of a strategic action. Please refer to Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines – Appendix 1 and 2.

**Question #:7.5**

**It is stated that the total administration and animation costs of the LDS must not exceed 25% of the total budget. Is it possible to use the project budget under the various themes for further animation e.g. put an animator in place on the ground for a specific period of time to develop and animate a new tourism project under the rural tourism theme?**

**Answer #: 7.5**

Further details regarding animation will be provided in the LEADER *Operating Rules*, however, it is expected that LAG animation will be restricted to a maximum of 25% of the overall budget.

## 8. Implementation of Projects under the LDS / LEADER Sub Measure

### Question #:8.1

What are the eligibility criteria for the projects that will be funded under LEADER? It is difficult to undertake local consultation in the absence of having the eligibility criteria as there is a risk that a wish list will be developed and cannot be delivered on.

### Answer #: 8.1

This will be covered in the LEADER *Operating Rules*, which will be available shortly. As outlined in the Expression of Interest (EOI) documentation any project that can demonstrate that it will contribute to the themes, sub-themes and local objectives of the LDS will be eligible, in principle. The main exceptions to this will focus on technical aspects of LEADER such as: State Aid, duplicate funding, agricultural activity etc.

### Question #:8.2

When will the rates of grant aid to individual projects be available?

### Answer #: 8.2

This information will be provided in the LEADER *Operating Rules*, which will be available shortly.

### Question #: 8.3

Page 14 of “Document 1: Overview of Stage 2” states “each LAG must ensure 40% of the project budget is allocated to projects approved using ‘time-limited’ calls for proposals”. Is this 40% of the overall Local Development Strategy (LDS) budget including the 25% animation and administration budget?

### Answer #: 8.3

This refers to the overall LDS budget minus the 25% administration and animation budget.

### Question #: 8.4

As part of the Strategic calls for proposals, our LAG intends putting out a call for “Expressions of Interest” (EOI) rather than making a “call” for proposals. Clear selection criteria and other details such as budget available, timeframes, etc. will be published with the EOI. EOIs will be assessed by an EOI sub-group. This sub-group would consist of:

- Nominees from LCDC
- Nominees from the LDC
- Independent expertise (according to the theme of the call)

On completion of the assessment process, LDC staff would work with the “runners” to help them develop up there proposals if necessary. These promoters would submit a full application which would follow the normal processing procedure. Is this acceptable within the operating rules?

### Answer #: 8.4

Following consultation with the Department, the situation that you describe regarding an EOI process does not meet the *Operating Rules* requirements i.e. 40% of the fund must be through “Call for Applications”. All decisions on applications must be made by the LAG itself. If the LAG wishes to (outside of what is required in the *Operating Rules*) do their animation through this call for EOIs they may do so but it will be in addition to what is prescribed in the *Operating Rules*.

**Question #: 8.5**

As part of the strategic calls for applications i.e. 40% of project funds, our LAG intends to have an Expression of Interest (EOI) stage as part of the application process. It is intended that the selection criteria and other details such as the budget and timeframes will be published in the EOI. The EOI's would be assessed by a sub group of the LAG with recommendations to the LCDC. The assessing sub-group would consist of nominees from the LCDC, LAG and independent expertise (according to the theme of the call). On completion of this stage, successful EOI's would be invited to submit a formal application which would be processed through the normal application procedure as per the *Operating Rules*. Can you confirm if this process is acceptable within the *Operating Rules*?

**Answer #: 8.5**

The Department has confirmed that an Expression of Interest stage may precede the targeted call for applications but only in so far as it is necessary to identify potential applicants so that all can be supported in developing an application. No decision to accept or refuse a project can be made on the basis of the EOI and the EOI must be followed by a full Call for Applications.

**Question #: 8.6**

**When will the application form be available for individuals/groups to apply for LEADER funding in Mayo?**

**Answer #: 8.6**

The application form to apply for LEADER funding (2014-2020) is not currently available. Local Development Strategies are currently being prepared for each sub-regional area. Once this process has been concluded, individuals/organisations will be in a position to apply to their Local Action Group (LAG) for LEADER funding. Based on current information it is likely to be May 2016 at the earliest, before this process is completed.

## 9. Implementation of Co-operation Projects / LEADER Sub Measure

**Question #: 9.1**

**If a Local Action Group (LAG) wishes to apply for funding under Co-operation Projects and the Artisan Foods Initiative do they apply separately for these or should LAGs incorporate this into the Local Development Strategy (LDS) submission?**

**Answer #: 9.1**

A LAG will apply separately for funding under the Co-operation projects and the Artisan Foods initiative. Further information on both of these funding streams will be available in due course. Please note that as part of the LDS, the LAG should identify any proposals to be undertaken under each of these areas (see in particular Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines - Section 6).

## 10. LEADER Monitoring Framework

**Question #: 10.1**

**Is there recognition that LEADER is a multi-annual fund and change/issues may impact on the roll out of the Programme? Usually there is low expenditure in years 1 and 5. Is this factored into reporting and monitoring?**

**Answer #: 10.1**

Yes, the reporting will take into consideration that LEADER is a five-year Programme. An annual review will afford the opportunity to take stock of progress.

## 11. LEADER Publicity Requirements

**Question #: 11.1**

**We intend to place an advert in the local newspaper for the upcoming consultation events. Are there any specific requirements in term of acknowledgment, statements and logos which must be used for the new LEADER 2014-2020 programme?**

**Answer #: 11.1**

As per Reg 808/2014 – Annex 111: Technical Characteristics of Information and Publicity Actions:

1. Logo and slogan

Each action of information and publicity shall display the following elements:

(a) the Union emblem in accordance with the graphic standards as presented on [http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/download\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/emblem/download_en.htm) together with an explanation of the Union's role, by means of the following statement:

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

(b) for the actions and measures financed by LEADER, the LEADER logo:

++ LEADER logo++

[http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/publications-and-media/promotional-material/en/promotional-material\\_en.html](http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/publications-and-media/promotional-material/en/promotional-material_en.html)

Please also refer to the information and publicity section of regulation 821/2014

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0821&from=EN>).

The relevant logos are available to download on the LEADER webpage on the Pobal website.

## 12. LEADER Operating Rules

### Question #: 12.1

**Can the draft LEADER *Operating Rules* be made available?**

### Answer #: 12.1

DECLG can provide a copy of the latest draft of the *Operating Rules* (version 1.3 dated 10/9/15). The current draft of the *Operating Rules* is not yet agreed for publication.

The draft *Operating Rules* are subject to possible revision by a recently established *Operating Rules* Focus Group which is comprised of nominees from each Expression of Interest (EOI) applicant. The nominees have agreed to be the conduit for information to/from their EOI grouping.

### Question #: 12.2

**In the absence of a procedures manual, finalised *Operating Rules*, scoring matrices, is it sufficient for an organisation to state that they will adhere to these when published? Will organisations be penalised in terms of scoring for not including these at the time of submission?**

### Answer #: 12.2

While the *Operating Rules* are in draft format, it is necessary to demonstrate that procedures are in place (see Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines – P7) and they will adhere to the finalised *Operating Rules*.

## 13. LDS Section 1: The LAG

### Question #: 13.1

**What are the requirements of the Financial Partner?**

### Answer #: 13.1

Where the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the Local Action Group (LAG) the Local Authority will be the Financial Partner. If the LCDC is not the LAG the Department (DECLG) will be the Financial Partner.

### Question #: 13.2

**In the case where there is agreement by a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) that a Local Development Company (LDC) will be the Implementing Body and the Local Authority (LA) will be the Financial Partner, can the contact details of the LDC and LA be added to the mailing list? Currently it would appear that information is only being communicated to the organisation who submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI).**

### Answer #: 13.2

The following communication was issued by DECLG to those included on the LDS Mailing List on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015.

“As you are the contact point listed in the LEADER EOI documents you are the individuals listed on the Department’s mailing lists for information related to the LEADER LDS selection process, on the understanding that you are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate people receive the information. We have been receiving emails over the last few days from individuals involved in the LDS process at a local level who are not listed as contact points requesting their inclusion on the mailing lists. The Department does not feel it is appropriate to add further contact points to the mailing list unless this addition is requested by those contact points already listed on the EOI documentation. If you wish to add additional contacts to the mailing list please let us know. We will not be adding any contact points unless instructed to do so”.

**Question #: 13.3**

In Section 1 (The LAG) of Document 2 it is stated that a Tax Clearance Certificate (TCC) for the Local Action Group (LAG) needs to be provided as part of the minimum requirements. Is a TCC also required for the Financial Partner and Implementing Body?

**Answer #: 13.3**

At this stage we only require the TCC of the LAG (if applicable). The TCC of the Implementing Body may be requested at a later date.

**Question #: 13.4**

Our LAG is a 17 person Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) with the Local Authority as Finance Partner and the Local Development Company (LDC) as Implementing Body. In relation to project decision making, can project applications go from staff member to an evaluation committee (monthly), then recommendations to a LAG (LCDC) Committee (monthly) for approvals or otherwise?

**Answer #: 13.4**

The draft *Operating Rules* for LEADER will be issued by the Department shortly (an exact date cannot be given at this time). Guidance will be provided in the *Operating Rules* regarding the evaluation committee, decision making, governance and conflict of interest.

**Question #: 13.5**

In cases where DECLG is the Financial Partner what will be the time lag between a financial claim being submitted by the Local Action Group (LAG) and payment being received?

**Answer #: 13.5**

In general, valid claims will be processed for payment within a timescale of 2-3 weeks. However, if an inspection is required the timescale will be extended pending the outcome of the inspection.

**Question #: 13.6**

Has it been clarified if the de-minimis regulation and threshold is applicable to the Implementing Body if the Local Action Group (LAG) is the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) i.e. is the Implementing Body restricted to receiving a maximum of €200,000 in any three fiscal years?

**Answer #: 13.6**

DECLG does not consider that the administration funding is State Aid as it does not meet the four State Aid tests.

**Question #: 13.7**

In relation to the LAG's Procedures Manual, should the content (a) be specific to the LEADER programme only, or (b) reflect the organisation's entire Procedures Manual document?

**Answer #: 13.7**

In relation to the LAG's Procedures Manual, the content should be specific to the RDP/LEADER programme only.

## 14. LDS Section 2: Area Profile

**Question #: 14.1**

Does the Local Action Group (LAG) have flexibility in deciding what data to use in compiling the area profile? Is it mandatory for the LAG to reference the Pobal HP Deprivation Index in the Local Development Strategy (LDS)? Furthermore, will a LAG be penalised by Pobal or the Independent Selection Committee in the evaluation process by virtue of the fact that such data was excluded from the LDS.

**Answer #: 14.1**

In the context of priority 6 and promoting social inclusion, LAGs are required to identify and consider the areas that are designated as disadvantaged within the LDS boundary area as part of

the 'Area Selection/Description'. This information i.e. identifying the areas that are designated as disadvantaged, can be sourced from Pobal Maps or via AIRO. In developing a 'Socio-Economic Profile' of the LDS boundary area, the LAG has the flexibility to use the particular socio-economic data and research, which they deem to be relevant. There is no specific requirement that as part of the LDS, LAGs must target the areas within the sub-regional area that are designated as 'disadvantaged' (according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index).

**Question #: 14.2**

**Can you provide a Resource Allocation Model (RAM) for a Local Development Strategy (LDS) area that is targeted outside of the predefined sub regional area in order to assist in the preparation of the strategy? Alternatively, can we get a practical example of how the RAM is carried out for a sub-regional area?**

**Answer #: 14.2**

DECLG will not be undertaking or providing entities with a RAM that is targeted at geographical areas that are outside the predefined sub regional area. A briefing document on the RAM is available at the following link on the Pobal website:

<https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/LEADER%20RAM%20Briefing%20Document%2002.pdf>

Please note, the RAM was only one of the objective criteria that was used in determining the allocation of funding for each sub-regional area. Allocations were based on the following three objective criteria; minimum allocation, population density and RAM. Further information in relation to this is available at the following link on the DECLG website:

<http://www.viron.ie/en/Community/RuralDevelopment/EURuralDevelopment/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload.40800.en.pdf>

**Question #: 14.3**

**In Section 2 of the LDS (Area Profile) the minimum requirements indicate that an area needs analysis should be included. Please clarify if the needs analysis is expected to be informed by only the Socio Economic Profile and Key Services/Programmes? Section 3, relates to Participative Planning (community consultations). Can the needs analysis be informed by both the Socio Economic Profile and the Community Consultations?**

**Answer #: 14.3**

Section 2 (LDS Area Profile) covers the following key sections: Area Selection; Socio-Economic Profile; Key Services/Programmes; and an Area Needs Analysis. Page 10 of Document 2 details what is required as part of the Area Needs Analysis. This includes a concise analysis of relevant data in relation to: (a) the current position, (b) significant changes, (c) summary of the key conclusions including identification of key gaps and potential areas / priorities for development. Section 3 (Participative Planning) covers the following key sections: Public Consultation; SWOT Analysis; and Agreed LDS Priorities.

The summary of the key conclusions including key gaps and potential areas / priorities for development in Section 2 (LDS Area Profile) coupled with the agreed priorities identified through Section 3 (Participative Planning) should be clearly identified, developed and evidenced within the LDS Action Plan in Section 4.

## 15. LDS Section 3: Participative Planning

**Question #: 15.1**

**Is there an opportunity for participants in the local consultation events to be provided with information on the outcome of the consultation process?**

**Answer #: 15.1**

That is a matter for the Local Action Group (LAG) in undertaking the consultation process. However, in order to support an open and transparent process it is best practice that the outcomes of any consultation process at a local level should be disseminated.

**Question #: 15.2**

**Is there any software available for conducting surveys other than through Survey Monkey?**

**Answer #: 15.2**

The preparatory support is available to assist with this type of activity and the Local Action Group (LAG) may obtain such technical support, if necessary.

**Question #: 15.3**

**Can any preparatory work that has already taken place in terms of planning and consultation be used and included as part of the Local Development Strategy (LDS)?**

**Answer #: 15.3**

Yes. It is acknowledged that consultations may have already taken place in advance of the launch of Stage 2 on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and it is acceptable that this be used to inform the LDS.

## 16. LDS Section 4: LDS Action Plan

**Question #: 16.1**

**Can some guidance be provided on the process for the prioritisation of the local objectives in the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and any tools for assisting with this?**

**Answer #: 16.1**

The prioritisation of objectives is a key process and is a matter for the Local Action Group (LAG). If the LAG requires assistance with this process the preparatory costs can be used to obtain this support/guidance.

**Question #: 16.2**

**If, the local objective relates to rural tourism and there are a number of different potential activities under rural tourism such as marketing, business development - how are these defined?**

**Answer #: 16.2**

Rural tourism is a sub-theme of the RDP theme relating to economic development, enterprise development and job creation. If a local objective relates to rural tourism the individual activities pertaining to this can be included as strategic actions under the local objective. Alternatively the LAG may wish to have a number of separate local objectives relating to rural tourism – this is dependent on the scale of the proposed activity.

**Question #: 16.3**

**In developing the Local Development Strategy (LDS) 5 key activities have been identified under one particular theme and we regard these as being 5 actions. For the purpose of completing the Financial Plan template (Implementation of Operations/Projects under the LDS), we intend to use these actions and submit in the template “State Sub-Theme and Local Objective Number”- is this acceptable?**

**Answer #: 16.3**

In developing the LDS and Action Plan, Local Action Groups (LAGs) are required to formulate a number of local objectives that respond to the needs of the area. Each local objective must be linked to an individual LEADER sub-theme (as opposed to a number of sub-themes) and LAGs are required to estimate a budget amount for each local objective. The Action Plan will also outline a number of strategic actions that will be undertaken to achieve each local objective.

In the Financial Plan template under 'Implementation of Operations/Projects under the LDS', LAGs are required to provide an annual breakdown of costs according to each theme. Under each theme, LAGs are required to further break down this figure by including a breakdown of costs on an annual basis for each local objective and identify the relevant sub-theme i.e. there must only be

one sub-theme linked to a local objective. Please note, the documentation does not require a breakdown of the costs for each strategic action.

## 17. LDS Section 5: Strategic Integration

## 18. LDS Section 7: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

## 19. LDS Section 8: Financial Plan

### Question #: 19.1

**Is there scope within the LEADER Programme to provide match funding from other public funds?**

### Answer #: 19.1

This will be covered in the LEADER *Operating Rules* which will be available shortly. It will be possible to co-fund LEADER with other public funding as long as the funding is not sourced from another EU fund. Under the 2014-2020 Programme, LEADER can be used to co-fund projects with other national schemes or funding - there is no limit on the value. LEADER cannot be used to co-fund with any other EU funding nor can it fund something that is eligible under another EU scheme e.g. fisheries.

### Question #: 19.2

**On the staffing sheet of the financial template can a Local Action Group (LAG) insert other variances to Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) to the examples given on the template?**

### Answer #: 19.2

Yes, any variance can be included where relevant e.g. .55 FTE, .7 FTE etc.

### Question #: 19.3

**Will costs submitted as part of the budget be reviewed on an annual basis?**

### Answer #: 19.3

Yes, the Programme will be reviewed annually.

### Question #: 19.4

**The financial template appears to be designed for one Local Action Group (LAG) and one Implementing Body. It is not suitable for arrangements with more than one Implementing Body. Can the template be edited to facilitate this?**

### Answer #: 19.4

Once a LEADER contract is in place the Department/DECLG will only be liaising with one entity i.e. the LAG. The onus is on the LAG to create systems locally to meet their specific implementation model. For the purpose of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) one financial plan is required. Each Implementing Body can complete individual templates and it is a matter for the LAG to combine and consolidate these into one overall template that is submitted as part of the LDS.

### Question #: 19.5

**In a scenario where a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the Local Action Group (LAG), can the LCDC include its own costs as part of the Administration and**

**Animation budget i.e. staffing costs for local authority employees and any associated overhead costs of the local authority?**

**Answer #: 19.5**

The eligible costs that can be included in the Administration and Animation element of the budget are detailed in article 35 of EU Reg 1303/2013. Any staff costs included in the administration budget should be directly attributable to the costs linked to the management and implementation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS).

- (d) running costs linked to the management of the implementation of the community-led local development strategy consisting of operating costs, personnel costs, training cost, costs linked to public relations, financial costs as well as the costs linked to monitoring and evaluation of that strategy as referred to in point (g) of Article 34(3);

**Question #: 19.6**

**It is noted that the total cost of administration and animation cannot exceed 25% of the overall budget. What is the criterion for scoring this element of the Local Development Strategy (LDS)? Will it be the case that the lower the percentage of administration and animation costs the higher the score in terms of Value for Money (VFM)?**

**Answer #: 19.6**

The LDS will be appraised in its entirety. Whilst the administration and animation costs threshold cannot be exceeded the LDS will be examined in terms of what actions and outputs will be delivered with the funding allocated, so all elements of the LDS will be taken into consideration. It is not necessarily about the lowest cost but what provides the best value for money.

**Question #: 19.7**

**If 20% of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) budget is allocated to animation / administration costs is the Local Action Group (LAG) tied to this percentage throughout the lifetime of the Programme - can the LAG increase the animation / administration budget to 25% at a later stage if required?**

**Answer #: 19.7**

The overall budgetary allocation for Administration and Animation is a maximum of 25% of the LDS expenditure and it is possible that this may change as the LDS is operationalised. However, this is the maximum percentage available and it is expected that LAGs will examine ways to minimise the level of funding for the administration element of the Programme with a view to maximising the funding available for projects.

**Question #: 19.8**

**I was unable to access the Local Development Strategy (LDS) financial template as the excel template prompted me for a password – can you please provide this?**

**Answer #: 19.8**

Certain users may be asked for passwords depending on their ICT settings; however, no password is required to access the template. Users should just select 'cancel' to the password prompt dialogue box and the file will immediately open for them.

**Question #: 19.9**

**As the LEADER Programme normally takes 1.5 years to wind down (based on experience), does this necessitate an amendment to the financial plan to allow for the allocation of funding for 2021 and part of 2022 depending on when the Local Development Strategy (LDS) is operationalised in the sub-regional area.**

**Answer #: 19.9**

The financial templates are provided to give an estimate of the financial expenditure for the period 2015-2020 only. Whilst there is an expectation that expenditure will be incurred beyond this date, for the purposes of the LDS the financial expenditure is based on estimations for the programming period only. Actual expenditure will be captured on an ongoing basis going forward.

**Question #: 19.10**

**Would it be possible to include more sections in the financial template under Theme 1: to have sufficient space to fit in all the Local Objectives? Based on the current draft being prepared we will need approx. 12 lines for filling in.**

**Answer #: 19.10**

Please submit your draft LDS and before you complete the final LDS we can provide additional lines in the financial template.

**Question #: 19.11**

**In relation to Chapter 8, Financial Plan – can you clarify what is included in this chapter as the guidelines state that the template goes into the appendices?**

**Answer #: 19.11**

The minimum requirement for section 8 is the Financial Plan Template (see Appendix 2 in Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines – P30) which may be included in the appendix of the LDS document. In addition, Section 8 of the LDS can be used to include any additional qualitative statements in respect of the Financial Plan Template.

**Question #: 19.12**

**Is the Preparatory Support for the development of the LDS included under the ‘Implementation of Operations/Projects under the LDS’ tab/sheet on the Financial Plan Template?**

**Answer #: 19.12**

The amount of preparatory support will reduce the overall allocation that is available for the implementation of the LDS. On the Financial Plan Template, the Preparatory Support is included on the first budget line under the ‘Implementation of Operations/Projects under the LDS’ tab. This tab also includes details of the project costs across the three themes.

## 20. LDS Section 9: Additional Information

## 21. LDS Section 10: Form of Declaration

**Question #: 21.1**

**In relation to the Declaration and Disclaimer, the Framework Guidelines state that the signed minutes of the LAG meeting at which the LDS was approved by LAG members must be submitted with the LDS. To comply with this requirement LAGs would need to have a second meeting at which they approved the minutes. This requirement will lead to an unnecessary delay in the submission of the LDS.**

**Answer #: 21.1**

Please submit the final approved formal minutes from the LAG Board meeting when available. As an interim solution it is possible to submit a declaration signed by all of the LAG members present at the meeting which approved the content and submission of the LDS

**Question #: 21.2**

**Page 33 of Document 2 states that Pobal may contact other public funding organisations to discuss an application, as part of the LDS appraisal process. In circumstance where the**

**application is in competition with a local authority-led application in the same sub-regional area, will Pobal contact the local authority in that area regarding the application?**

**Answer #: 21.2**

In areas where there are competitive LDS's for the same sub-regional area submitted, Pobal will not be consulting with the Local Authority or the Local Enterprise Office.

## **22. LDS Section 11: Appendices**

**Question #: 22.1**

**Can you please confirm if the appendices in the LDS are included in the overall page count for the document?**

**Answer #: 23.1**

Please refer to Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines. Page 3 outlines that a suggested maximum page length for the LDS is 100 pages, this excludes appendices. Appendices can be used for additional information, where necessary.

## **23. Format of the LDS.**

**Question #: 23.1**

**In relation to the development of the LDS, please advise if the LDS document is restricted to 100 pages, excluding appendices?**

**Answer #: 23.1**

Yes, the suggested maximum page length of the LDS is 100 pages excluding appendices. Please refer to Page 3 of Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines.

**Question #: 23.2**

**In terms of the page length of the LDS being a "suggested maximum", can you confirm if a penalty applies for exceeding 100 pages and if so what the penalty is?**

**Answer #: 23.2**

No penalty applies, however it should be noted that this is a suggested maximum.

**Question #: 23.3**

**With regard to Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines (page 3), it states that "strategies that far exceed the maximum page limit may be penalised under the 'Quality of the Strategy' criteria." As this is a competitive bid situation, it is imperative that there is clarity on the criteria that strategies will be evaluated on. Can you quantify what is meant by "far exceed the maximum page limit"?**

**Answer #: 23.3**

The guidance outlines that you 'may be penalised' if you exceed the maximum page limit. We do not plan to invoke this however it is hoped that approved EOI applicants in completing the LDS will make every effort to adhere to the suggested maximum number of pages.

**Question #: 23.4**

**In Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines, (page 25) it states that "whilst entities may include info....., it should be noted that this is up to the suggested maximum page length**

**of 100 pages". Can you clarify if the maximum of 100 pages relates to Section 9 or the entire LDS.**

**Answer #: 23.4**

Document 2: LDS Framework Guidelines (page 3) states that the suggested maximum page length is 100 pages for the LDS excluding appendices.

**Question #: 23.5**

**When submitting the LDS is it necessary to provide a glossy print version or will a word version suffice? To have the final glossy print version will delay the submission date further.**

**Answer #: 23.5**

Document 1: Overview of Stage 2 – Invitation to submit a LDS (page 24), requires the LDS (including all appendices) to be submitted to Pobal in electronic and hard copy format.

## 24. Submission of the LDS

**Question #: 24.1**

**How can the submission of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) be co-ordinated with the scheduled Independent Selection Committee meetings and how long in advance should an LDS be submitted to be considered by the Independent Selection Committee.**

**Answer #: 24.1**

Local Action Groups (LAGs) will have a minimum of six months provided (from 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015 to 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016) for the design and submission of the LDS. The end date refers to the end of that 6-month period. If a situation arises where an LDS does not reach the required standard and more time is required / requested, consideration will be given to extend this timeframe.

The appraisal and selection process for the LDS will be undertaken on a rolling basis with outline submission dates detailed below:

- End October 2015
- End November 2015
- End December 2015
- End January 2015

It is important to note that the dates specified are the likely timeframe that the Independent Selection Committee will be convened to consider LDS submissions, additional dates may be added depending on timing and volume of LDS submissions. If you wish your LDS to be considered at the end of a particular month, it is recommended that a fully completed LDS is submitted at least 6 weeks in advance.

Please note that where there are competing strategies in a sub-regional area, all LDS will be appraised on a competitive basis before a final decision will be made by the Independent Selection Committee on the particular sub-regional area.

## 25. LDS Appraisal and Selection Process

### Question #: 25.1

**Local Action Groups (LAGs) are required to provide realistic targets as part of the Action Plan in the Local Development Strategy (LDS). Is it a case that an LDS that includes higher but unrealistic targets will achieve a greater score than another strategy with lower targets?**

### Answer #: 25.1

Each LDS will be assessed on the information provided in terms of the type and quality of the outputs and how realistic the proposed targets are. It should be noted that LAGs are required to provide estimated but realistic targets in the LDS.

### Question #: 25.2

**Please confirm if the appraisal criteria and scoring will be broken down for each of the bullet points detailed in Document 1: Overview of Stage 2 Invitation to Submit a LDS - page 22/23?**

### Answer #: 25.2

The published scoring criterion for each criterion is detailed on page 23 (Document 1: Overview of Stage 2 – Invitation to Submit a LDS).

## 26. Provisional Timeframes

### Question #: 26.1

**What is the timeframe for the approval and commencement of the next LEADER Programme once the Local Development Strategy (LDS) has been submitted to Pobal?**

### Answer #: 26.1

Local Action Groups (LAGs) have a minimum of six months (from 16/07/15 to 16/01/16) for the design and submission of the LDS and the latter date refers to the end of that 6-month period.

The appraisal and selection process for the LDS will be undertaken on a rolling basis with outline submission dates detailed below:

- End October 2015
- End November 2015
- End December 2015
- End January 2016

The dates specified are the likely timeframe that the Independent Selection Committee will be convened to consider LDS's that have been submitted. Further dates may be added depending on the timing and volume of LDS submissions. If you wish an LDS to be considered at the end of a particular month, it is recommended that a fully completed LDS is submitted to Pobal at least 6 weeks in advance. Please note that where there are competing LDS's in a sub-regional area, all LDS's will be appraised on a competitive basis before final decisions will be made by the Independent Selection Committee on the particular sub-regional area.

If an LDS is approved by the Independent Selection Committee an Agreement/Contract will be issued from DECLG within approximately 2 weeks.

### Question #: 26.2

**What is the timeline for applying for a new LEADER grant for a particular project?**

### Answer #: 26.2

The new LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is not operational at this stage and thus calls for proposals are not open. Potential Local Action Groups (LAGs) are currently developing a Local

Development Strategy (LDS) to cover the period 2015-2020 for a particular sub-regional area. LAGs will have a minimum of 6 months to develop and submit the LDS under stage 2 of the selection process. We anticipate that this will be completed towards the end of 2015/early 2016.

**Question #: 26.3**

**What is the closing date for applying for LEADER funding for a heritage project?**

**Answer #: 26.3**

The new LEADER Programme 2014-2020 is not operational at this stage and thus calls for proposals are not open. Potential Local Action Groups (LAGs) are currently developing a Local Development Strategy (LDS) to cover the period 2015-2020, for the particular sub-regional area. LAGs will have a minimum of 6 months to develop and submit the LDS under stage 2 of the selection process. We anticipate that this will be completed towards the end of 2015/early 2016.

Following the approval of the LDS, LAG's will operate a series of calls for proposals that are based on the local objectives of the LDS; these have been developed on the basis of locally identified needs.

**Question #: 26.4**

**Does the provision of extended LEADER closure funding for Oct/Nov 2015 and the provision of preparatory support for the development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) impact on the contract period and funding for LEADER 2014-2020? In addition, will the later than anticipated start date impact on the budget and timeframe that has been communicated with regard to administration costs for LEADER 2014-20?**

**Answer #: 26.4**

As per the communication from DECLG regarding the extension of contracts for the 2007-2014 Programme, the extension and work associated with the closure of the Programme is separate and distinct to any work or costs associated with the 2014-2020 Programme. The extension of the 2007-2014 contract should have no implications for the time period associated with the 2014-2020 Programme.

## 27. Supports for LDS Development

**Question #: 27.1**

**Will there be an additional workshop on financial planning and budgets for Local Action Groups (LAGs)?**

**Answer #: 27.1**

This can be facilitated as the Local Development Strategy (LDS) process develops, if required.

**Question #: 27.2**

**Can the deadline of the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 for the submission of the draft Local Development Strategy (LDS) be extended?**

**Answer #: 27.2**

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are at different stages in the development of their LDS. The deadline of 25<sup>th</sup> September is for the submission of a draft LDS, however the submission of a draft LDS is not mandatory. Extensions for submitting a draft LDS can only be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Question #: 27.3**

**We are planning to go to public consultation once the draft LEADER *Operating Rules* are available and would welcome feedback on chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the Local Development Strategy (LDS). It is acceptable to submit these 3 completed sections?**

**Answer #: 27.3**

Entities can submit a draft LDS to Pobal that includes Section 2 (LDS Area Profile), Section 3 (Consultation and SWOT Analysis) and Section 4 (LDS Action Plan). Please note there is only one opportunity to submit a draft LDS.

**Question #: 27.4**

**In relation to submitting a draft Local Development Strategy (LDS) to Pobal in September can you please clarify if we are required to submit a signed declaration and disclaimer?**

**Answer #: 27.4**

A signed declaration and disclaimer is only required for the final LDS that is submitted.

**Question #: 27.5**

**Is the date for the submission of the draft Local Development Strategy (LDS) flexible? Is there a final date after which a draft for review will not be accepted?**

**Answer #: 27.5**

As part of the technical support that Pobal will provide to assist in the development of a high quality LDS, Local Actions Groups (LAGs) will have an opportunity to submit a draft LDS. Whilst it is not mandatory to submit a draft of the LDS, LAGs are strongly encouraged to avail of this opportunity. LAGs will receive written feedback from Pobal on the following aspects of the draft LDS only:

- LDS Area Profile (Section 2 of LDS Framework)
- Participative Planning: Consultation & SWOT Analysis (Section 3 of LDS Framework)
- LDS Action Plan (Section 4 of LDS Framework)

There will be a designated 10 week period (following the launch of stage 2) for LAGs to submit a draft LDS to Pobal from 20th July 2015 to 25th September 2015. Entities should note that there is only one opportunity to submit a draft LDS. Pobal will review the documentation and provide written feedback on key elements of the LDS within 10 working days. This is in the context of providing support to LAGs on the structure and content of their LDS at an early point in the development process in order to support high quality and robust strategies.

Whilst it is indicated that the 25th September 2015 is the final date that draft submissions will be accepted, there will be some flexibility on this date on a case-by-case basis. In this instance it is important to contact Pobal to advise when a draft LDS is likely to be submitted.

**Question #: 27.6**

**Is it possible to source the powerpoint presentations from the various capacity building sessions, which were held during July-Sept. 2015?**

**Answer #: 27.6**

The presentations from the capacity building events that were hosted by Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government are available on the Department's website. See the following link:

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

## 28. Article 28/48 Checks

**Question #: 28.1**

**Who will undertake the article 28 checks and who will cover the cost of these checks? If a Local Action Group (LAGs) is not carrying out these checks will the Administration and Animation budget be reduced accordingly?**

**Answer #: 28.1**

While the system to support the administrative checks for the new LEADER Programme is not yet finalised the following is an outline of what is expected without prejudice to the outcome of the selection process.

1. If the LAG is a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) it is expected that the Local Authority as a partner of the LAG will be the designated Financial Partner. In this context DECLG will delegate the article 28/48 checks to the Local Authority and they will be conducted by the Local Authority on all third party projects. In the context that this function will be delivered as part of the implementation of the LDS it will be eligible for funding under the 25% Administration/ Animation available and it is envisaged that a portion of the 25% will be assigned to support this function. It will be a matter for the LAG to determine if this is appropriate and to what extent admin funding will be allocated to this function.
2. If an entity other than the LCDC is the LAG, then the Article 28/48 on third party projects will not be delegated to the LAG and will be carried out by DECLG and/or its agents. In this context the cost of these checks will be borne by DECLG and no element of the 25% administration funding will be allocated to this function.
3. In the context of approved expenditure relating to projects that are promoted by the LAG and all administration and animation related expenditure the Article 28/48 checks will be carried out by DECLG and/or its agents and the cost will be borne by DECLG.