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Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

LEADER 2014-2020 GUIDANCE ON THE COMPLETION OF THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar
gyfer Datblygu Gwledig:
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



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LEADER 2014-2020

GUIDANCE ON THE COMPLETION OF THE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

If you wish to express an interest in becoming a Local Action Group under the Rural Development Plan for Wales (2014-2020), please complete the Expression of Interest (EOI) Form at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/rural-development-plan-for-wales-2014-2020/?lang=en>

Summary of Process

This is the first stage in an iterative process leading to the establishment of Local Action Groups (LAGs) and the development and approval of Local Development Strategies (LDSs). The selection of LAGs will be a two-stage process:

Stage 1: Expression of Interest to be a Local Action Group (LAG)

At this stage of the process, approval of an EOI will confirm eligibility to apply for full LAG status at Stage 2 of the process.

The EOI form should provide an explanation of how the proposed LAG meets the requirements of Articles 28 to 31 of the Common Provisions Regulation and Articles 42 to 45 of the rural development regulation. These Articles cover requirements related to structure, partners, population thresholds etc.

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/com627/627_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm#4

**Expressions of Interest must be submitted to the Welsh Government
no later than 31 January 2014.**

Stage 2 Full Application to be a LAG and submission of LDS

Applicants approved at EOI stage would be invited to submit a full application for LAG status and develop an LDS. We hope to issue this invitation as soon as possible after the draft Rural Development Plan has been submitted to the Commission (planned June/July 2014). The implementation of Local Development Strategies is currently expected to begin early 2015. Further guidance and support towards the preparation of an LDS will be provided following approval at Stage 1.

LAGs with stage 1 approval will develop an LDS for their area. The LDS should reflect the needs and opportunities of their area including long term visions to support social inclusion, tackling poverty and promote economic growth. This should include an action plan set to achieve identified priorities. The LDS will incorporate all proposed LEADER activity plus any additional activity that the LAG intends to deliver locally (using other RDP funds, other European Structural and Investment funds, or other sources of funding). The LDS will also need to explain how the LAG will integrate its activities with the Fisheries Local Action Groups.

It is currently anticipated that the LEADER-funded elements of the LDS would be approved for the entire RDP period, with revision clauses. Progress in delivering the strategy would be monitored and reviewed by Welsh Government regularly.

Budget

Regulations require that as a minimum 5% of the EAFRD budget must be allocated to LEADER.

The Welsh Government is considering issuing indicative budget allocations for LEADER activity to each area provided that the LAGs can agree an acceptable and fair basis to determine the allocations. However Welsh Government will take account of the minimum amount of funding required to deliver an effective LDS.

LEADER Activity

LEADER is a method used for rural development on a local level. LEADER activity in Wales for 2014-2020 will follow the original LEADER concept (the 7 key principles of LEADER) focussing on innovation, piloting of new approaches, networking, and bottom-up community working. LEADER funding will not be used for grants under the next programme.

Further information relating to LEADER can be found on the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) website at: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader/>

LAGs will also have the opportunity to apply for Inter-territorial and Trans-national cooperation funding in accordance with Article 31c (CPR) and Article 44 in RD Regulation.

Guidance on completing the sections within the EOI form

Section 1: Operating Area / Geographical Wards

In order to take full advantage of LEADER delivery in Wales, the Local Action Group boundaries need not necessarily be aligned with Local Authority boundaries.

LEADER activity will be permitted in all eligible Rural Wards throughout Wales as defined below.

For the 2007-13 period the schemes Axis 3 and Axis 4 LEADER adopted a tiered definition of areas defined as 'rural' based on ward-level classifications as described in the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007 - 2013:

- **Rural Ward:** the full benefits arising from Projects located in these wards must accrue to Rural Wards.
- **Service Centre** or Named Ward: where a Project is located in a Service Centre or Named Ward, *up to 30%* of the benefits arising from the project can accrue to that ward but the balance must accrue to the surrounding Rural Wards.
- **Host Ward:** where a Project is located in a Host Ward for practical or operational reasons (e.g. premises, cost efficiencies etc) *none* of the benefits arising from the project can accrue to the ward itself.
- **Ineligible Ward:** These wards are regarded as exclusively urban in nature and no activity supported under the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007 - 2013 can take place in them.

The above list is based on National Statistics Classification of settlement type and context and uses the Welsh electoral divisions. It was compiled in consultation with Local Authorities, Welsh Government and the Office for National Statistics. The list was initially produced in 2005 and was refreshed in 2010 for the 18 Local Action Group areas approved for the current RDP.

It is anticipated that this categorisation will be retained for the next programme period to ensure maximum benefit to rural areas from the funds available. Please e-mail ruralprogrammes@wales.gsi.gov.uk if you require a list of the Rural Wards.

This section must clearly define the proposed operating area/geographical wards to be covered by the Local Action Group (LAG). The operating areas should be based on the eligible Rural Wards as detailed above. Please provide a list of Wards to be covered and provide a map.

If you wish to operate in any Wards not currently included on this list, please provide a justification for their inclusion.

An explanation should be provided as to why this area has been selected and to why a Local Development Strategy should be based on these Rural Wards, e.g. by drawing out the key distinguishing features and the factors which give it a coherence in social, economic and environmental terms.

Each Rural Ward may be covered by one LAG only. If competing bids for a Ward or Wards are received the relevant applicants will be told of the duplication and will be asked to find a solution. Applicants would be allowed to submit revised EOIs provided that the duplication is removed. In order to minimise the risk of duplication we encourage potential applicants to engage early on with local regeneration partnerships and Local Service Boards to discuss their proposals.

Section 2: Population (minimum 10,000 / maximum 150,000)

Further to the response provided in Section 1, please state the number of residents in the LAG area and provide an explanation for their inclusion.

We anticipate a minimum population of 10,000 up to a maximum of 150,000 to be covered by each LAG. Should the total population exceed the 150,000 threshold, please provide justification for the threshold to be exceeded.

Section 3: Indication of Proposed Themes to be covered by the Local Action Group

Under the new Common Strategic Framework proposals there is scope for a single Local Development Strategy to match its priorities to those of the different EU Funds. The extent of this will vary from area to area. At this stage, we are looking for an indication of the initial priorities of the LAG based on what local partners consider to be important. This will help us to have an early understanding as to what role EU funds (individually or combined) might play in Community Led Local Development Strategy delivery. As a minimum your EOI will need to identify clearly which themes you intend to cover using LEADER funds.

The following is a proposed menu of 'themes' that will be offered in Wales to apply the LEADER approach towards:

- Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable energy at Community level
- Exploitation of digital technology

Please outline which of the theme(s) noted above would be of interest to the LAG.

Section 4: Priority needs in the area (including high level aims and objectives)

Bearing in mind the small nature of LEADER projects as well as the bottom-up decision-making approach inherent to LEADER it is crucial that individual operations contribute to achieving the objectives of the Local Development Strategy and correspond to the objectives and priorities indicated for support under LEADER in the Partnership Agreement and the relevant European Programmes (EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF and ESF).

Please outline the priority needs of the area to be covered by the LDS, including the higher level aims and objectives. This section should also refer to objectives targeted at tackling poverty and economic growth.

Section 5: Partners and Engagement Strategy

You will need to provide an outline of the makeup of the partnership that will be developing the Local Development Strategy – the LAG, including narrative on how potential partners will be enabled to join.

Please note that the public sector as a whole must represent a minority in the LAG with membership and decision making emphasis on business and community interests.

Local Development Strategies under LEADER in Wales need to demonstrate how they connect to the Single Integrated Plans of the Local Service Boards, integrate with the use of other European Structural and Investment (ESI) funds and relate to the delivery of national priorities for tackling poverty and delivering growth.

An outline Engagement Strategy should include your proposals for the participation of business, public, third sector, community and businesses, partnerships, etc. This should indicate their interests in the Local Action Group and the preparation and development of the Local Development Strategy.

We would expect potential LAGs to set out how they will ensure that everyone in the areas are to be given an opportunity to engage in the preparation of the LDS, including representatives of public sector organisations, business, voluntary bodies and local people.

Section 6: Estimated Costs to prepare Local Development Strategy

This section should outline your estimated costs to prepare the LDS and should indicate how much of the costs can be secured locally (either in kind or direct financial support). Based on the proposals received, the Welsh Government will consider whether financial support can be offered to help with the preparation of the LDS.

An indication of eligible expenditure for the above costs is included within the Commission's Draft Measure Fiche for LEADER (Articles 28-31 of Common Provisions Regulation). These are summarised below however please refer to the most recent Regulations when completing this form as these are subject to change.

Preparatory Costs to develop the LDS (costs to prepare the LDS not to implement it)

These include the capacity building, training and networking required to prepare a Local Development Strategy.

- setting up of public-private partnerships; training actions for local actors, studies of the territory concerned, actions related to public relations regarding the local development activities, administrative costs related to co-ordinating the implementation of pilot project schemes, development and implementation of pilot project schemes
- training actions for local stakeholders, studies of the area concerned (including feasibility studies for some of the projects to be foreseen in the LDS), costs related to the elaboration of the LDS, including consultancy costs and costs for actions related to consultation of stakeholders in view of preparation of the strategy, administrative costs (operating and personnel costs) of an organisation that is applying for preparatory support during the preparation phase (future LAGs, existing LAGs, if no commitments are done by them for running costs under a 2007-2013 programme).

Section 7: Estimated Costs to Implement a Local Development Strategy

Running costs and animation costs together may be up to 25% of the total public expenditure incurred within an LDS. We are asking for an indication of both anticipated running costs and animation costs at this stage in order to provide an indication on the appropriate split between running costs and animation of the above 25%.

A reduction in the level of running costs is envisaged for the next programme and there is nothing prohibiting one organisation providing the running cost function for several LAGs. It is therefore important for areas to work together and join up resources where possible in order to maximise the efficiency of the running of the next LEADER programme in Wales.

An indication of eligible expenditure for the above costs is included within the Commission's Draft Measure Fiche for LEADER (Articles 28-31 of Common Provisions Regulation). These are summarised below however please refer to the most recent Regulations when completing this form as these are subject to change.

Running Costs - linked to the financial management of the implementation of the strategy

Costs linked to the management of the implementation of the strategy consisting of operating costs, personnel costs, training costs, costs linked to public relations, financial costs as well as the costs linked to monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

Animation Costs

Costs of 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 to develop operations and prepare applications.

Please also provide an indication of who you anticipate may undertake the functions outlined above.

At this stage we only require a broad indication of the costs in percentage terms.

Section 8: Additional information

You may wish to add any additional information that you think might be relevant, e.g. how this LDS relates to parallel Strategies.

Further Information

The Commission's current proposals on LEADER local development are outlined in Articles 28-31 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), Articles 42-45 of the (draft) Rural Development Regulation and the Guidance Fiche presented to the 15th May Rural Development Committee:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/legal-proposals/com627/627_en.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm#4

Further information on the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2014-2020 is available on the Welsh Government Website at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/rural-development-plan-for-wales-2014-2020/?lang=en>