



WEST LIMERICK RESOURCES CLG

Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2023-2027

Expression of Interest (EOI) Handbook

INTRODUCTION

Limerick Local and Community Development Committee (LCDC) is the Local Action Group (LAG) for County Limerick and is responsible for the management of the LEADER Local Development Strategy (LDS) in the county. West Limerick Resources CLG is its implementation partner for County Limerick and delivers the majority of project and animation related actions associated with the implementation of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) including managing calls for proposals. Limerick City and County Council are the financial partner and secretariat.

LEADER THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Under the programme, local projects may be funded under three LEADER themes and thirteen sub-themes as outlined below (subject to funding availability):

RDP THEME: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

SUB-THEME - THE GREEN ECONOMY

A green economy is a low carbon, resource efficient economy, achieved based on social justice / fairness. Growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment in improving processes and practices to reduce resource consumption, waste generation and emissions across the full life cycle of processes and products.

Significant potential for employment opportunities for rural areas are presented by the green economy. There is a strong need to maximise the opportunities presented by the circular and bio economy with Ireland being in a particularly favourable position to develop its bio and circular economies because of its abundance of natural advantages.

Circular Economy: A model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended.

Bioeconomy: Using renewable biological resources from land and sea, like crops, forests, fish, animals and micro-organisms to produce food, materials and energy.

The Green Economy offers opportunities for innovation, developing new markets and new entrants. It can also help existing enterprises in all sectors (including Social Enterprise) to improve competitiveness by adopting innovative environmental goods and services and improve energy efficiency in commercial, domestic and community buildings.

SUB-THEME - AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION

Many farmers are struggling to make a living in a difficult economic context of falling prices in key agricultural commodities and high agricultural market volatility. For many, a way to stabilise or increase their income is to branch out into other non-agricultural activities, using farm facilities known as farm diversification. In the context of enterprise development, and in line with the overall aims of the CAP Strategic Plan specific focus is placed on diversification opportunities for farm families.

Opportunities for diversification are in areas including: Tourism, Food, Renewable Energy, Green Economy, Farm Shops, Direct to Market and Social Farming. While providing additional income for farmers, they also have wider benefits providing new services and products to local communities, playing an important role in the rural economy and rural community vibrancy.

SUB-THEME - RURAL TOURISM AND RECREATION

Tourism plays a very significant role in the rural economy, and it is essential that Ireland continues to develop its tourism sector in a sustainable way. Areas such as outdoor rural recreation, outdoor activities, cultural and heritage initiatives, festivals, and other events have all been identified as areas of significant potential that would benefit from investment in order to contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism. Other examples of actions that may be supported include:

- feasibility studies to explore the tourism potential of an area;
- marketing initiatives;
- the creation of tourism hubs to facilitate a multi-sectoral approach;
- activities that centre on the development and renovation of infrastructure, which contribute to historic and heritage based tourism;
- actions that promote the development of cultural/heritage infrastructure of local significance and arts-based activities and events;
- the provision of amenity and leisure facilities, which can support adventure/eco-based tourism

LEADER supported tourism projects must comply with relevant Fáilte Ireland and/or other sectoral standards.

SUB-THEME - ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

LEADER can support micro, small and medium enterprises as defined in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC5. These enterprises make an important contribution to the enterprise base and jobs in rural Limerick. They are also a source of innovation and support diversification and resilience of the local economy. There exists a strong need to facilitate business development in rural areas by providing opportunities and support to businesses and individuals looking to develop rural enterprises. Creating employment opportunities close to where people live is particularly important, given the focus on environment and the need to reduce commuting long distances to work.

Types of Enterprise projects supported include but are not limited to: Innovative Rural Enterprise; Manufacturing/Engineering; Creative Industries; Renewable Energy; Sector-specific training programmes.

SUB-THEME - RURAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Ireland has seen considerable growth and expansion in the artisan food sector over the past decade. The LEADER programme is well positioned to continue to support this sector with investment in artisan and micro, small and medium food producers to develop and expand rural food production, skills development and marketing.

The agri-food sector is embedded in local communities across Limerick and an important economic sector in terms of direct and indirect employment. By developing opportunities for cooperation at a regional level, a sustainable food sector can be progressed that is profitable, has broad-based benefits for society (benefits of buying and eating local, security of supply, quality) and a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (reducing food miles/waste).

SUB-THEME - SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES

Social Enterprises are enterprises whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact rather than maximising profits for their owners. Social Enterprises are recognised for their vital social impact in areas such as sustainable job creation, social integration and provision of local services. New opportunities are emerging for social enterprises, for instance, in the green economy in areas including re-use, upcycling and the circular economy, in responding to needs for social care, other services and shops that have been lost from rural communities with economic and social change.

SUB-THEME - RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Community and voluntary groups play an essential role in their communities, providing important services by developing and managing community infrastructure. Support is available for measures to develop and/or enhance rural infrastructure, to provide an opportunity for more people to live and work in their rural communities.

As well as traditional community buildings, this action will support the enhancement of parks, playgrounds, outdoor space and other community recreational and social amenities. Prioritised will be strategic upgrades and developments that enhance social inclusion and engagement with social diversity as opposed to focusing on general upgrades or large-scale investment in new builds along with a focus on improved energy efficiency.

SUB-THEME - ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Accessible local services of high quality are critical to the well-being of rural residents and the social and economic resilience of communities. Meeting challenges of local service delivery presents opportunities for innovation, especially based on digitalisation, shared service delivery models and networking.

This sub-theme focuses on improving access to basic services for people living in rural and remote areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion, including hard to reach and new communities. Inclusive rural communities ensure that as many people as possible, and diverse groupings have a voice in the decisions affecting their area and are able to take part in collective action. Actions may involve the introduction of a new service or the re-introduction of a previously withdrawn service under the following categories: community; training; social/cultural; recreation with a particular focus on Smart Communities Initiatives.

SUB-THEME - OPTIMISING DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Digital connectivity is revolutionising service delivery and, in many areas, people's quality of life as we increasingly embrace the transformative potential of digital technologies and innovative applications. To ensure rural sustainability, there is a need to find new ways of doing things, new solutions to challenges we face and use technology to improve social, community and economic well-being.

As well as the requirement for good IT infrastructure and connectivity, supporting the development of digital skills and digital literacy is also essential to enable rural dwellers to maximise the benefits of digitalisation. Increased access to reliable and high-speed broadband is vital for the economic and social development of rural areas and communities. High-quality broadband enables businesses to set-up or continue to be based in rural areas, by overcoming barriers relating to access to markets and services. There is also a potential to create additional employment as access to broadband can support businesses to grow. While this sub-theme may support local actions that complement national initiatives aimed at developing a comprehensive rural broadband infrastructure, it does not cover most broadband infrastructure, as this is covered under the National Broadband Plan.

SUB-THEME - RURAL YOUTH

A youth-centred approach to local development can stimulate young people to stay in rural areas or to return while also attracting newcomers. It is essential to engage young people in decisions that affect them and enable them to actively shape their communities and design of infrastructure and services. Rural youth can provide inspiration and energy to imagine and take opportunities for stronger, more connected and prosperous rural areas.

Gaps exist in the diversity of activities available in rural areas for young people, outside of sports. There is a need to encourage rural youth participation in issues that affect their daily lives, to build their leadership capabilities and to provide

on-going input to the development of future rural youth initiatives. Young people, particularly those who may be vulnerable, also have distinct needs regarding the type of services they may need to access. For the purposes of LEADER, young people are defined as people aged 15 to 40 years.

Types of projects that may be supported include but are not limited to: Sports/recreation activities but increased emphasis in the development of activities outside of sport; Provision of youth clubs/cafés; Improved access to ICT; Arts-based projects; Youth development programmes.

RDP THEME: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION

SUB-THEME - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable communities use resources to meet current needs while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations. It is essential to support communities to responsibly utilise the natural resources within their local area, including water and biodiversity, while creating a greater environmental awareness and improving environmental protection through targeted action. Protection of our environment has profound benefits on health and well-being while the shift to a greener region will also create new opportunities for economic development. Renewable energy is a growing market, with Limerick well-placed to capitalise on this, from wind and bioenergy.

Under this sub-theme support will be provided to encourage protection and sustainable use of water resources, protection and improvement of local biodiversity and development of renewable energy. Projects that may be supported include but are not limited to: awareness raising and capacity building activities; development of plans or feasibility studies; initiatives focusing on conservation/protection/enhancement/restoration/energy efficiency.

SUB-THEME - CLIMATE CHANGE CAPACITY BUILDING

Climate Change is not just a national but a global issue requiring far reaching changes to the way we live. However, real change starts on a local scale. By informing and building capacity of local communities and directly involving them in planning and development of actions, there is a better chance of achieving progress. It also ensures that measures taken are adjusted to the local context, serve the community's specific needs and different capacity to implement change. Community-driven initiatives empower community members and give them control and management of local resources, while guiding them on sustainability and protection of these resources.

This sub-theme will support the creation of greater awareness and engagement around climate change and foster the development of a greater range of local responses to climate change through capacity building.

SUB-THEME - CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Society in general, businesses and other organisations have a responsibility to take steps urgently to use resources more sustainably. This is so that current and future generations can continue to maintain a balance between social, environmental and economic development while changing to mitigate and adapt to the reality of climate change and its negative effects. By fostering innovation in addressing climate change, communities can shift to produce and consume resources sustainably, while valuing nature and the environment.

This sub-theme will provide support to projects that encourages and complements climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. Areas seen as priorities are encouraging uptake of renewable energy, reduction in energy consumption, reduction in the generation of waste across all sectors and from further back the production cycle, advancing the circular economy and finding nature-based solutions to climate change.

FUNDING ELIGIBILITY AND RATES

Applicants will be accepted from the private and community sectors based within the LDS area subject to the exclusion of ineligible sectors and activities specified in the LEADER Operating Rules. See following sections for details.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

In general funding under LEADER falls into the following three categories:

- **Capital**
 - a. construction or improvement of immovable property;
 - b. purchase of new or second-hand machinery and equipment, excluding the items specifically listed as ineligible, up to the market value of the asset;
 - c. general costs linked to expenditure referred to in points (a) and (b), such as architect, engineer and consultation fees, fees relating to advice on environmental and economic sustainability,
 - d. intangible investments such as the acquisition or development of computer software and acquisitions of patents, licences, copyrights, trademarks.
- **Analysis and Development**
 - a. actions to promote analysis and development of rural (rurally sourced) products;
 - b. feasibility studies;
 - c. development plans;
 - d. resource audits;
 - e. development of prototype products and services;
 - f. assessments, surveys and other reports required for the purposes of securing planning permission, and/or fulfilling other statutory obligations for projects under the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Theme, and heritage projects.
- **Training** (subject to eligibility criteria)

INELIGIBLE SECTORS AND ACTIVITIES FOR ALL LEADER FUNDING

The following table lists the ineligible sectors and activities for which LEADER funding shall not be awarded or paid.

Ineligible Sectors and Activities
Primary Agriculture
Primary Horticulture (including Bee Keeping)
Fisheries - Commercial activities involving fisheries, including but not limited to fish farming, fish processing and fishing in general.
Purchase of animals or livestock
Conventional retail operations, excluding community-based shops and farm shops, outlets selling locally produced produce
Courses of instruction or training which form the part of normal education programmes or systems at pre-school, primary, secondary or higher levels up to and including FETAC & QQI Level
Private schools and colleges, Sudbury type schools, Montessori schools, Creches. Boards of Management of such institutions, all schools funded in any way by the Department of Education, including private schools.
Research Bodies
Continuous Professional Development Courses
Loans

Working capital (including stock)
Funding for a training course provider to run their own course/training course provider getting funding to run a course and get paid for it out of project funding aid.
Operational Costs of Project Promoters – salary/overheads etc.
Insurance for project promoters
Payments for gifts, donations or personal entertainments, Small Benefit Tax Exemption, Inducements to take part in Training e.g. shopping voucher for attendance.
Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages
Legal expenses in respect of litigation
Costs associated with meeting a legislative or statutory requirement
Planning application fee and other measures required for compliance
Reclaimable VAT
Improvements/refurbishment of private residential property
B&B's that are part of a private residence.
Cars, industrial/farm/construction vehicles, vans, buses, tractors, diggers, mini-diggers, excavators, forklifts, including trailers to transport such vehicles.
General maintenance works of public bodies
Works that normally come within the remit of Local Authorities and/or is included in the development plan of a Local Authority.
Childcare
Health Care and Healthcare Equipment (<i>unless in exceptional cases where approved by the Department</i>)
Nursing homes
Housing
Race and sport horse industries with the exception of ancillary activities for the provision of services to those industries
Greyhound Industry and activities that involve greyhounds, such as but not limited to, greyhound tracks, training facilities, and ancillary activities for the provision of services to those industries.
Projects where products being funded are made outside Ireland and are kept outside Ireland.
Mentoring is not eligible as a standalone project. It may be included as a module in a training project.

LAG POLICIES

The LAG reserves the right to implement policies from time to time on the types of projects which it will support in the local area. Please consult with your Project Officer to confirm if your project falls under one of these policies. The following is a summary of current policies:

- Community Infrastructure Projects must have at least one environmentally friendly component within each application and those awarded funding required to develop an inclusion policy as a condition of grant aid, or to supply copy of existing policy. Policy to include reference to health and wellbeing.
- Core activities of mainstream sporting (GAA, FAI, IRFU) will not be funded.
- Projects must have full planning permission and procurement at time of application, as applicable
- Land Purchase will not be funded.
- Funding for Tourism Accommodation is capped at €50,000 per unit up to a maximum of €200k per applicant. Those funded must be Fáilte Ireland approved. Funding is not available for small scale fit out equipment and supplies
- Maximum grant for a community socio-economic plan is €7,500

- Lawnmowers and Christmas lights will not be funded
- To be eligible, festivals must run over a minimum of 2 days. Eligible items for festivals limited to marketing, stage, sound, lighting, marquee, toilets, furniture rental, street barriers, event security, generators. Funding cap of €50,000. Entertainments, street decorations, programmes not eligible.
- Books will not be funded

FUNDING AMOUNTS

The minimum grant amount is €5,000 and the maximum grant amount is €200,000. The rate of grant aid is governed by the type of applicant and will be based on eligible costs specific to the project.

Summary of Current Funding Ceilings and Support Rates			
Type of Project	Applicant	Maximum Rate of Aid	Maximum Funding
Community Project <i>not</i> involving Economic Activity	Community	Up to a Maximum of 75%	€200,000
Community Project involving Economic Activity	Community	Up to a Maximum of 75%	€200,000
Investment & Other Supports	Private	Up to a Maximum of 75%	€200,000
	Community	Up to a Maximum of 75%	
Analysis and Development	Private	Up to a maximum of 90%	€30,000
	Community	Up to a maximum of 90%	
Training	Private or Community	Up to a maximum of 100%	€200,000

APPLICATION PROCESS

LEADER operates a two-step application process.

- Step 1 - Expression of Interest (EOI)– this is used to determine project eligibility in principle. Those successful at EOI stage will be eligible to submit a full application.
- Step 2 - Application Submission - the application will be subject to an independent evaluation prior to submission to LCDC for final decision. Full application guidelines are contained in West Limerick Resources Application Handbook available on request.

PROMOTER NAME

Promoters must ensure that they use their correct legal name at time of EOI and application. Reasons for incorrect project promoter details may include incomplete project promoter names, a trade name rather than a personal name, or partnership names other than the promoter's correct legal name format. Subsequent requests for amendment of project promoter detail record may have legal implications for amending or adding to existing LAG contracts to enable transfer of approved project assets and liabilities to a separate legal entity.

KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECTS PROGRESSING TO APPLICATION AND APPROVAL

PROJECT PERMISSIONS

The LAG may not offer a contract to a promoter where all necessary permissions are not in place, including planning permission and other permissions related to heritage and the environment as applicable. In all cases, the applicant must contact the relevant Local Authority to ascertain whether planning permission is required or not. The applicant must also ascertain whether or not consents are required from the appropriate Government Departments or other Agencies; this will

depend on the project type and location. **Contact Limerick City and County Council- planning@limerick.ie or for planning exemptions- enforcements@limerick.ie**

EVIDENCE OF TITLE, LEASEHOLD OR PERMISSION TO USE

Evidence of title or leasehold must be provided in respect of capital projects involving land e.g. sites of building construction or renovation, fixtures, traffic ways, etc. Where a lease cannot be obtained, legal documentation confirming the promoter's authority to carry out the relevant activities will suffice. Evidence of access to lease of a minimum of 10 years to be provided at time of application.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants applying for funding will be expected to attend information events related to LEADER funding which will be run by West Limerick Resources.
- Project activity undertaken or commenced, or the purchase of goods or services engaged by the project applicant prior to the date of contract signing, shall not be eligible for LEADER funding.
- The LAG may not award an increase in funding to an applicant in any circumstances, notwithstanding that costs may prove higher than anticipated.
- Applicants awarded funding will be required to repay all or part of the funding amount if the duration of the investment does not persist for a minimum of five years i.e. if a funded activity or enterprise closes, is sold, leased or substantially changed within five years of the final grant payment.

OTHER INFORMATION

APPEALS PROCESS

The right of appeal applies to all funding decisions by the LAG. Full details of the appeals process are available on request.

DATA PROTECTION

All data supplied will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679) which came into effect on 25 May 2018. Applicants will be required to complete a Form of Consent in relation to the processing of their Data as part of the application process.

CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

West Limerick Resources Office St Mary's Road, Newcastle West, Co Limerick Phone: 069 62222 or email info@wlr.ie

To arrange a meeting to discuss this grant scheme in relation to your project, please contact a member of the team or email rdp@wlr.ie to request an Expression of Interest.

Rural Development Officer (East Limerick) <i>Katie Murray</i>	087 3571310	kmurray@wlr.ie
Rural Development Officer (East Limerick) <i>Aimee Grigg</i>	087 3563880	agrigg@wlr.ie
Rural Development Officer (West Limerick) <i>Caitriona Scully</i>	087 3575790	cscully@wlr.ie
RDP/LEADER Coordinator (West Limerick) <i>Suzanne Rowley</i>	087 3539179	srowley@wlr.ie

For further information regarding the LEADER Programme, please see <http://www.wlr.ie/leader-2023-2027/> A full copy of the programme operating rules is available on <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/87e09-leader-programme-for-rural-development/>

DISCLAIMER

Please note that this is a summary guide only and does not include full programme details and operating rules. Information is correct at time of printing but may be subject to change. All Expressions of Interest will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.