



County Wicklow Partnership

LEADER PROGRAMME IN WICKLOW

2014 – 2020

APPLICATION HANDBOOK



NOTE: The guidelines, rules and regulations of the programme are updated periodically. County Wicklow Partnership reserves the right to implement the updated guidelines, rules and regulations as appropriate



Department of Rural and
Community Development
*An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail*



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Section 1: Introduction

The LEADER Programme

The LEADER programme has been supporting communities and businesses in County Wicklow for 25 years. Since the programme was introduced in 1992 in excess of €15 million has been invested in 632 projects. The projects supported have ranged in size from small projects worth €2,000 to large flagship projects requiring up to €500,000 in a diverse range of sectors but primarily in the areas of farm diversification, enterprise, rural tourism, heritage, town and village renewal, community facilities and amenities, renewable energy and environmental projects.

The LEADER Initiative (Liaisons entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale) was established by the European Commission in 1991 and was designed to aid the development of sustainable rural communities following the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy. Highly successful, it operates across the European Union and in all rural areas of Ireland. LEADER is part funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Irish Exchequer.

Rural Development Programme in Wicklow

The roll out of the new LEADER programme 2014 – 2020 is quite different from previous LEADER programmes. While the focus of the programme is still on the development of vibrant rural communities and a strong rural economy, there is a new multi-organisation delivery approach involving the following bodies:



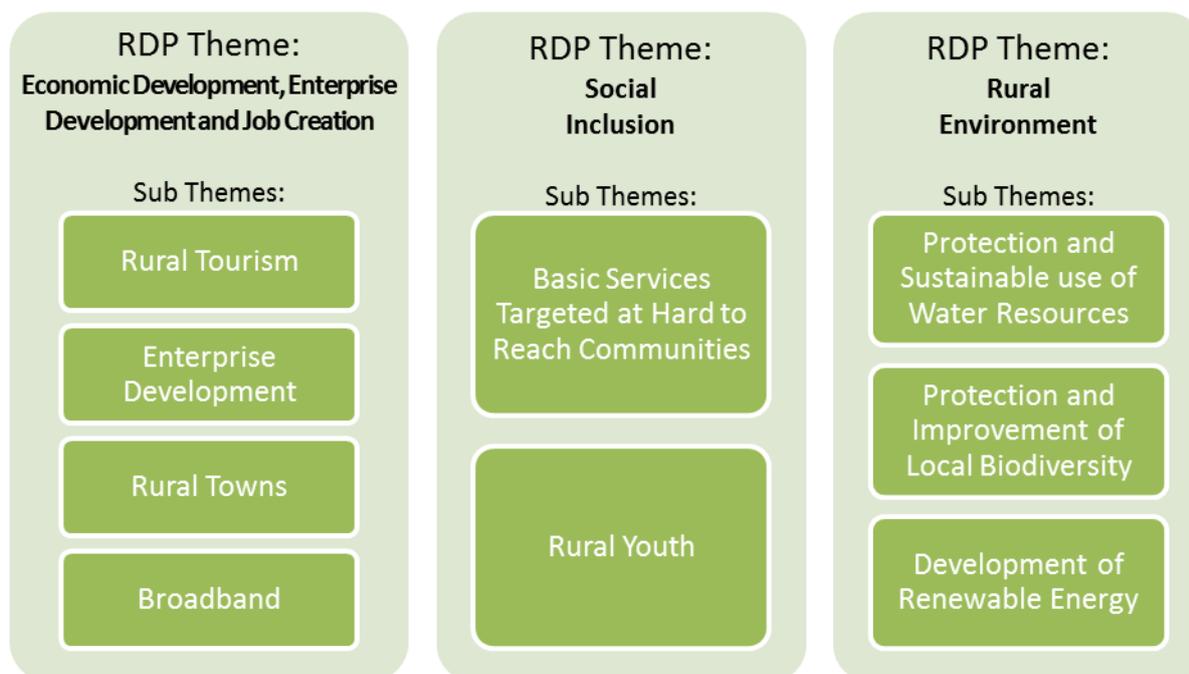
- **Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)** is now the contract holder (the Local Action Group - LAG) for the LEADER programme in Wicklow 2014 – 2020. Further info about Wicklow LCDC can be found on: <http://www.wicklow.ie/committee-lcdc>
Wicklow LCDC will provide direction and oversight to the programme and will be the final decision maker on all project applications.
- **County Wicklow Partnership (CWP)** is the Implementing Partner for the programme and is the point of contact for all project applicants. CWP will create awareness of and promote the programme, develop local initiatives, develop calls for applications and will deal with projects from Expression of Interest (EOI) stage right up to preparing grant claims.
www.wicklowpartnership.ie
- **Wicklow County Council** is the financial partner for the programme and will make payments to projects as well as conducting audit and compliance checks on project files.

www.wicklow.ie

Section 2: LEADER Programme Themes and Sub-Themes

Please see below a summary outline of the programme themes and objectives under the programme. These are the areas for priority action prescribed by the LEADER Programme to each county delivering LEADER. Refer to Appendix III to see a more detail on the themes within the programme.

Fig 2.1 – LEADER 2014-2020 Themes and Sub-Themes



Wicklow's Local Development Strategy (LDS)

Allocation of funding under the LEADER programme is based on the strength of individual projects but also on whether or not the project complies with the national programme themes and most importantly, Wicklow's Local Development Strategy (LDS).

In October and November 2015, public consultation meetings were held in five locations across the County (Newtownmountkennedy, Blessington, Aughrim, Wicklow Town and Baltinglass) to get feedback on local requirements and potential actions under each of the themes and subthemes outlined above in order to create a Local Development Strategy (LDS) that could identify the needs and propose solutions that are specific to Wicklow. Meetings were also held with relevant agencies and stakeholders in each sector. The information gathered from these meetings was used to devise a Local Development Strategy (LDS) for Wicklow.

Priority strategic actions in the Wicklow Local Development Strategy (LDS)

Theme 1: Economic Development and Job Creation

Rural Tourism

- 1.1 To support the growth of the tourism sector in Wicklow by improving and expanding the quality and range of tourism products on offer
- 1.2 Build the capacity of Wicklow's tourism communities and tourism providers to be prepared to take advantage of Fáilte Ireland's IAE (Ireland's Ancient East) brand and expand market share
- 1.3 To animate and develop the heritage potential of South Wicklow's Fitzwilliam Coolattin Estate as a co-operative approach to destination development and an economic driver for the villages of Shillelagh, Coolboy, Carnew & Tinahely
- 1.4 To animate and develop the unique and traditional village settlements of West Wicklow as a driver of heritage tourism through a co-operative approach aimed at destination development as a mechanism of stimulating economic activity in the area
- 1.5 Assist Wicklow's tourism providers and rural communities to benefit from social media as an effective marketing tool to attract visitors

Enterprise Development

- 2.1 Support and expand LEADER-type micro / SME and social enterprises in Wicklow providing capital, marketing, and Analysis and Development support where needed as a stimulus to creating an entrepreneurial environment linked to job creation and service provision in the County
- 2.2 Support and facilitate the development of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises and social entrepreneurs in Wicklow as key contributors to local employment creation and the provision of much needed services and products
- 2.3 Strengthen the capacity of start-up and existing LEADER type businesses in Wicklow

Rural Towns

- 3.1 Deliver a community buildings and social capital regeneration programme in specific towns in Wicklow to improve the social aspects of these areas
- 3.2 Facilitate community planning through the development of four integrated town plans enhancement / renewal plans
- 3.3 Wicklow's town enhancement / renewal / capital programme

Theme 2: Social inclusion

Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities

- 4.1 Targeted animation / capacity building and capital programme to support “hard-to-reach” communities in rural villages / areas as an initiative to improve balanced regional development across the county
- 4.2 Support facilities / hubs / projects that enable engagement / participation among individuals experiencing social and geographic exclusion

Rural Youth

- 5.1 Provision of bespoke, flexible and creative pathways to learning for young people enabling them to progress both socially and economically in line with their own specific needs and interests and to reach their full potential
- 5.2 Develop and deliver a youth re-engagement programme in West Wicklow
- 5.3 Support provision of social infrastructure for young people in specific areas where the need is greatest

Theme 3: Rural Environment

Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources

- 6.1 Support communities and individuals to investigate and develop solutions and contribute to the conservation of our valuable local water resources

Protection of Local Biodiversity

- 7.1 Improve local biodiversity awareness and protection among communities in Wicklow
- 7.2 Improve recreational access to areas of high nature value, ensuring protection of local biodiversity

Development of Renewable Energy

- 8.1 Strengthen the development and quality of Wicklow’s renewable energy businesses

Interested parties are also welcome to contact CWP directly and meet with one of our Rural Development Officers to discuss their project and establish its eligibility & suitability under the programme and Wicklow’s Local Development Strategy.

Section 3: Applicants and the Application Process

Who can benefit from LEADER funding?

- **Individuals** or a group of promoters who have a viable rural enterprise idea
- **Rural Businesses** looking to expand or diversify, or start a brand new business
- **Farm Families** looking to diversify into non-agricultural activities to supplement their farm income
- **Community Groups** promoting community enterprises, local amenity projects or community services
- **Voluntary Organisations** or special interest groups promoting social, cultural or environmental projects
- **Partnerships** promoting projects in collaboration with other organisations, including other Local Action Groups

Rolling and Targeted Approach

This LEADER programme will receive project applications in two different ways.

1.Rolling

Firstly, projects are welcome to apply in an open, scheduled set of rolling deadline dates. These will be published and updated regularly on the County Wicklow Partnership website and social media.

2.Targeted

Secondly, targeted calls will be completed annually on themed areas. The purpose of the targeted calls for applications is to ensure that LEADER funding is targeted where it delivers the most value, is awarded based on a comparative, competitive assessment, secures fair and equal opportunities for all potential applicants and ensures that funding is available for the duration of the Programme.

The LCDC will advise CWP on what targeted call should be advertised annually. Targeted, periodic calls will be widely publicised, including on the CWP website and social media accounts, at information meetings and in the local media. Calls will have a deadline for submission of Expressions of Interests and each eligible application will be assessed together in a competitive way via the Evaluation and Approval process of the programme.

Two Stage Application Process:

Applicants must complete a two stage application process:

1. **Expression of Interest:** Applicants must complete an expression of interest form to help determine if their proposal meets the objectives of the Wicklow Local Development Strategy and complies with the overall programme guidelines. This is available on the CWP website.
2. **Application:** EOIs that are deemed eligible at Stage 1 will be invited to submit a full application

Those invited to make an application will be invited to attend a pre-application seminar or to meet with a Rural Development Officer to outline the documents required and process to be followed to complete an application.

(See Appendix I for a full check list of documents required for Application Stage)

Evaluation and Approval Process

Applications will be noted by the Board of CWP before then being evaluated by an Independent Evaluation Committee against a set scoring criteria (see Appendix II), with a recommendation being forwarded to the Wicklow LCDC. Promoters will be informed in writing of the decision of the LCDC. A letter of offer is subject to a complete application and all necessary information and documentation being supplied.

Incomplete applications will not be progressed by CWP as a paperwork check is carried out on project applications at two stages prior to '**Letter of Offer**' being issued by Pobal and they will not permit approval in the absence of required information.

Project works may only commence **after** the project has been approved by Wicklow LCDC, and the promoter has signed and returned the Terms & Conditions to CWP. If works commence prior to the date of formal acceptance of grant aid by the promoter, the project (or clearly identified phase of project) will then be deemed ineligible and the offer of grant aid will be null and void.

Project Eligibility

It should be noted that applications can only be considered for enterprises and activities that will not cause displacement elsewhere. For this reason, many conventional business sectors and activities are precluded from receiving LEADER funding.

In general terms the following activities are eligible for funding:

- a) construction, acquisition or improvement of immovable property; *(evidence of title / leasehold required for this activity, see Section 5)*
- b) purchase of new machinery and equipment up to the market value of the asset; *(second hand equipment is eligible under certain conditions, see section 5)*
- 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, including feasibility studies. Professional costs, such as the fees of architects, archaeologists, engineers and consultants, shall be eligible for funding up to a ceiling of 12% of the capital costs of such projects. *(Note: Professional fees associated with a capital project e.g. an architect preparing plans for planning permission, are not eligible as a standalone project.)*
- d) intangible investments such as the acquisition or development of specialised computer software and acquisitions of patents, licenses, copyrights, trademarks.
- e) Training programmes that relate to the LEADER themes and that are not available elsewhere or as part of a mainstream educational programme

- f) Voluntary labour may be considered as an eligible cost in some circumstances for **community** and **farm diversification** projects only and are subject to a minimum cash contribution of 5% of the overall project (*see section 5*)
- g) The donation of buildings, equipment or services free of charge or at a nominal cost as part of the project may be considered as an eligible cost in some circumstances for **community groups** only and are subject to a minimum cash contribution of 5% of the overall project (*see section 5*)

N.B: Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and many factors must be considered when determining the eligibility of your proposal.

Fig 3.1 - The following activities are not eligible for LEADER funding under any circumstances:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Fisheries • Conventional retail operations, excluding community based shops and farm shops selling locally produced produce. • Courses of instruction or training which form the part of normal education programmes or systems at secondary or higher levels. • Loans • Working capital (including stock) • Insurance for project promoters • Horticultural (including bee-keeping) • Payments for gifts and donations or personal entertainments • Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning application fee • Reclaimable VAT • Improvements/refurbishment of private residential property • Projects that already have other EU funding either directly or through a national programme • Conventional motor vehicles, including cars, industrial/farm/construction vehicles, vans and buses • General maintenance works • Childcare • Health Care • Nursing homes • Housing • Race and sport horse industries • Legal expenses in respect of litigation
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LCDC Policies for funding under the LEADER Programme

In addition to the Local Development Strategy and the Operating Rules of the Programme, the LCDC have compiled a series of policies on what types of projects they will concentrate on supporting under the programme. Policies have been developed on project types including:

Festivals and Events	Outdoor Recreation
Training Facilities and Training Courses	Enterprise Funding
Social Enterprise	Capital Funding Towards Sporting Facilities
Ancillary sectors to the Race and Sport Horse Industries	Capital Funding Towards Community facilities
Voluntary Labour	Accommodation
Community Recreation Areas	Publications

The LCDC may publish new policies throughout the life time of this LEADER programme. Please contact a Rural Development Officer in CWP for the text of a policy that relates to your project.

Funding Limits & Rates of Grant Aid:

LEADER funding is not intended for large scale projects and a ceiling of €200,000 will apply in most cases. The LCDC may decide to lower grant aid ceilings in certain themes and subthemes which may mean that the average grant is likely to be lower than the maximum figure. In exceptional circumstances higher amounts can be awarded as per Fig 3.2 below. At each targeted call, a maximum grant aid amount will be advertised along with the theme or sector that is being targeted in that specific call.

In general, private projects carry a maximum grant rate of 50% for capital projects and 75% for analysis and development, subject to the ceilings below. Corresponding community based projects may receive up to 75% and 90% rates respectively. Training projects can receive up to 100% funding.

Fig 3.2 – Rates of Grant Aid

Type of Project	Applicant	Max. Rate of Aid	Max Funding
Capital	Private	Up to a maximum of 50%	€ 200,000 (in exceptional circumstances, a max of €500,000 can be applied for flagship community projects)
	Community	Up to a maximum of 75%	
	Community under basic services targeted at hard to reach communities sub-theme	Up to a maximum of 90%	
Analysis and Development	Private	Up to a maximum of 75%	€ 30,000
	Community	Up to a maximum of 90%	
Training	Private or Community	Up to a maximum of 100%	€ 200,000

Public Procurement: Quotations and Tenders

LEADER funding for projects involves the distribution of public money for the purposes of rural development. All LEADER funding is therefore subject to public procurement regulations. This means all community or private applicants (promoters) for LEADER funding must adhere fully to the procurement regulations for the purchase of any service, supplies (goods) or works for which LEADER funding is sought.

On application, every promoter must show evidence of the grant aid being sought by showing quotations or tenders that were requested by the promoter and submitted by suppliers for the purposes of the application.

A more detailed document on Public Procurement has been prepared and accompanies this document. Please also note that all projects must comply with National Procurement Guidelines & LEADER Procurement rules as outlined in an accompanying guidelines to this document.

Applicants are strongly encouraged by CWP to engage professional expertise to assist you through the Public Procurement process. For all works projects and Supplies/Services Contracts that are required to go through public procurement, applicants are required to have professional certification that procurement guidelines were followed at application stage.

Project Matching Funding

Generally, LEADER funding is a partial contribution to the cost of delivering a project and must be matched by non-programme funds to meet the full cost of the project. Applicants must provide evidence of the availability of matching funding at application stage. This can be through private matching funding from the applicants own resources / loan facility, or public matching funding from another (non EU) scheme or programme. A minimum of 5% of the total cost of the project must be met through *private matching funding*. (See Section 4 for full details on matching funding)

De Minimis

LEADER (along with most grant programmes) is subject to the EU 'De minimis' rule which stipulates that any one beneficiary must not exceed €200,000 grant aid from all grant giving agencies over a three-year period. 'De minimis' does not apply to non-commercial community projects. Applicants will be required to sign a De Minimis declaration form at application stage.

Additionality: 'Funding Sought/Available Elsewhere'

LEADER cannot fund projects/ elements of project that are eligible under other EU funded schemes under any circumstances. Similarly, LEADER cannot usually fund projects that are eligible under another national programme or scheme. In this instance applicants should apply under the relevant scheme. This is to ensure that all schemes are fully utilised and in the interest of securing real added value under LEADER. Co-funding with other exchequer schemes is possible in some situations for non-commercial community projects.

CWP maintains close liaison with other funding agencies and in the event that a project is ineligible under LEADER or is more appropriate for another agency or scheme, we will make every effort to put you in touch with the correct contact to help advance the project.

Applicants must have evidence at time of application that every promoter has sought funding from other relevant agencies. This can be in the form of emails and replies informing the promoter that no funding stream is open for the type of project being applied for. Applicants can enquire with CWP for contact details of people or organisations where this funding check should be carried out.

Tax Compliance: Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN)

Project approval or payment cannot be granted in the absence of a certification that the promoter is tax compliant. The Revenue Commissioners have introduced Electronic Tax Clearance from January 2016. Applicants who are tax compliant will be issued with a **Tax Clearance Access Number (TCAN)** by the Revenue Commissioners which they must provide at application stage.

Suppliers to LEADER projects must also prove they are tax compliant and supply a TCAN to the promoter at the time of payment to prove their tax compliance. See Section 6 for more details on grant draw down requirements.

VAT Registration

The default position for all applications is that applicant is registered for VAT. In such circumstances VAT is not an eligible cost and will not be included in the calculation of grant aid. In order for VAT to be eligible under the programme, beneficiaries must provide evidence from Revenue that the VAT paid is non-recoverable. Similarly, if a beneficiary is not registered for VAT, they must provide written confirmation from the Revenue Commissioners that they are not registered at application stage and for each payment in order to claim the VAT element as an eligible cost.

Project Durability: 'Funding Repayment Condition'

Beneficiaries will be advised at offer stage that all offers of grant aid are made on condition that funding will be repaid if –

- the beneficiary ceases or relocates the activity outside of Ireland within a period of five years of the date of the final grant payment; and/or
- any LEADER funded assets are sold, leased or substantially changed or modified within five years of the date of the final payment (without the Departments prior written approval)

Section 4: How to prepare your LEADER Application

Step 1: Contact a Rural Development Officer

CWP Rural Development Officers are here to help! Contact CWP with your idea or suggestion and they can advise whether your proposal is eligible under the LEADER programme. If it is not, they might be able to advise on other, more appropriate funding streams which you could avail of. They can meet with you to give you advice specific on your project and to explain the steps that you need to take in order to complete a LEADER application.

Step 2: Prepare a Business Plan or Development Plan

A Business Plan or Development Plan is required for all LEADER applications. The detail required in a Business or Development Plan will vary according to the scale of the funding being sought and the type of applicant you are. Assistance is available for applicants looking to create a Business or Development plan. In Appendix III we have some sample headings to get you started. We recommend that you conduct as much of the initial business planning as possible yourself.

Please send any early drafts of your business plan into your CWP Rural Development Officer so they can advise you and whether additional information should be included to ensure your project has the best opportunity of securing LEADER funding.

Local Enterprise Office

If you require further support, Wicklow Local Enterprise Office has a series of training courses and advice clinics that can assist you in your planning process. Visit the LEO website for an up to date listing of training events and advice clinics. www.localenterprise.ie/Wicklow/

LEADER Analysis & Development Funding

If your plan requires professional or technical input or consultancy, you might consider applying for an Analysis & Development grant for the completion of the plan. This might entail the hiring of a conservationist architect to advise on capital works on a listed building or to assist in designing equipment to make a product for an enterprise.

Step 3: Does your project require Planning Permission?

If the project involves any capital works, Planning Permission or a Section 5 Exemption from Planning Permission from Wicklow County Council needs to be submitted as part of the application.

Heritage Projects

This stage should also highlight whether your project has any 'Heritage' considerations as part of a capital works contract. Projects which are intending to carry out building, refurbishment or upgrade works on any building with a 'Heritage' value (e.g. National Monuments and Protected Structures) are required to go through an additional assessment stage, a 'Heritage Review'. Please contact a Rural Development Officer at this stage for further guidance.

Step 4: Identify what costs are going to be involved in delivering the Business Plan or Development Plan

As mentioned previously, LEADER funding is a contribution to costs an applicant will incur in developing a project. As part of the Business Plan or Development Plan process you should now know what level of investment you require for your Community Project or Enterprise.

Contact a CWP Rural Development Officer to receive information on which Public Procurement procedure you are required to follow. Procedures differ depending on the scale of investment being sought.

Step 5: Match Funding and Bridging Funding

If you are successful with your LEADER application, you will be required to cash flow the project until you can draw down the grant aid. You will be required to have access to finance to deliver a part of the project and will be required to show evidence of this at application stage. This might include a letter from a bank allowing for a bank loan or over draft facility, a letter from a social finance organisation detailing how they will support the delivery of your project or bank statements detailing how you have sufficient finance to deliver the project.

If you approached a traditional bank for lending and were refused, there are three Social Finance organisations in Ireland that provide finance to projects

Community	Community	Private Enterprise
		
www.clanncredo.ie	www.communityfinance.ie	www.microfinanceireland.ie

Step 6: Public Procurement, Quotations and Tenders

LEADER funding is a partial contribution to the cost of delivering a project and must be matched by non-programme funds to meet the full cost of the project. All applicants, at the time of their application to the LEADER programme must justify the cost they are seeking funding for, with evidence of pricing provided by prospective suppliers. This is to ensure value for money for both the applicant and the LEADER programme.

It is **the applicant's sole responsibility** to ensure that every stage of their procurement process is undertaken in full compliance with the public procurement regulations and LEADER Operating Rules. The applicant must be able to submit documentary evidence of all stages of the process. The consequences of failing to follow correct procurement procedures will deem any funding application and/or grant payments, including phased payments, invalid.

A separate Public Procurement Guidelines document has been prepared to inform you about the procedures involved in ensuring compliance with procuring works, supplies or services for your project.

Step 7: Collection of Supporting Documentation

As part of the LEADER application, you are required to provide CWP with supporting documentation from every applicant, for example, Accounts, Tax Clearance Access Number, Bank Statements, VAT number etc. **A full check list for all projects can be found in Appendix I.**

As these documents should be in date at the time of the application, this part of the process should be conducted as near the deadline date as possible. If you have any queries as to the validity of these documents prior to application, please contact your CWP Rural Development Officer.

Step 8: Complete the LEADER Application Form

The LEADER Application Form is the last piece of documentation to be completed. The Application Form is a summary of all the above information which you have to submit to CWP. Once all of this documentation has been gathered you can now complete the application form. Information provided on the Application Form should be typed but there are several sections require original signatures prior to submission.

Section 5: To be considered as part of your application

This section deals with requirements of the programme that may or may not relate to your specific project. A Rural Development Officer with CWP can advise whether you should consider some or all of the below requirements.

Property

Beneficiaries of the LEADER programme must provide evidence of title or leasehold in respect of capital projects involving land, e.g. sites of building construction or renovation, fixtures, traffic ways, etc. Any lease provided must

- be signed by the lessor and the promoter;
- be appropriately witnessed;
- be accompanied with a map identifying the land; and
- stipulate the term of the lease (must be for a period of at least five years from the date of the final payment to the promoter or for a term not less than the term of the contract, whichever is the longer)

Where the promoter cannot obtain a lease, legal documentation confirming the promoter's authority to carry out the relevant activities (for at least a five-year period after the date of final payment for the project), will suffice. The promoter must ensure that this documentation, witnessed by a solicitor, is signed by a person or body recognised as the person or body in charge of the property. The solicitor must verify that the person leasing the property is in charge of the property and must also witness this document. The asset covered by this document cannot be used as contribution-in-kind.

Any agreement for a period of less than five years from the date of final payment for the project will not be eligible for funding. CWP therefore advises promoters to seek a **7-year lease** at application stage to ensure optimum funding can be drawn down by the promoter.

Second Hand Equipment

Funding may be awarded for the purchase of second-hand-equipment in cases where –

- the seller provides a written declaration confirming the equipment's origin and that the equipment was not purchased with national or EU funds in the previous seven-year period; and
- the price of the equipment does not exceed its market value and is less than the cost of similar new equipment (provide evidence of quotes for similar new equipment); and
- the equipment meets the technical specification required for the project and meets applicable norms and standards.

Asset Register

Beneficiaries must put safeguards in place to ensure that LEADER funded equipment and furniture are not misappropriated. The promoter must maintain an asset register of all LEADER funded assets including serial numbers where relevant, and designate a location where assets will be available for inspection. The register must be provided to CWP at payment stage.

Heritage

Where projects have a heritage element or concern (e.g. National Monuments, Protected Structures and Nature Conservation Sites) an additional check needs to be carried out by the Department to ensure that no built or natural heritage will be destroyed or damaged as part of a LEADER funded project. This will require promoters engaging with specialist experts to certify the work being undertaken is of a suitable standard. In order to encourage promoters to work with their local heritage, CWP will accept on a rolling basis, Analysis and Development (A&D) applications for projects with a heritage element to ensure that the professional services required to adhere to these rules can be facilitated before capital applications are made.

Inclusion Strategy

Sporting organisations who wish to apply for funding to the LEADER programme, may make an application for grant aid to go towards costs in establishing multi-use facilities for the wider community. In order to ensure the facility can be accessed by the wider community, the applicant group must prepare an inclusion strategy at the time of application. This will be monitored by CWP for 5 years after the final drawdown of funding.

Section 6: Project Matching Funding

Sources of Matching Funding

Generally, LEADER funding is a contribution to the cost of delivering a project and should be matched by non-Programme funds to meet the full costs of a project. Matching funding can be sourced privately or from other public funds. In this regard

- Private matching funding is all funding that is not obtained from public sources
- Public matching funding is funding from all public sources other than EU funds

Promoters must provide evidence of the matching funds at project application stage where possible. A letter of grant offer will not be issued in the absence of verifiable proof of matching funding under any circumstances.

Private Matching Funding

Private matching funds include:

- Cash contribution to the project by the applicant – at least 5% of the total project cost must be met by a private matching cash contribution (wherever sourced by the applicant), other than for training projects that are funded at 100% and
- Benefits-in-kind – eligible for community-led projects only, with the exception of farm diversification projects where farmers labour may be accepted as a benefit in kind

Public Matching Funds

Public matching funds includes:

- Cash contributions from non-EU funded sources and
- Benefits-in-kind – eligible for community-led projects only.

LEADER may not co-fund with other EU funds. Accordingly, funding from other EU sources cannot be used to match-fund or co-fund LEADER projects. Matching funding from other public funded sources (e.g. Fáilte Ireland, local authorities, Waterways Ireland, etc.) is permitted providing it does not derive from an EU fund. Applicants should ensure that their proposed matching funds have not come from other EU funds and provide evidence of this at application stage. This additional public funding must be included when calculating the amount of State aid provided to the applicant, whether or not they are covered under the de minimis rule.

Public matching funding is allowed subject to the following:

- Only applications submitted by community bodies are eligible
- The overall level of public funding does not exceed 95% of the total eligible project cost
- There must be a minimum cash contribution (i.e. private matching funding element) of at least 5% of total eligible project costs
- The public bodies providing the matching funds must not be the project applicant or beneficiary.

Donation of Land or Real Estate *(Community-Led Projects Only)*

Regarding lease agreements and the donation of land or real estate, the applicant may make a nominal cash payment of no more than €1 per annum to effect such leases. The value of the 'donated lease' must be certified by an independent qualified expert prior to the approval of the project by the LAG.

The value of the donations used in previous projects may not be used again. Where the value of the term of a donated lease has been used for a previous project, the term donated to the previous project must expire before the remaining term of the lease can be donated to any new project. The value of the donation may not exceed the limit applying to the funding of land purchases (10% of all other eligible expenditure). To be eligible, the land must have been donated no earlier than two years prior to the date of the funding application.

Voluntary Labour

Contributions- in- kind can be provided in the form of voluntary labour (i.e. unpaid work) which must be based on the verified time spent and the rate of remuneration for equivalent work. The applicant must ensure that the rate applied is properly justified in the application. The maximum rate allowed is €14 per hour.

Important Note: Project administration and management costs are not eligible as voluntary labour.

A voluntary labour schedule must accompany the funding application. This schedule should detail:

- the persons contributing the voluntary labour and their relationship to the applicant
- the nature, time, quantity and cost of the contribution
- the qualifications that enable them to make that contribution, i.e. their trade or profession (e.g. engineer, architect, electrician, plumber, etc.)

The voluntary labour schedule will be assessed as part of the project assessment and only activity approved by the LAG will be eligible as project expenditure.

Voluntary Labour is only eligible as part of community or farm diversification type projects.

Section 7: Drawdown of LEADER funding

In order to successfully drawdown the grant aid, all promoters must be compliant with the conditions set out in the formal **Letter of Offer** and **Terms & Conditions**. Please note that there will be a site visit from a CWP Rural Development Officer prior to application for grant drawn in order to verify project completion.

Payment

Once a project is completed, a promoter may then notify CWP that they are ready to draw down grant assistance that was committed. Grant payments may be made only on satisfactory completion of the project (*in exceptional circumstances, a phased payment may be made when the project has incurred minimum 20% of the total costs*), and on submission of original paid invoices, receipts etc. as per the Letter of Offer and Terms and Conditions issued by CWP.

(See Appendix I for a check list of documentation required for draw down of funding)

Types of Payment Allowable

Project promoters are required to pay suppliers with electronic payments. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) of all payments from promoters in respect of expenditure under a LEADER project is required as it is traceable, reliable and preferred by auditors and inspectors of the LEADER programme.

At payment stage, a bank statement along with a print out of the EFT payment confirmation for each payment will need to be submitted along with the other relevant documentation (see Appendix 1 – Checklist Drawdown Stage). Bank drafts will also be accepted as a form of payment to suppliers. A copy of the bank draft will be required at payment stage.

This is to ensure a complete, verifiable audit trail for each payment being claimed under the programme.

***No payments to suppliers paid by cash, credit card or cheques can be considered at claim stage for payment.**

Invoices

Invoices that are to be considered at claim stage **must** have the project promoters **unique project reference number, preceded by the word 'LEADER'** in the order number section of every electronic invoice. Where electronic invoices cannot be provided, this payment description must be written on the invoice and signed by the supplier or provider before submission to CWP for claiming. This project number should follow the following format: 34LDRWKP followed by a unique 6-digit code.

Reports

Where relevant, a report from professional services contracted with LEADER funding may be required as evidence of a completed project at draw down stage. For capital projects, promoters are required to provide an independent report from an architect/engineer to state that the works completed are in compliance with public procurement, relevant planning, building and fire regulations, and other statutory regulations (including heritage regulations). These reports must be signed by the person who completed them.

Information and Publicity

Promoters must acknowledge receipt of funding under the LEADER programme on publicity and on signage at the location of the project. Evidence of this will be needed before payment of grant assistance can be processed.

The following logos must be included on all posters, plaques, websites and publications. Wicklow LCDC logo; Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Partnership logo; EU emblem; LEADER logo; and “The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas” logo. These logos will be supplied to you by CWP. Promoters may apply for the cost of this signage as part of their LEADER Application.

You may submit draft publicity to CWP for review before proceeding with printing to ensure compliance with the publicity requirements of the programme.

Sign Off & Certification

If a project includes works, sign off is required at each payment drawdown by a certified professional stating that the works undertaken are compliant with Planning, Building and Fire Regulations, Heritage Regulations and Public Procurement. They must also certify the value of the works completed are reflected in the invoices being claimed.

Insurance

All grant beneficiaries will be required to hold appropriate insurance cover, including public liability and other insurances as required for their enterprise / activity / facility, and must furnish CWP with proof of same.

Insurances must be held for the duration of any building work e.g. public liability insurance for contractors and sub-contractors used by the promoter and ongoing after completion of the project, the promoter must show it is adequately insured. As part of the Public Procurement process, the promoter will require any contractor to provide their insurances certificates at each payment stage of the process.

Professional sign off of capital works is required to certify that the works are completed in line with planning and building regulations. This person will be required to submit their professional indemnity insurance as part of their certification of works completed.

Further to this, promoters must indemnify CWP. Wicklow LCDC, the Minister of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs on the insurance of the promoter and continue this cover during the 5-year period after the last payment has been received by the promoter.

Contact a Rural Development Officer in CWP for suggested wording for inclusion in your insurance.

Section 8 – Additional Information

Contact Details

Address:

County Wicklow Partnership
3rd Floor Avoca River House,
Bridgewater Centre,
Arklow,
Co. Wicklow

Tel: 0402 20955

Email: info@wicklowpartnership.ie

LEADER Programme Staff:

Alison Keogh	Rural Development Officer	akeogh@wicklowpartnership.ie
Conor Doolan	Rural Development Officer	cdoolan@wicklowpartnership.ie
Siobhán Mehigan	Rural Development Officer	smehigan@wicklowpartnership.ie
Denise Healy	Administrator & Claims	dhealy@wicklowpartnership.ie
Karen Windsor	Administrator & Claims	kwindsor@wicklowpartnership.ie
Gillian Murphy	LEADER Secretary	info@wicklowpartnership.ie

Privacy Policy

CWP is committed to delivering the LEADER Programme in a manner that both delivers for the applicants to the programme as well as the county at large.

Data Protection

CWP respects your right to privacy in relation to your interactions with the organisation. Any information which you volunteer will be treated with the highest standard of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003.

However, CWP are obliged to contact other organisations to conduct funding checks (for example Local Enterprise Offices, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland) or acquire sectoral specific advice on a project application (for example, Teagasc, Heritage Council) and we require applicants to the LEADER programme to sign a Data Protection Consent Form to allow CWP share limited information to conduct these checks.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 (FOI) as amended by the Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003 obliged government departments, the Health Service Executive (HSE), local

authorities and a range of other public bodies to publish information on their activities and to make the information they held, including personal information, available to citizens.

On 14 October 2014, the Freedom of Information Act 2014 came into effect and repealed the 1997 and 2003 Acts. The new Act introduced a number of changes to the Freedom of Information scheme and widened the range of bodies to which the FOI legislation applies to all public bodies, unless specifically exempt. It also allows for the Government to prescribe (or designate) other bodies receiving significant public funds, so that the FOI legislation applies to them also.

(Source: Citizens Information)

The LEADER programme, being delivered by CWP in conjunction with Wicklow LCDC & Wicklow County Council is subject to Freedom of Information.

Individuals or groups who have made an application to the Wicklow LEADER Programme are therefore eligible to access information held by CWP on applicants or obtain reasons for decisions affecting applicants.

Appendix I – Application and Drawdown Check lists

LEADER Application Stage - Document Check list

Basic Application requirements

1.	Completed Application Form , signed and dated by Applicant Signed declarations for compliance, data protection, De Minimis and procurement
2	Business/Development Plan signed and dated by the Applicant Cash Flow & Financial Projections as part of plans– to be signed and dated by the applicant
3	Evidence of costs – Quotations or Public Procurement (See supporting document)
4	Evidence of funding check with other agencies
5	Proof of Tax Compliance (Tax Clearance Access Number - TCAN)
6	Evidence of Promoter Legal Status
7	Copy of full signed Audited Accounts/Financial Statements/Management Accounts for 3 years. For accounts less than nine months old, management accounts are required, signed by the Applicant.
8	Copy of Current Bank Statements (3 months Minimum) for all accounts held.
9	Confirmation of Source of Match funding and confirmation that Match Funding and Bridging Finance is in place.
10	VAT Exemption Letter from Revenue or VAT number
11	Planning Permission & Conditions or Notice of Exemption from Planning

Additional application requirements depending on the project:

1. Terms of Reference for project (For A&D, Animation or Training Projects)
2. Certification that public procurement procedures were followed for all works contracts and supplies/services contracts over thresholds
3. Evidence of title or acceptable leasehold. Include Associated Map.
4. Fair Usage Policy/Inclusion Strategy /Equality of Opportunities Policy
5. Heritage Consents and Approvals
6. Other Statutory Approvals (e.g. compliance to Fáilte Ireland standards for tourism projects)
7. Certified Valuation of land/property donated and /or agreed Voluntary Labour schedule, if relevant

LEADER Drawdown Stage - Document Check list

Basic Drawdown requirements

1	Completed promoter claim form (available from CWP)
2	Original Detailed Invoices*
3	Original Receipts – signed by supplier
4	Bank statements
5	TCAN for Project promoter AND ALL Suppliers
6	Insurance with indemnification (see Section 6 for more detail)
7	Mandatory Publicity

Additional application requirements dependent on project/promoter

1. Up to date letter from Revenue confirming the promoter is not registered for VAT
2. Asset Register – Signed & with level of detail set out in Terms & Conditions
3. Sign Off Report for capital works from an independent person certifying compliance with legal regulations (including planning, building and fire regulations and public procurement)
4. Copy of feasibility report/Study/Plan (with relevant logos)
5. Voluntary Labour Certificates (with relevant sign off from qualified independent person)
6. Any other compliance requirements or special conditions outlined in the Letter of Offer i.e. Heritage conservation conditions

Additional requirements for drawdown of funding for training projects

1. Final signed report from trainer
2. Original copies of all evaluation forms filled out by participants
3. Original attendance sheets filled in by participants for each training session
4. Photographs of the training in progress

***All invoices must include the promoters unique project reference number (34LDRWKP104XXX), preceded by the word LEADER in the order number section of the invoice**

Appendix II – Project Evaluation Scoring Sheet for all projects

Date		Time	
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Project Title		Project Reference Number	
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Assessment Criteria	Objective	Issues Raised by Evaluation Committee	Weighting	Score
Compatibility with Local Development strategy	Do the project proposals meet the criteria set out in the LAG business plan for the relevant measure?		20	
Innovation	Is the project Innovative in its nature and does it displace existing enterprises?		15	
Promoter Experience	Does the promoter have the training/skills, track record or experience to deliver?		10	
Impact of project	What will the impact of this project be? Consider increased employment, increased economic activity, increase in services or facilities for communities, environment & climate change impacts or any other relevant potential impacts of the project.		20	
Financial Viability	Are the project costs justifiable (reasonableness of costs) and is adequate funding available to match-fund the project?		15	
Sustainability	Is the project viable and will the service continue to be delivered?		10	
Requirement	Does the proposal target a specific need or address a specific gap in the market?		10	
Total			100%	

N.B Projects must receive a minimum score of 65% prior to being recommended for approval

Recommendations of the Evaluation Committee: _____

Signature of Evaluation Committee Member

Date

Appendix III – Business Plan & Development Plan suggested headings

Sample Business Plan Headings
Promoter background and skills - education and all relevant experience
Project rationale / background – what need is this project addressing / what problem does it solve? In what context is the project being developed? What research have you done e.g. statistics, market research
Project details – site / location, full description of business proposal, business model, proposed works, drawings etc.
Details of product/s - e.g. break down of products if relevant. If you have a number of product offerings, you must address displacement and market / marketing in relation to all
Innovative aspects of project (USP)
Consider questions asked in Scoring Sheet
Target Market – geographic / age / sector etc.
Evidence of market
Estimated market share and evidence of same
Competitor analysis – will this project result in the displacement of other businesses? NB it is up to the promoter to demonstrate a strong case in this regard.
Marketing strategy - how will the product / service be publicised? IT Skills of promoter? Online & Social Media Marketing? Linking to third party marketing organisations?
Employment potential (Creating new jobs or sustaining existing jobs)
Project considerations - e.g. permissions, Fáilte Ireland standards etc.
Expected impact of project on business and local area
Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • years projected financial statements including assumptions (cash flow, P&L, Balance Sheet) NB these must relate back to info in business plan • Finance structure e.g. grant sought, own resources, loans (matching and bridging finance)

This is not an exhaustive list. All plans should be unique and highlight the reasons why the application should receive LEADER funding

Sample Development Plan Headings

Background of the Group

- Background of the Group
- Current Officers and Committee Members (include contact details)
- Detail governance efforts (legal structure, submission of accounts, membership of PPN and Governance Code etc.)

Brief outline of past and ongoing projects undertaken by group

Project Outline

- Summary of proposed project proposal and location
- Details of local consultation undertaken
- Needs Analysis of local need and rational for project (include statistics) – Are there similar facilities in the area? How is this project innovative?
- How many user's/community members will engage with the project?

Management

- Future usage and corresponding management plan for development if applicable
- Costing structure for usage

Finance of project

- Short piece outlining the procurement of the project and how the match funding will be found

Finance of group

- Current Financial Status of Group include accounts
- Details of Funding for proposed project
- Outline of tender process noting in particular how any conflict of interest is handled
- Financial Projections
- Financial projections may be required depending on the nature of the project – check with CWP staff.

Additional items

- Permissions, Heritage considerations etc.
- Expected anticipated or hoped for impact of project on community & region
- Promotion of project – how will the group engage with the community and attract users to the project

We acknowledge that all Community Groups are different so please feel free to amend the headings and add any additional information where relevant.