



County Wicklow Partnership



LEADER

2014 – 2020

Guide to the LEADER Programme in Wicklow



An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta,
Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta
Department of Arts, Heritage,
Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Introduction

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.

LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020

Wicklow has been allocated a project budget in excess of €4.7 million for the period of 2014 – 2020.

All projects supported must be in line with Wicklow's Local Development Strategy and the operating rules of the LEADER programme.

Themes & Subthemes

The following programme themes and subthemes will be targeted under the programme. These are taken from the national themes and subthemes of the LEADER programme 2014 – 2020.

Theme 1 – Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

- Rural Tourism
- Enterprise Development
- Rural Towns

Theme 2 – Social Inclusion

- Basic Services Targeted at “Hard-to-Reach” Communities
- Rural Youth

Theme 3 – Rural Environment

- Protection & Sustainable Use of Water Resources
- Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity
- Development of Renewable Energy

Significant changes for LEADER in Wicklow 2014 -2020

The new LEADER programme 2014 – 2020 is quite different from previous LEADER programmes.

The main changes are:

- **Organisational Changes**

Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is now the contract holder 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.

For any queries regarding projects under the programme, contact CWP.

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.

- **A More Targeted Approach**

The new LEADER Programme will be much more targeted than in previous programmes. In this regard projects will be assessed closely against the strategic actions of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) as well as national LEADER guidelines. Additional criteria may also be put in place at local level when assessing projects to ensure funding is allocated where it is needed most e.g. areas / project promoters that have not accessed LEADER funding previously may be prioritised.

- **Time Specific / Targeted Calls – a more competitive process**

A more competitive process is now being used to assess project applications. The majority of Wicklow's project budget will be allocated using Time Specific / Targeted calls. This means that a public call will be made for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) under specified themes and subthemes of the programme within a defined timeframe. Time specific / targeted calls will be widely publicised in local press and on CWPs website.

The purpose of time specific calls is to:

- Target funding where it delivers most value
- Award funding based on a comparative assessment
- Secure equal opportunities for all potential applicants
- Ensure funding is available for the duration of the programme



Wicklow's Local Development Strategy (LDS) – Priority Actions

In October / November 2015, public consultation meetings were held in five locations across the County to get feedback on local requirements and potential actions under each of the themes and subthemes outlined above. 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.

The following actions have been identified as priority strategic actions in the Wicklow Local Development Strategy (LDS):

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



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

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

This local development strategy has been approved and endorsed by the LEADER partners (Wicklow LCDC, CWP and Wicklow County Council) and has also been approved by the Department.

Projects that fall under these strategic actions will be prioritised for funding under the programme.

Note sure where your project fits in?

Contact CWP for assistance in developing a project application or for advice on whether your project is eligible for funding under the programme.

Contact details are on the last page of this document.



Examples of Projects than can be supported under each LEADER Subtheme

**** Note that there are specific policies in place for this project area. Please contact CWP for further details**

Rural Tourism

- Feasibility studies to explore the tourism potential of an area / project
- Marketing initiatives (community groups/ cluster/ networks of tourism businesses only unless as part of a capital project
- Promotion of the area as a destination
- Creation of tourism hubs to facilitate a multi sectoral approach
- Arts based activities and events e.g. festivals and events **
- Accommodation in certain areas **
- Activity / adventure tourism

- Culture & heritage tourism
- Rural recreation**
- Eco-tourism
- Marine & water based tourism
- Agri-tourism

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

Enterprise Development

Supports are available for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's).

Please note that Wicklow Local Enterprise Office (LEO) has primary responsibility for micro-enterprise and there is a project referral process in place between County Wicklow Partnership and Wicklow LEO.

- Agricultural diversification (e.g. farm shops)
- Artisan and other food & beverage businesses
- Renewable energy
- Marine diversification (e.g. fish smoking)
- Creative industry
- Social enterprises**

Rural Towns

- Streetscape enhancement
- Tidy Towns
- Community buildings providing multifunctional infrastructure Development of recreation spaces
- Development of markets
- Festivals, Unique social events and activities **



Basic services for Hard-To-Reach Communities

This subtheme focuses on improving access to basic services for people living in rural and remote areas and groups who are at risk of social exclusion. Types of activities include;

- Community activities / facilities**
- Education / training
- Social / cultural activities
- Recreation facilities

Examples of groups who may be at risk of social exclusion include but are not limited to;

- Those living in disadvantaged areas
- Those living in remote and less accessible areas
- Unemployed and underemployed people
- Fishermen or farmers on small holdings
- Women
- Children
- Lone parents
- People with a disability
- Older people
- People living alone
- NEETs (Young People who are Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- Migrants / New Communities
- Travellers
- Roma

Rural Youth

- The provision of youth clubs / cafes
- Improved access to Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
- Sports / recreation activities**
- Arts based projects
- Youth development programmes

Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources

- Raising general awareness on water conservation issues
- Development of local water conservation plans and feasibility studies
- Awareness / Training on the technical aspects of water recycling schemes
- Initiatives that conserve water e.g. community programmes for rain water harvesting

Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

- Actions that promote and protect local biodiversity
- Feasibility studies and action plans
- Upgrading parks and river walks
- Establishment of nature corridors
- Habitat creation / planting schemes for native species



Development of Renewable Energy

- Support the development of Renewable Energy enterprises
- Support community energy initiatives
- Actions that could reduce Wicklow's carbon footprint and create employment locally

Eligible Costs & Activities

- Construction and redevelopment work
- Purchase of new machinery and equipment
- Professional costs e.g. architect, engineer, archaeologist, consultant's fees (up to 12% of capital costs of projects)
- Group marketing schemes
- Feasibility study / Development plans / Analysis & Development
- Training programmes
- Voluntary Labour (community / farm diversification only) **
- Donations (community Only)
- Purchase of land (community only)

Ineligible Costs

- Mainstream Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Horticulture (including beekeeping)
- Conventional retail operations (except community / farm shops)
- Training which is part of normal education programmes
- Conventional motor vehicles including cars. Industrial/farm/construction vehicles, vans and buses
- General maintenance works of public bodies
- Childcare
- Healthcare
- Nursing homes
- Housing
- Race and sport horse industries
- Greyhound industry
- Loans / leasing
- Working capital (including stock)
- Insurance for project promoters
- Gifts / donations / fines / penalties
- Costs associated with meeting a legislative requirement
- Planning application fees
- Reclaimable VAT
- Improvements / refurbishment of a private residential property
- Projects that already have other EU finding either directly or through a national source

Note: any costs incurred prior to grant approval and contract are not eligible for funding.

For further information or clarification on queries relating to a specific project, please contact CWP

Email: leader@wicklowpartnership.ie
Phone: (0402) 20955

Grant rates and Ceilings

Summary of current Funding Ceilings and Support Rates			
Type of Project	Applicant	Maximum Rate of Aid	Maximum Funding
Investment and other supports (including animation undertaken as part of the implementation of a project)	Private	Up to a maximum of 50%	€200,000
	Community	Up to a maximum of 75%	(NB This may be capped or reduced)
	Community under Basic Services subtheme	Up to a maximum of 90%	Max of €500,000 available for projects with additional impact to the county
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 (NB This may be capped or reduced)

Note that funding of €1,250 is the minimum grant that can be allocated

Please also note that the above rates and ceilings are the **maximum** allowed. In some cases, these may be reduced for example where;

- The LAG (decision making body) places a cap on funding to maximise the number of projects supported
- Other grant schemes are available for similar projects o LEADER funding becomes limited

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can apply for LEADER Funding?

Individuals, businesses, social enterprises and community groups are all eligible to apply for LEADER funding.

To attract the 75% or higher rate of aid a **community group** must be;

- A non-profit distributing group; and
- Institutionally separate from the state; and
- Coming together, or has come together, to pursue a common cause or interest for the good of their community; and
- Autonomous and engaged in voluntary activity; and
- Promoting the interests of the wider community rather than the commercial interests of its members; and
- A group, or project whose membership does not consist of any secondary economic beneficiaries e.g. local business people coming together as a community body to apply for funding to being tourists into an area.

A **Social Enterprise** is defined by Forfas as an enterprise;

- That trades for social /societal purpose
- Where at least part of its income is earned from its trading activity
- Is separate from Government
- Where the surplus is primarily re-invested in the social objective

2. How do I apply for LEADER funding?

The application process now involves two steps which is a change from the process used in previous LEADER programmes.

Step 1	Step 2
<u>All</u> applicants must complete an Expression of Interest Form (EOI) for each project.	If your Expression of Interest form is deemed eligible in principle, you will then be given an application form and invited to submit your application for LEADER funding.

3. What is a Time Specific / Targeted Call?

The new LEADER programme 2014 – 2020 requires us to approve a minimum of 40% of project funding in time specific / targeted calls. This means that a public call will be made for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) under specified themes and subthemes of the programme within a defined timeframe. For example, tourism projects may be invited to submit an EOI by a specific deadline date. If these EOIs are eligible in principle, they will be invited to submit a full application within a specified timeframe and all applications will be assessed together. This is a competitive process. The purpose of this process is to ensure that funding is targeted where it delivers the most value and to ensure that all projects have an equal opportunity to apply for funding.

It is intended to primarily run time specific / targeted calls in Wicklow which means that there may not be funding available for your project until a call is announced under the subtheme your project falls into. Time specific / targeted calls will be widely publicised in local press, at information meetings and on CWPs website.

The targeted call is a two stage process;

Step 1 - Call for EOIs

A public call will be made for EOIs stating;

- The LEADER theme or themes being called
- The proposed overall budget for the call
- The maximum level of funding available to any individual project
- The closing date for receipt of EOIs

Step 2 – Application stage

- EOIs deemed eligible will be invited to submit a full application
- Applicants will be informed of the qualifying criteria and marking scheme to be used
- Applicants will be informed of the closing date for receipt of applications and the timeframe for assessing and notifying applicants of the results

4. What is a Rolling Call?

A rolling call means that we can assess projects on a continuous basis until the budget for that project activity is fully allocated i.e. funding is allocated on a first come first served basis. However, the majority of Wicklow's project budget will be allocated using time specific / targeted calls.

5. Can I still submit an Expression of Interest Form (EOI) even if there isn't a time specific / targeted call open for my project?

Yes. We also accept Expression of Interest forms (EOIs) on a continuous basis. This helps us to plan effectively for the future and respond to local needs. If you submit an EOI outside a time specific / targeted call your enquiry will be placed on a database and you will be informed of any calls as they arise.

6. What happens when I send in my Expression of Interest (EOI)?

Once we receive your Expression of Interest form we will send you a letter of acknowledgement. Your project idea will then be assessed for eligibility and you will be informed of the outcome. If your EOI is eligible you will be invited to make a full application for funding.

7. My EOI has been deemed eligible in principle what happens next?

A Development Officer from CWP will inform you of the documentation required to complete your application and the decision making criteria and processes. Initially this may be in the form of a training seminar however there will also be an opportunity to meet with a Development Officer to discuss your proposal and get guidance on the application process. A list of sample documentation required to complete an application is outlined further in this document.

8. Once my application is submitted what happens next?

Your Development Officer will assess your project against the LDS and programme operating rules and will prepare a project report. All projects are then fully assessed and scored by an independent Evaluation Committee before going to Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) for a final decision.

9. How long will it take to get a decision on my application?

It may take a number of months between the time that you are invited to make an application and a final decision is made. This is to allow project promoters sufficient time to prepare their application and collate the documentation required.

10.If my project is approved what happens?

If your project is approved you will be issued with a grant contract. Once this has been signed and returned to CWP you may commence work on your project or incur any expenditure. Your Development Officer and the administration team will continue to guide you through the process until your project is ready for payment.

11. If my project is refused what happens?

If your project is refused you will receive a letter outlining the reason/s for refusal. You can appeal this decision and information about the appeals process will be included in your refusal letter.



Sample List of Application Documentation required

Below is a sample list of documentation required and is not exhaustive. Additional items may be requested by your Development Officer. Not all items listed may apply to your project.

- **Memo & Articles / Constitution**
- **Certificate of Incorporation**
- **3 years Financial Statements/ Accounts**
- **Recent Bank statements**
- **3 years Projected financial statements (Cash flow, Profit & Loss, Balance Sheet)**
- **Evidence of matching funding required for the project (this may be own funds or a Loan)**
- **Evidence of bridging funding to complete project
(Grants are paid out on expenditure incurred you must have sufficient funding to make payments and then claim your grant)**
- **For capital projects evidence of property ownership / lease agreement / legal agreement.
N.B. this must be valid for a minimum of 5 years from final grant payment**
- **Grant of planning permission or exemption**
- **Additional permissions consents, e.g. Heritage Projects**
- **Evidence of compliance with statutory standards where applicable, e.g. Fáilte Ireland standards, Food Safety**
- **Evidence that other funding agencies have been consulted in relation to the application**
- **Quotations or evidence of procurement process followed
N.B. You will need to speak to your Development Officer about this in advance of seeking quotes or going to tender**

Business Plan and Development Plan Outline

Below is an outline of what your Business Plan or Development Plan should include. Additional items may be requested by your Development Officer.

- **Applicant details and background**
- **Promoter skills or skills present in the community group to complete the project**
- **Project background**
- **Project Proposal (business idea)**
- **Project Details (description of works and or services)**
- **Evidence of market and need e.g. market research conducted**
- **Competitor Analysis**
- **Project Costs**
- **Funding Structure (grant required, matching funding, bridging funding)**
- **Innovation (what is new and unique about this project?)**
- **Displacement (will this project have a negative impact on existing businesses?)**
- **Sustainability (financial and environmental)**



Contact Details

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Please Note: all information is correct at time of printing this guide but may be subject to change. This is a summary guide to the LEADER programme in Co. Wicklow and does not include every aspect of the programme guidelines. County Wicklow Partnership accepts no responsibility for errors or omissions.