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H12 DP86

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H12 DP86

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Cavan LAG – LEADER Programme for Cavan 2023-2027

Department of Agriculture consultation on the draft CAP Strategic Plan

Introduction:

Cavan Local Action Group, Cavan County Council and Cavan County Local Development successfully implemented the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme for county Cavan and currently deliver the Transitional LEADER Programme. The 2014-2020 programme was due to commence nationally in 2014 but as with previous LEADER Programmes there was a two year lead in time before programme commencement. Therefore, going forward this submission for clarity will refer to the 2014–2020 LEADER programme as the 2016-2020 LEADER programme. The National Budget was €250 million while the allocation for County Cavan over the course of the programme was €9,022,285.84 excluding successful applications made under the Cooperation Measure totalling €533,871.40 and the Food Measure totalling €228,428.92. Therefore, the total funding committed to Cavan under LEADER was €9,784,586.16.

The Department of Agriculture Food & Marine proposed budget allocation for LEADER 2023–2027 is €180 million with the EU contribution of €77.9million (43.29%) to be co funded by the Irish Exchequer with a further €102.1 million (56.71%). However, it must be noted that Member states can co-fund the LEADER budget up to 80% of the actual euro allocation that LEADER is allocated. If this was achieved, then the Irish Exchequer contribution would be increased to €311.60 million resulting in a total budget of €389.5 million for LEADER 2023 -2027. Please see the table below to illustrate this.

| | <u>Proposed Amount</u> | <u>Current Co-funding %</u> | <u>Potential @ 80% co-funding</u> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| EU contribution of 5% of Pillar II | €77.9m | 43.29% | €77.9 M (20%) |
| Irish Exchequer (<i>max 80%</i>) | €102.1m | 56.71% | €311.6 M (80%) |
| Total | €180.0m | 100% | €389.5 M (100%) |

Submission:

The implementing partners for LEADER in Cavan are seeking that the Department review their proposed allocation which would be a significant reduction over the programme period compared with the 2016-2020 programme and consider increasing the Irish Exchequer contribution to the full 80% allowable which would result in a significant investment in rural Ireland. (Please see below)

| |
|---|
| 2016-2020 LEADER Programme annual allocation €50 million (€250 million) |
| 2023-2027 Department of Agriculture Food & Marine proposed LEADER Programme annual allocation €36 million (€180 million) |
| 2023–2027 The Cavan LEADER Partners are proposing a National LEADER Programme annual allocation of €77.9 million (€389.5 million) and €9,784,586.16 minimum allocation for Cavan over the same period. |

To ensure a sustainable and viable allocation for county Cavan the implementing partners are further seeking that the funding allocation for Cavan would not fall below its total 2016 -2020 allocation of €9,784,586.16. The 2016 – 2020 funding for Cavan was allocated in full and the below sets out the case for sustaining this allocation as a minimum for the 2023 – 2027 programme period.

Environment:

While significant work has been undertaken to date to build capacity and awareness of the LEADER Environmental themes and the Government’s Climate agenda further and sustained engagement with businesses and communities is required to encourage innovative and high impact projects particularly given the rise in construction inflation, concerns around the pay back periods of renewable energy retrofits and hesitancy around the investment needed for effective biodiversity action. A sustainable and properly funded LEADER programme for county Cavan can have a significant role to play in achieving national environmental and climate objectives.

Under the 2016–2020 LEADER programme €871,948.57 was committed under the Environmental Theme, see Appendix 1. for further detail on how the LEADER programme is developing capacity within the county.

Hard to Reach Communities:

The LEADER programme prioritises the need to reach ‘Hard to Reach Communities’ therefore a designated animation budget is required to stimulate activity and build capacity among this cohort to generate viable projects and overcome the technical elements of the LEADER programme.

- Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Co. Cavan is Marginally below average - 3.91%
- According to the most recent CSO data on August 29, 2021 Estimated Number of Persons on the Live register or benefitting from Pandemic Unemployment Payment, Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme or Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme in county Cavan was 8,287 persons.
- The Impact of BREXIT and COVID on businesses and communities is only starting to be felt within the county. LEADER can be a significant resource to tackle the negative impacts of both.

Significant Investment Grant Programme:

Periodically there are a wide variety of community grants available from different funding streams however these tend to be smaller in nature (<€25,000 per project) compared with LEADER. LEADER is the primary programme that fills the space between those smaller community grant programmes and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). It must also be stated that the animation work that LEADER undertakes in communities helps to build the capacity of those communities to apply for funding from the other various funding streams that are available to them.

Under the theme of Enterprise one example points to the National Food Measure were €228,428.92 was successfully approved for a range of food projects across the county. The farm to fork food economy is very important in county Cavan and the LEADER programme is considered a viable funding platform for those enterprises.

Investment in Adequate Administration & Animation:

An adequate administration budget is required to sustain the corporate LEADER knowledge that exists within the implementing partner organisation. In Cavan this totals over 55 years of service spanning the various previous LEADER programmes and is critical to ensuring a high quality service is being delivered to businesses and communities across the county in preparing often very complex and highly administrative applications. Furthermore, the experienced front line staff delivering the LEADER programme in Cavan have often been a significant source of advice, guidance and learning for all stakeholders both at LAG and Departmental level.

Return in Investment:

An investment in capital projects in county Cavan under LEADER results in a financial return to the Irish Exchequer through direct and indirect taxation (VAT) and stimulates economic activity locally building new or enhancing existing infrastructure while sustaining and creating employment in a rural county.

Job Creation:

Job Creation under the LEADER 2016 -2020 and Transitional programme to date is as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Full-time Created/Sustained | 87 Male | 19 Female |
| Part-time Created/Sustained | 15 Male | 22 Female |
| Seasonal Created/Sustained | 2 Males | 1 Female |
| FTE | 95.35 Male | 28.9 Female |


An investment in the LEADER programme in Cavan is an investment in job creation therefore resulting in an annual payback to the Irish Exchequer through income taxation. Please note these figures only relate to completed Businesses or Social Enterprise Projects and do not include those jobs created to support the construction of community projects or projects that have yet to drawdown their final LEADER claim payment.

Conclusion:

The submission from the Implementing Partners of the LEADER programme in County Cavan are seeking that the proposed budget figure of €180 million for LEADER 2023 – 2027 is reconsidered and that the full exchequer contribution allowable up to 80% is applied which would yield a significant investment for rural Ireland of €389.5 million. The current proposal is a reduction from €50 million per year which was under LEADER 2016 – 2020 to €36 million per year under the proposed LEADER 2023 – 2027 programme. It must be reiterated that the previous LEADER programme was due to commence in 2014 but did not commence until 2016 despite being publicly titled as LEADER 2014 - 2020.

Finally, for county Cavan to have a viable and impactful LEADER programme and given the demand for the programme locally the minimum budget allocation of €9,784,586.16 is required to ensure that businesses and communities can overcome the future challenges brought about by Climate Change, BREXIT and COVID 19.

Yours sincerely,


Chairperson Cavan Local Action Group

Appendix 1 – Building Environmental Capacity:

Under the 2016 – 2020 LEADER and the Transitional LEADER programme a series of training initiatives have been implemented to assist with developing the capacity of the community to undertake environmental and climate action initiatives with LEADER and other public funds. These actions have borne fruit by developing a number of environmental projects which will act as examples of good practice for other communities to follow under future LEADER programmes.

A series of four separate LEADER funded training programmes throughout Cavan were delivered by Cavan County Local Development (the Implementing Partner) as an 'Introduction to biodiversity' in 2019. The main purpose of the training was to enable participants to apply learning to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in their local area. The programme attracted 84 participants who primarily were from the community and voluntary sector. There is a greater need to provide further support to the community to acquire skills, knowledge and capacity to undertake environmental projects which can be supported through LEADER. **These applicants will need considerable animation support, as they mostly are newly established groups without experience or track record in accessing LEADER or public funds.**

Separate to the above training programmes Cavan County Local Development have appointed a trainer/facilitator to deliver 3 Pilot LEADER funded 'Community based Climate Change Adaption' training programmes in County Cavan. To date 2 of these pilot programmes have been delivered successfully during the period of the current pandemic with 43 participants. The primary objective of this training is to provide basic knowledge that can enable participants to develop **climate change adaption, mitigation and community based solutions** that could be eligible for funding under LEADER programmes. These comprehensive training programmes have instigated citizen engagement and resulted in the formation of new volunteer led, Cavan Climate Action network. It is clear from these initiatives that further animation support will be required to assist these groups/individuals to develop the capacity to access LEADER support.

A significant Biodiversity Cooperation Training Programme has been approved by the Department for delivery in Cavan, West Limerick and South/West Cork with a budget of €805,722.36. The proposed Biodiversity Co-operation Project Wild Works is designed to deliver a co-ordinated approach to biodiversity conservation and promotion on an inter-territorial basis through the development of an innovative, scalable and sustainable approach. The inter territorial partnership is designed specifically to achieve a scale of action whilst benefitting from the combined experience to date of the project partners. This training focused Co-operation project will involve experiential (outdoor classroom) and immersive learning to enhance e-Learning. The Wild Works Project will be launched in January 2022.

To conclude a properly resourced LEADER programme for 2023 -2027 will continue to advocate the Sustainable Development Goals and will in turn work to promote and champion the Climate Action Plan 2021. In order to achieve this aim, budgetary resources are required to animate and deliver a Climate proofed LEADER programme in 2023 to 2027.