

## 2023-2027 LEADER Programme Stage 1 EOI - Selection Process Webinar Q & A

Updated - Selection Process Webinar Q & A 13/12/2022

No.	Question	Response
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### Joint and Separate EOI Submissions/ LDS areas/Funding

1	Can an LCDC position themselves with Partners and submit an EOI if they are aware LDC are submitting their own EOI?	<p>Yes. The department is not prescribing a delivery model for the next LEADER programme. It is open to all interested groups to submit an EOI by the deadline date of the 16th December 2022.</p> <p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li><li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li><li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li><li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li></ul>
2	If LDC only submits an EOI, or should LCDC and LDC submit EOIs, and LDC prove to be successful, what if any role is envisaged for the Local Authority with regard to LEADER?	<p>The department is not prescribing a proposed delivery model.</p> <p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li><li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li><li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li><li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li></ul>

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	<p>If a role is envisaged for the Local Authority, what is it, and where would risk liability lie and who would be responsible for paying back any grant paid in error, and what accountability would be on the Local Authority re audits?</p> <p>What funding would be made available to the Local Authorities, and would discussions be open for agreement to participate?</p>	<p>In a LAG where the Local Authority is not a partner it is not envisaged they would have a role in the direct delivery of the programme.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that all groups must clearly demonstrate consistency and complementarity with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies such as LECPs and national rural development schemes.</p> <p>The LAG regardless of structure will be required to take on the financial role and ensure there is good governance and capability in place to address this.</p> <p>The responsibility will rest with the LAG regardless of structure to ensure that only projects that satisfy the eligibility criteria are brought forward for approval of support under the programme.</p> <p>In instances where there is an issue with project the LAG will be required to pursue the matter with the promoter. If there is an issue with LAG expenditure they will be responsible for rectifying the matter.</p>
<b>3</b>	If a LDC seeks to apply to be the LAG without cooperation with the Local Authority, does the LDC take on all financial risk and oversight requirements?	See reply to Q2
<b>4</b>	Is there a possibility for multiple organisations that submit EOIs to come together post the EOI process, to move forward with a single LAG for a sub-regional area?	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>Ideally, the EOI process should show your intention and how you will meet the 4 key elements above. In exceptional circumstances DRCD will consider changes to the structure outlined in the EOI – such instances will be addressed on a case by case basis.</p>
5	For an organization that wants to express its interest in being a provider within the strategy of the LAG, is that a different expression of interest process?	This EOI process relates to the selection of the Local Action Group to administer and deliver the 2023-2027 LEADER programme. It does not relate to any other process.
6	Where an EOI is submitted for a part of a sub-regional area and one is also submitted for the full sub-regional area - will only one EOI be selected?	<p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>All EOs in a sub-regional area that meet the eligibility criteria at Stage 1 of the selection process will progress to Stage 2.</p>
7	Can a group/company submit more than one EOI - for example to deliver as an IP or an AP	This process is to seek expressions of interest from groups to form Local Action Groups only.
8	Where there is a competition situation in developing a LDS, surely it would be fairer that each applicant gets the same amount of funding for preparing their LDC?	All groups who qualify for Stage 1 of the EOI process will receive preparatory support to design an LDS for their area. Per Section 8 of the EOI application document, each group is asked to indicate the required level of funding in order to develop its LDS.

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		Allocations of preparatory support will take into account the scope of the LDS to be developed – not all LDS development processes will be the same.
<b>9</b>	To ensure fairness, where there is more than 1 applicants at Stage 2, surely they should each get same funding for preparing their LDS?	See reply to question 8
<b>10</b>	If an entity submits multiple Expressions of Interest for part, all, or multiple sub-regional areas, will that entity receive funding to deliver all LDSs, or will the Department decide that the entity can only progress with one LDS?	<p>All entities successful at Stage 1 and progressing to Stage 2 will be provided with funding to develop their LDS. Where an entity submits more than one EOI in respect of different sub-regional areas, if all are deemed eligible at Stage 1 and progress to Stage 2 the group will be funded for the development of each LDS.</p> <p>Stage 2 is a more detailed process with groups developing a strategy that will deliver the LEADER programme in their indicated area(s). Applicants whose strategies are selected following the Stage 2 process will receive funding to deliver that strategy in their indicated area(s).</p>
<b>11</b>	Can we get some clarity please on the following: where a sub-regional area has more than one EOI submitted, is it the case that all could be permitted to proceed to LDS development, and be adjudged then, or will elimination take place at EOI stage?	<p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>All interested groups who qualify at Stage 1 of the EOI selection process, will go forward to Stage 2 of the selection process to develop a LDS.</p> <p>Stage 2 is a more detailed process with groups developing a strategy that will deliver the LEADER programme in their indicated area(s). Applicants whose strategies are selected following the Stage 2 process will receive funding to deliver that strategy in their indicated area(s).</p>

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<b>12</b>	Please clarify if you are saying only one EOI will be selected to go ahead after this first selection process from an individual sub-region?	See reply to Q11
<b>13</b>	If more than one EOI is received for a sub-regional area will DRCD select one EOI only? It wouldn't appear to make sense to have two competing LDSs being developed at the same time.	See reply to Q11
<b>14</b>	My earlier question was responded to, stating that only one EOI will be approved, but in answering later questions development of more than one LDS has been alluded to. Clarity needs to be provided for prospective applicants.	See reply to Q 11
<b>15</b>	What governance roles for LCDC is envisaged if LDC are successful?	See reply to Q2
<b>16</b>	Do all sections listed in the membership of LAG list have to be represented on LAGs, or is there flexibility as long as there is a diverse membership that is representative of the area?	<p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>Local action groups should be representative of their local communities and involve all relevant local stakeholders. The decision making body of the LAG must be comprised of public and private interest groups and must be inclusive, particularly with regard to the participation of young people, women and less advantaged groups in the decision making process.</p>

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<b>17</b>	For local individuals/groups who would like to get involved in terms of contributing to achievement of LDSs that have been devised by LAGs: will expression of interest be requested for this at a later date? I.e. groups seeking funding for projects that align with local LDS.	<p>The Stage 1 of the EOI selection is now open and will conclude on Friday, 16th December, 2022.</p> <p>Once the Stage 2 selection process is complete, the new LAGs will be contracted to administer the LEADER programme in their area. Potential applicants can then apply to their local LAG for funding regarding potential projects.</p>
<b>18</b>	What is the role of a CLG? Are they a LAG or is a LAG only governmental bodies?	<p>The main elements of a LAG structure are contained in Article 33(2) of the Common Provisions Regulation 1060/2021. The LAG is comprised of representative public and private local socio-economic interest groups.</p> <p>Any group that can fulfil the requirements outlined in the EU Regulations, and the requirements set out in the Expression of Interest Guidance document provided, including a CLG, may participate in Stage 1 of the selection process to become a LAG.</p>
<b>19</b>	Will forestry be eligible under the next programme, given that it is referenced in the CSP Specific Objective?	Forestry is listed as an ineligible activity for LEADER support in the CAP Strategic Plan as agreed with the EU Commission.
<b>20</b>	Projects with an ECO element, will they be given priority I wonder?	<p>It will be a matter for the relevant groups to outline their priorities in their Local Development Strategy which will be developed in consultation with their communities.</p> <p>This is an overarching element; LDS will need to include actions that reflect local priorities, the need to ensure added value with reference existing interventions etc, and the overarching aims of CSP.</p>
<b>21</b>	Is deprivation linked to the CLAR regions?	No
<b>22</b>	Who are the members of the independent selection committee?	Application at Stage 1 will be assessed by a Board convened by the Department comprising of Department staff and representative from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

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		<p>Stage 2 is a more detailed process with groups developing strategies to deliver the LEADER programme in their indicated areas(s). The members of the independent selection committee for the selection of the LDS at Stage 2 will include representatives from various interested sectors such as tourism, enterprise, rural development etc. and will be confirmed at a later date.</p>
<b>23</b>	<p>Section 8 of EOI asks applicants to indicate level of funding sought and basis for calculation. Should the same criteria be applied as Department did when distributing the 180m - population density, deprivation index and min allocation?</p>	<p>As more than one EOI can be submitted in each sub-regional area and the proposed area to be covered by the LDS may not include the full sub-regional area the approach to the allocation of the funding needs to take account of this and in order to determine the level of funding required by a group the Department is asking groups to indicate their required funding.</p> <p>Allocations of preparatory support will take into account the scope of the LDS to be developed – not all LDS development processes will be the same.</p>
<b>24</b>	<p>Will applicants be advised if there is more than one successful applicant in stage 1?</p>	<p>Yes. All successful applications will be announced.</p>
<b>25</b>	<p>The quality of EOI could be very dependent of the level of funding provided by DRCD. Surely it would be better to provide a set amount of funding for preparatory support for each applicant?</p>	<p>See reply to Q23</p>
<b>26</b>	<p>If there is ultimately only one successful applicant for an area (be it a sub-region or part of) is this decided on the Stage 1 application, or is a final decision not made until after Stage 2?</p>	<p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul>

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		All applicants at Stage 1 who meet the qualifying criteria may proceed to Stage 2. Final decision on the selection of the LDS will be made at Stage 2.
27	Is there independent evaluation of the individual LEADER Groups which are mainly county based e.g. engagement with local groups; remote working seemed to be non- working?	<p>The LEADER programme will be delivered in line with the relevant EU Regulations and national Operating Rules. All LAGs contracted to deliver the programme will be required to comply with same.</p> <p>DRCD will be in ongoing contact with LAGs in relation to the efficient operation of the programme.</p>
28	Will the Department please send each LAG the exact detail and model that were used to decide on the budget allocation for each county and show the exact figures that these allocations were based on?	<p>The methodology to distribute the €180m to each sub-regional area uses the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum allocation to each sub-regional area of €3m,</li> <li>• Population density</li> <li>• Deprivation index</li> </ul> <p>A minimum allocation of €3m was provided to each sub-regional area. This allocation accounts for €84m of the overall allocation (€3m per county except County Cork, which receives €9m as it contains three sub-regional areas).</p> <p>The remaining allocation of €96m is distributed based on the population density of the county compared to the national average and an allocation based on the deprivation index for the county (excluding the five main city areas of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway). €48m is allocated based on each of these criteria.</p> <p>A measure of population density (county population divided by km<sup>2</sup>) was calculated for each county based on the Census Preliminary 2022 results. An 'average amount' based on 28 sub-regional areas was calculated (to take</p>



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	<p>account of the fact that County Cork will contain three sub-regional areas). Each county's population density was then compared to the average population density for the country. For those counties where the density was above or below average, the average amount was adjusted upwards (below average) or downwards (above average) based on the percentage deviation from the average to determine an allocation to each county. This adjustment was done on a banded basis and capped at +/- 40% to reduce the impact of extremes.</p> <p>The remaining fund was allocated to each county using a Resource Allocation Model (RAM). The calculations done using this model were weighted towards rural areas and considered areas with low and medium deprivation.</p> <p>This approach is similar to the approach taken in the previous LEADER programme, with the relevant population and deprivation figures updated to take account of the passage of time.</p> <p>The total core programme funding available for the 2021-2027 period was combined (€65m Transitional programme and €180m 2023-2027 Programme) and viewed comparatively with the core programme budget allocated under the 2014-2020 programme (€245m versus €220m).</p> <p>The following key factors were then taken into consideration when finalising the allocations in order to ensure fairness in the distribution of the funding across all areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• each county would receive a minimum increase of at least 3.5% on their previous core programme budget and</li><li>• no county would gain by more than 50% of their allocation under the 2014-2020 programme</li></ul>
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<b>29</b>	Will the details / names of those submitting EOIs that proceed to LDS stage be published for all to see?	Yes. These details will be published.
<b>30</b>	Given the reduced budgets, are there any plans to encourage the merger of current lot areas i.e. reduce the number of LAGs or indeed reduce the number of implementing bodies to ensure admin/animation budget is sufficient? Some of the current arrangements are clearly no longer sustainable.	There has been no reduction to the LEADER budget. €250m was allocated for the 2014-2020 programming period. €250m is available for the 2021-2027 period. This is comprised of €70m under the Transitional Programme for 2021 and 2022 and €180m for the years 2023-2027. LEADER Sub-regional areas are aligned to the county boundaries rather than Lot areas. The selection process will determine the number of successful LAGs that will administer the LEADER programme as this is an open process.
<b>31</b>	If the EOI is deemed not successful is there a timeline for the appeals process and negotiations on that appeals process?	There will be an appeals process at Stage 1. Unsuccessful applicants must submit an appeal within 21 days of the date of notification from the Department. The outcome of the appeal will be made known within 21 days following receipt of any such appeal.
<b>32</b>	Presumably "the best one" is the best LDS rather than the best EOI?	See reply to Q26
<b>33</b>	Why is there a question on EOI about the level of funding needed when the funding levels have already been announced?	A total of €2m has been allocated nationally in preparatory support for the development of local development strategies (LDSs). This amount is not included in the overall programme allocation €180m. Therefore, EOI applicants must identify an indicative amount of funding relating to the development of their LDS.
<b>34</b>	Can the Department please clarify the huge anomalies of funding per head of population between similar and neighbouring counties?	Allocations to the sub-regional areas are not made on a per head of population basis. See reply to Q28 for detailed information on the methodology for the distribution of the funding to each sub-regional area.
<b>35</b>	What is the indicative date for the appointment of the LAG(s)?	The first LAGs must be operational by the 31st August 2023. However LAGs can be appointed prior to this date if the LDS selection process is finalised in their sub-regional area.
<b>36</b>	Will the closing date for completed LDS be the 30th June, 2023?	Groups who meet the Stage 1 criteria will be invited to submit a completed LDS proposal within six months of the commencement of the Stage 2 process.

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37	When/what date do the department aim to allow the LAGS start to evaluate projects for the new 23-27 programme?	The first LAGs must be operational by the 31st August 2023, however, LAGs can be appointed prior to this date if the LDS selection process has concluded in their sub-regional area. Once the LAG is operational it can start to evaluate project applications.
38	Will the structure of the programme be similar to the last with themes and sub-themes? I note you are just referring to the themes as indicative themes at present. Does that mean they may be amended?	The themes/sub-themes are included in the CSP as agreed with the EU Commission and cannot be amended. However, it will not be mandatory to include all of these in the LDS. The themes and sub-themes included in the LDS must reflect the actions that emerge in consultation with the communities when it is being developed and must demonstrate how the LDS will contribute to identified local needs and priorities, the aims of the CSP and in particular to the Specific Objective outlined in Article 6(1)(h) EU Regulation 2021/2115 which is to <b><i>'to promote employment, growth, gender equality, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry.'</i></b>
39	What level of detail will be provided at the LDS development stage e.g. max % level of funding available for community groups etc. or is it expected to be similar to the current programme?	The new Operating Rules will set out the relevant details for the funding categories and rates of aid. Operating rules will be developed in consultation with stakeholders.
40	Is it envisaged that the level of funding will or can remain at 75% for business/commercial projects in the new ORs as it has been for the Transition/EURI programme?	See reply to Q39.
41	How many regions in Galway?	County Galway is one sub-regional area.
42	Is it expected that the Operating Rules will be similar to the current programme?	The Operating Rules will be developed over the coming months in consultation with relevant stakeholders and in line with the relevant EU regulatory requirements.

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<b>43</b>	When will the revised or "new" operating rules be available for the 23-27 programme?	The new Operating Rules will be in place before the commencement of the operation of the first LAG.
<b>44</b>	What will be the impact on carrying out Art 48 Audit checks (if any) under the new LEADER Programme?	The administrative checks will be carried out in line EU regulatory requirements.
<b>45</b>	Will the same payment method "simplified cost option" be applicable beyond the funding for the completion for the LDS as in the delivery of the programme /LDS?	<p>The Department intends to of introduce Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) for lower value projects in the next programme.</p> <p>The Department is also open to revisiting the introduction of SCOs in relation to the administration costs of the LAGs.</p>
<b>46</b>	Is there a plan to move the actual project application process electronic in the new programme by the Department?	The department is exploring the possibility of an on-line application process for potential beneficiaries.
<b>47</b>	DRCD mentioned that EU funding has 7 year cycles, the LEADER funding outlined only covers 5 years and how can the additional staffing for the 2 years working of the LEADER programme be funded?	The EUs budgetary cycle covers a seven-year period. The current period runs from 2021-2027 and covers all EU funds. A total of €250m is available for the seven-year period, €70m of which was allocated for the period 2021-2022 and €180m has been allocated for the period 2023-2027. This amount corresponds to the EUs budget period for 2014-2020.
<b>48</b>	Is there any plan to simplify the procurement process for smaller projects as has been previously recommended?	The next LEADER Programme will be delivered in line with the EU regulations and national procurement guidelines.
<b>49</b>	Is provisional approval likely to be reinstated?	This point will be addressed in the context of the development of the Operating Rules for the next programme.
<b>50</b>	Given the new open process, who will be carrying out Article 48 checks in the new programme?	The Department is currently reviewing the position with regard to the administrative Article 48 checks based on experience under the current programme, the aim of establishing a consistent approach across LAG areas, and the requirements of EU Regulations.

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51	Who will be responsible for Art.48 checks in the next programme?	See reply to Q50
52	Will the Closed Call mechanism still be an integral delivery method or will it be up to each LAG in how they choose to deliver?	Article 33(3) (c) of EU Regulation 1060/2021 states that one of the tasks to be carried out by local action groups (LAGs) shall be “ <i>preparing and publishing calls for proposals.</i> ” Further details will be contained in the new LEADER Operating Rules.
53	<p>Clarification on the following with regard to process:</p> <p>If an EOI is submitted for the same sub-regional area by both the LCDC (by positioning themselves with partners) and the LDC can both be deemed eligible and be selected as successful applicants and proceed to Stage 2?</p> <p>Would both the LCDC and LDC then receive funding to develop detailed Local Development Strategies and outline how they would deliver the new LEADER Programme in the same area?</p> <p>At this point on conclusion and submission of LDS would DRCD select the successful LAG which would be contracted to deliver the Programme for 2023-2027 – LDS will determine what LAG is chosen?</p> <p>Any future roles envisaged for Local Authority in process, particularly with regard to Article 48 Checks, and risk responsibility, governance area and audit</p>	<p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>All group(s) who are successful in Stage 1 may proceed to Stage 2 of the selection process. All those who meet the required standard will receive preparatory support funding to develop a local development strategy (LDS) for their chosen area.</p> <p>At Stage 2 which is the more detailed phase for the development of the LDS, the Independent Selection Committee, will be responsible for the selection of local development strategies (LDSs). The LDS selected at the conclusion of Stage 2 will determine the LAG chosen to deliver the 2023-2027 LEADER programme.</p> <p>See reply to Q2</p>

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	accountability – funding roles and admin payments if LCDC are not successful– information would be beneficial to inform LCDC members and assist with decision making.	
<b>54</b>	In terms of cross-cutting climate change mitigation and adaptation issues, will these be mandatory for all Social Inclusion and Enterprise projects to include these elements within makeup of their proposed projects?	Each project selected locally must align with Specific Objective 8 of the CAP Strategic Plan, show coherence with the local development strategy and comply with the general principles of EU law. Specific criteria for the selection of projects for funding will be outlined in the Operating Rules.
<b>55</b>	I request the DRCD's rationale, calculation matrices and the formulas used in the funding allocation process	See reply to Q28
<b>56</b>	<p>The following are some queries regarding the Expression of Interest process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are assessment criteria that will be used to assess the EOI? Can this be detailed in score weightings for each question?</li> <li>- Question 6; If assessment criteria are unavailable, can you please provide clarity on question 6. Where this refers to 'actions' are you referring to our operational actions to deliver the LDS or the actions contained in the LDS?</li> <li>- Question 7; As an assessed question, provision of scoring criteria is essential to enable a focused and meaningful response to 'additional information'. Please provide.</li> </ul>	<p>The guidance document provided on the Department's website outlines the assessment criteria and the scores associated with each element.</p> <p>In this section give a high level overview of the type of activities you aim to support to deliver the LEADER programme in your area.</p> <p>Maximum score of 20 marks with a minimum requirement of 5 marks. Each application will be assessed on its own merits. Additional information may include reference to relevant experience of the proposed group in the</p>

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		area of programme delivery, corporate governance, budget management, skillset of proposed personnel etc.
<b>57</b>	<p>I have a query regarding the Expression of Interest.</p> <p>We are a club. Are we the type of group that produces an expression of interest at this stage?</p>	<p>The Stage 1 Expression of Interest is open to all groups who wish to apply to administer the LEADER Programme in their area, subject to meeting the qualifying criteria.</p> <p>The department expect that the programme will be operational in Q3 of next year. Interested applicants should then contact their local action group (LAG) to discuss the eligibility of their proposed project.</p>
<b>58</b>	<p>I am reviewing the details in relation to the Expression of Interest for next LEADER Programme. One of the queries that has come into me relates to TUPE and the need to consider same by those who are putting in an EOI.</p> <p>I would appreciate your views in relation to this</p>	<p>It is assumed that this query refers to the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employees) which is an employment law matter.</p> <p>The department has no role in these matters.</p>

### Financial: Project and Administration Funding 2014-2022 & 2023/2027

<b>59</b>	Will any unspent admin funding from transitional period be allowed to carry forward to 2023?	This will be addressed as part of the closure of the current programme. Separate guidance will issue to all current LAGs.
<b>60</b>	Within the Lead Financial Partner contribution there is no recognition of the LAG manager and LAG user costs and staff time. In the preparation of the next Leader Programme and the delivery of same, with the	The division of the available administration budget will be a matter for each LAG to agree with their partners. The position will likely vary across each LAG area based on LAG composition and the role of each partner in the LAG.

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	<p>anticipation that the administration cap will also be 25%, we urge that the following are considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This provision must provide for a more equal share of the available administration budget for the local authority as the Lead Financial Partner.</li><li>• The ratio available to the implementing partner and Lead financial partner should not be left to each LAG to negotiate as this will impact on local relationships and working relationships established in the delivery of the last and transitional leader programme.</li><li>• The 25% administration budget must account for the full cost of staff associated with the delivery of Leader from all partners and the Department should set a benchmark attributed to each potential partner from the outset removing the requirement for local negotiation.</li><li>• In the absence of this benchmark then the department must assure the lead financial partner if they are to continue to administer Leader and assume the risks associated with same and also retain the A48 audit function that sufficient funding is in place to ensure that the Lead financial partner (or Local Authority) will not bear any financial costs associated with the delivery of this function.</li><li>• This confirmation or benchmark should be provided at Expression of Interest stage so that each potential partner for any future LAG are aware of the administration budget that they can expect to achieve to operate and participate in any potential LAG.</li></ul>	<p>The Department is currently reviewing the position with regard to the administrative Article 48 checks based on experience under the current programme, the aim of establishing a consistent approach across LAG areas, and the provisions of the EU Regulations.</p>
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<b>61</b>	In the case of a current LAG who is unsuccessful in tendering for the new programme, how are they to be resourced to pay out claims, and wind down existing projects, that are not complete as yet?	See reply to Q59
<b>62</b>	As the new Programme timeframe is from 2021 to 2027, will any unspent admin funding from transitional period be allowed to carry forward to 2023?	See reply to Q59
<b>63</b>	Apart from the preparatory fund for development of the LDS, will the LAGs be provided with Admin funding to cover the costs of claims, etc. until the new programme starts?	See reply to Q59
<b>64</b>	Is it expected that there will be a new transitional fund for 2023 until the new programme commences?	No, there will be no additional transitional programme funding.
<b>65</b>	For those counties who have transitional funding remaining, can it be rolled over into early 2023?	All project funding must be approved by 31 Dec 2022.
<b>66</b>	Can decommitted funding or unspent funding from the transitional and or EURI Programme be allocated during 2023, given that the new 2023-2027 Programme is unlikely to launch until Q4, 2023?	The question of decommitments will be addressed as part of the closure of the current programme. Separate guidance will issue in relation to this matter to current LAGs.
<b>67</b>	If there is no food or co-operation projects, with extra admin funding, then it can't be said that the level of funding is the same as previously, as it's clearly a significant cut.	The European budgetary cycle for EU funds operates on a seven-year cycle, i.e. from 2021 to 2027. €70m was made available for the period 2021-2022 and €180m is available for the period 2023-2027. The total amount of funding for this cycle is €250m. This corresponds to the available budget for period 2014-2020 which included funding for Food and Cooperation measures. Co-operation funding will be included in the overall LAG allocation.
<b>68</b>	Minister Humphries has stated that there is no cut to this budget compared to the previous programme and that there will be no redundancies. Given that there is no Food admin or Coop funding which was a significant	See response to Q67.  The Department has no role in staffing matters of the LAG.

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	source of admin funding, can the Department confirm that they will ensure that no LAG will have to lose staff because of budget cuts?	
<b>69</b>	So for example if a project from the Transitional programme decommits in early 2023, could that money be reallocated under the transitional programme in 2023 (before the start of the new programme)? Equally, if all money is not committed by Dec 31 2022, can that be committed in Jan/ Feb '22? May be one for the FAQ document, but early clarity would be very welcome.	<p>All project funding must be approved by 31 Dec 2022.</p> <p>The question of decommitals will be addressed as part of the closure of the current programme. Separate guidance will issue in relation to this matter to current LAGs.</p>
<b>70</b>	Are the costs of completing the Article 48 checks included in the allocations (as part of the admin percentage) per sub-regional area which have been announced, or will the costs of completing the article 48, if and as they might apply in 23-27, be in addition to the allocations announced?	See reply to Q50
<b>71</b>	Can EURI funding remaining be carried over into 2023?	See reply to Q65
<b>72</b>	Will the exchequer funding available for January be at the same level as this year per month, and what happens if it is not enough to cover admin expenses?	In April 2021, the department notified all LAGs of the maximum monthly contribution from the Exchequer, the limits of which were also notified to each LAG at that time. Administration funding will be made available again in 2023, in cases where it is required by LEADER group, subject to the maximum monthly contribution previously advised.
<b>73</b>	Will exchequer admin funding at the required monthly return continue until the start of the new programme?	See reply to Q72.

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<b>74</b>	<p>It is important for the general public to know that the current LEADER Programme is now effectively closed (given procurement timelines etc.). If there is unspent money from EURI and or Transitional Programme (including decommitments), can DRCD please advise if the December 31st 2022 timeline for allocating funding be extended - as was the case in the previous programme? If not, there is no LEADER funding available until late 2023.</p>	<p>See reply to Q69.</p>
<b>75</b>	<p>In reading the guidance document can you please clarify for me the following matter?</p> <p>The guidance document states that “Flexibility will also be provided to eligible groups that wish to submit multiple LDSs to cover parts of different sub-regional areas”. Do ‘different sub-regional areas’ apply to different counties or only to sub-regional areas within counties (such as Cork for example)?</p>	<p>In line with the Stage 1 Local Action Group Expression of Interest guidance document, eligible groups are permitted to submit multiple LDSs to cover parts of different sub-regional areas within different counties.</p> <p>However, any such group must submit a separate EOI and LDS for each sub-regional area in which they wish to operate.</p>
<b>76</b>	<p>In the guidance documentation it states that “where a debt exists under any previous LEADER programme, eligibility may be impacted where there is no agreed debt repayment resolution in place”.</p> <p>If an EOI is submitted by a number of groups in partnership, and one of these has such a debt, will this render the EOI ineligible for all the groups?</p>	<p>The group submitting the EOI may be impacted if one of the partners has a debt incurred under the current or previous LEADER programmes. In such circumstances, the relevant partner should contact the Department in relation to the matter.</p>

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<b>77</b>	<p>I refer to Circulars issued in relation to Administration and Animation Funding for LEADER Food and Cooperation Projects along with Q A LEADER Programme Administration Animation_Issue 1_280322 and Updated Transitional Programme Guidelines 090421 which give details in relation to the above.</p> <p>Can the Department clarify what the position is for Admin &amp; Animation in 2023 and if there is a budget line?</p>	See reply to Q72
<b>78</b>	<p>Article 48 checks – will the local authority still be carrying out these checks and if so will article 48 funding towards staff costs be continued into the new programme? The reason this is urgent at this stage is that we are entering into discussions with local development companies at present and they are asking about the 25% administration element of the budget. In the last programme some LAGs held on to a percentage of this funding for their staff costs however, at a later stage Article 48 funding was provided.</p>	See reply to Q50
<b>79</b>	<p>If independent LAGs are successful within a sub-regional area in addition to some LCDCs, is there a requirement for an independent LAG to feed into the LCDC structure and if so, how does this work?</p>	See reply to Q2
<b>80</b>	<p>A breakdown of individual LCDC allocations was promised at Webinar, can these be sent out, please</p>	<p>The county allocations are provided in Stage 1: Local Action Group Expression of Interest guidelines and published on the gov. ie website on the 27th of October last.</p>

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81	Want to seek clarity on timelines around decommitments and spending of budget. While the implementing partners will be aware of the decommitments, they are waiting for claims to be processed to de-commit the remaining monies. Therefore, we will be approving a number of projects in the December meeting subject to funding being released. Will December 31st release be the deadline or can this continue into January assuming all projects are approved in 2022?	See replies to Q66 and Q69
82	If a Council intends on submitting through its existing LCDC/LAG – who should be the lead applicant on the form?	<p>See replies to Q1 and Q2.</p> <p>It is a matter for the group in question to nominate who they wish to have as the lead applicant for the group.</p>
83	Can a Council through the Expression of Interest process indicate that if it is successful it will have a tender process for future implementing partners if existing LDC have indicated they will enter their own Expression of Interest separately.	The EOI must identify all of the partners that will form the new LAG.

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84	<p>In a situation where the LDC has indicated that it will be submitting its own EOI without involvement with the Local Authority is it permissible for the LCDC to submit an EOI nominating the LCDC as the LAG, the LA as the Financial Partner and another LDC or entity similar to a LDC as Implementing Partner or to contract a Rural Development team to animate and deliver the programme on the ground.</p>	<p>While the department is not prescribing a delivery model for the next LEADER programme, the options outlined would be considered eligible. It is open to all interested groups to submit an EOI by the deadline date of the 16th December 2022.</p> <p>The selection process will be open and transparent, applicants will be required to clearly demonstrate all of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of partnership in the formation of a LAG, public and private interest groups coming together to deliver the programme.</li> <li>• Clear strategic direction and coordination with existing EU, regional and national rural development policies</li> <li>• Clear connection to the community and the local animation process to underpin the LEADER model</li> <li>• Financial capacity to deliver the programme to high governance standards</li> </ul> <p>Further queries may continue to be submitted to the dedicated email address <a href="mailto:leader2327@dracd.gov.ie">leader2327@dracd.gov.ie</a> at any stage up to the closing date of 5.30pm on this Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December. As the closing date is this Friday any newly submitted questions will be responded to immediately and circulated by email to all stakeholders.</p>
85	<p>I am just wondering in relation to the new Leader programme 2023 – 2027 do we need to put in place a new LAG or can we continue with our existing committee obviously ensuring compliance in accordance with regulation 29 and 30 of Statutory Instrument No. 234 of 2014</p>	<p>In relation to the new LEADER programme 2023-2027 I can confirm that a new LAG must be in place and that it must operate separately to the LAG for the 2014-2022 programme. It could have similar membership once it meets the requirements set out for the 2023-2027 programme.</p> <p>At the below URL you will find a guidance document to assist in completing an EOI Stage 1 form for the 2023-2027 programme and you will also find a detailed Q and A document.</p>

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		<a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/service/87e09-leader-programme-for-rural-development/">https://www.gov.ie/en/service/87e09-leader-programme-for-rural-development/</a>
<b>86</b>	<p>There is a bit of confusion about what is being looked for in Section 6 of EOI.</p> <p>The webinar appeared to suggest that it was possible LDS Actions. Are you looking for possible suggested Actions which would be included in the LDS or is this broader than this?</p>	<p>Section 6 of the EOI is looking for a description of your proposed actions to implement the LEADER programme in your area. This may include possible actions that you would submit in an LDS if you were to successfully proceed to stage 2.</p> <p>Please note the maximum word count of 500 words for this section of the stage 1 EOI form. If you were to successfully proceed to stage 2 broader detail would be required.</p>
<b>87</b>	<p>Query who's signature(s) are required on the Expression of Interest application which is due to be submitted by Friday 16th 2022.</p>	<p>The Chair of the LCDC or the Chief Officer of the LCDC if the application is in the name of the LCDC or another Officer authorised by the Chief Officer to sign documents.</p>