

Guide to the Rural Development (LEADER)
Programme in Co. Kildare
January 2018

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The Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2014 – 2020

The LEADER programme has been supporting communities and business in County Kildare for almost 20 years. Under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2014, 232 projects were supported with €8.2 million in LEADER grant aid. The projects supported have ranged in size from small projects to large flagship projects in a diverse range of sectors. Sectoral areas supported were primarily 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 Developement de l'Economie 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. The Department of Rural and Community Development is the national programme manager for LEADER.

- **Kildare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)** is the Local Action Group (LAG)
- **County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP)** is the Implementing Partner
- **Kildare County Council (KCC)** is the Financial Partner.

The following guide is for information purposes only. Rules regarding the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 are contained in the programme operating rules Department Circulars and European Regulations. Changes or clarifications may be issued by the Department of Rural and Community Development during the lifetime of the programme. The programme is informed by the Local Development Strategy which may be updated and amended during the lifetime of the programme by Kildare LCDC.

Co. Kildare's Local Development Strategy

Significant evidence based research in Kildare and an in-depth countywide participative process undertaken in 2015/2016. The information gathered from this process was used to devise a Local Development Strategy (LDS) for Kildare. Kildare LCDC has identified priority themes and objectives and developed strategic actions in the Kildare Local Development Strategy.

Action Plan Framework

Economic and Enterprise Development and Job Creation		
Sub-Theme and Local Objective	Strategic Action	Budget
1.1 Rural Tourism Supporting sustainable tourism development in Kildare	SA 1.1. To support a Digital Marketing Platform for County Kildare	€65,000
	SA 1.2 To support the growth of Kildare's tourism sector by improving and expanding on the quality and range of products on offer, particularly within Hub/Cluster destination development	€546,920
	SA 1.3 Build the capacity of Kildare's tourism sector	€75,000
1.2 Enterprise Development Increasing and expanding enterprise development in rural Kildare	SA 2.1 County Flagship – Support Kildare's Creative Network and Craft Design Hubs	€200,000
	SA 2.2 Research and capacity building for LEADER-type enterprises in Kildare	€80,000
	SA 2.3 Support and expand LEADER-type micro/SME and Social Enterprise in Kildare	€540,000
	SA 2.4 Support Kildare's artisan food sector as a mechanism to create local jobs	€200,000
1.3 Rural Towns Developing clear, agreed plans to progress social, economic and infrastructure of towns in rural Kildare	SA 2.2 Research and capacity building for LEADER-type enterprises in Kildare	€80,000
	SA 2.3 Support and expand LEADER-type micro/SME and Social Enterprise in Kildare	€540,000
	SA 2.4 Support Kildare's artisan food sector as a mechanism to create local jobs	€200,000
	SA 3.1 Support four Town Revival Business Plans in specific towns in Kildare	€100,000
	SA 3.2 Kildare Rural Towns - Capital Support Programme	€235,000
1.4 Broadband Increasing access to broadband in rural Kildare	SA 4.1 Support for small scale feasibility and equipment for increased broadband access	€30,600

Social Inclusion		
Sub-Theme and Local Objective	Strategic Action	Budget
2.1 Basic Services for Hard to Reach Communities Increasing access to community facilities and amenities in targeted areas	SA 5.1 Support for community infrastructure and activities in areas of greatest need.	€283,680
	SA 5.2 Capacity building and technical support for hard to reach communities	€260,000
2.2 Rural Youth Developing employment, education and social opportunities targeting vulnerable young people in rural Kildare	SA 6.1 Rural Youth Training for empowerment and employment initiative	€250,000
	SA 6.2 Develop and enhance youth facilities and amenities and build the capacity of young people.	€400,000
Rural Environment		
Sub-Theme and Local Objective	Strategic Action	Budget
3.1 Protection and Sustainable Use of Water Resources Increasing awareness and supporting sustainable water management	SA 7.1 Sustainable Water Resource Management Programme	€100,000
3.2 Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity Increasing awareness and protecting Kildare's unique landscape	SA 8.1 Biodiversity awareness and protection programme	€90,000
	SA 8.2 Enhance and protect Kildare's unique local biodiversity	€210,000
	SA 8.3. Integrated landscape plan for the Curragh Plains	€100,000
3.3 Development of Renewable Energy Developing employment opportunities in renewable energy	SA 9.1 Increase employment through renewable energy businesses and build greater awareness and capacities in this area of renewables	€180,000

Who can apply?

Individuals or a group of promoters who have a viable rural enterprise idea

Rural Businesses looking to expand or diversify, or start a 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 Local Action Groups.

Supports are available for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's). Kildare Local Enterprise Office (LEO) has primary responsibility for micro-enterprise. A project referral process is in place between County Kildare LEADER Partnership and Kildare LEO.

The applicant/beneficiary is a natural / legal person or a private/community based group responsible for initiating and implementing the LEADER project. At the time of application, the beneficiary must meet the requirements in relation to previous State Aid. Therefore, information on State Aid such as previous grant aid must be outlined in your application. Beneficiaries must be solvent and not have been excluded for previous non-compliance under LEADER.

All areas of Co. Kildare are considered "Rural" for the purposes of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

What can LEADER funding be used for?

In general terms, eligible expenditure falls under four headings: Capital supports, Marketing, Analysis & Development and Training. Applications can only be considered for enterprises and activities that will not cause displacement elsewhere. For this reason, many conventional sectors and activities are precluded from receiving LEADER funding. It is best to speak with our development officer if you are unsure whether your project is eligible.

Capital Supports	Analysis & Development
Marketing	Training

Eligible Costs

Capital Supports includes construction and redevelopment work as well as purchase of new machinery and equipment. Associated professional costs e.g. architect, engineer, archaeologist, consultant fees may be eligible up to a maximum of 12% of the capital costs of projects.

Analysis and development includes feasibility studies and development plans.

Marketing includes group marketing schemes or marketing and promotion as part of an overall project.

Training programmes which are not part of mainstream education and are not available elsewhere can be considered.

Ineligible Costs

Certain costs and sectors are precluded from grant aid under the LEADER Operating Rules. They are:

- 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 work 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 or statutory requirement
- Planning application fees
- Reclaimable VAT
- Improvements / refurbishment of a private residential property
- Projects that already have other EU funding either directly or through a national source

Expenses already incurred cannot be recouped through LEADER grant aid.

Examples of Projects that can be supported

Rural Tourism

- Feasibility studies to explore the tourism potential of an area/project.
- Marketing initiatives (community groups/cluster/network of tourism businesses only unless 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

Enterprise Development

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

Broadband

- Basic ICT training to priority groups, for example, to enable older people and young people to stay connected.
- Skills development for installing broadband,
- Feasibility studies in relation to community broadband
- Funding for small scale equipment (such as boosters) and small-scale infrastructure to allow local businesses access broadband.

Rural Towns

- Streetscape enhancement
- Tidy Towns
- Community buildings providing multi-functional infrastructure development of recreation spaces.
- Development of markets
- 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

Rural Youth

- The provision of youth clubs / cafes
- Improved access to Information & Communications Technology
- 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

How much funding is available?

The amount of funding depends on the available budget at the time of allocation. Funding of €1,250 is the minimum grant that can be allocated. LEADER funding is not intended for large scale projects. In most cases the finite nature of the funding will mean that the average grant is likely to be much lower than the maximum figure. Please note that the rates and ceilings set out below are the maximum allowed, these may be reduced. A maximum of €10,000 can be provided for broadband equipment or infrastructure.

Type of Project	Applicant	Maximum Rate of Aid	Maximum
Investment and other supports (including animation undertaken as part of the implementation of a project)	Private	Up to a maximum of 50%	€200,000.00 (NB this may be reduced / capped)
	Community	Up to a maximum of 75%	
	Community under Basic Services Targeted at Hard-to-Reach Communities subtheme	Up to a maximum of 90%	
Analysis & Development	Private	Up to a maximum of 75%	€30,000.00
	Community	Up to a maximum of 90%	
Training	Private or community	Up to a maximum of 100%	€200,000.00

How do I apply?

Expression of Interest

If you are interested in applying for grant aid the first step is to fill in an **Expression of Interest (EOI) form**. Forms are available from CKLP. If you are unsure of your post code, log onto <https://finder.eircode.ie> to find or check your Eircode. Make sure to sign both the EOI form and the Data Consent form.

From time to time, we will announce themed calls and a deadline for expressions of interest. Calls will be advertised in local papers, the CKLP Facebook page and website and supported with information events. You can leave your contact details with us if you wish to be notified of a call under a particular theme or themes.

Once you submit a completed EOI, it will be reviewed to see whether the project is eligible in principle.

Application

If your project is eligible in principle, you may submit a funding application. Each year, we issue at least one “time limited call” with a deadline for the application to be submitted. Otherwise, applications will be dealt with on a first come first serve basis (“rolling call”). We strongly advise you to attend application workshops to find out about the process, how to prepare a business plan and check procurement requirements for your project. We require a signed completed application form with supporting documents. The following is an example (but not an exhaustive list) of some of the commonly required documents.

- Company/community group documents
- Business Plan
- Financial documents e.g. 3 Months Bank Statements, confirmation of matching funds, bridging finance.
- Insurance Policy Document
- Procurement (Quotes/Tenders as appropriate)
- Title/Lease
- Planning Permission
- Heritage or other statutory consents

We will give feedback on incomplete applications and clarify what information and documents are required specifically for your project. Your data will be managed confidentially and in accordance with our data protection policy.

Assessment

Valid applications will be assessment for eligibility and viability. This includes checking eligibility of promoter, project, matching funds and procurement. Each project is assessed in line with programme operating rules. Your project may require a site visit as evidence that work on the project has not already commenced. This will be arranged at a mutually convenient time. A mandatory administrative check will be carried out. At present, this is done independently by Pobal.

Evaluation

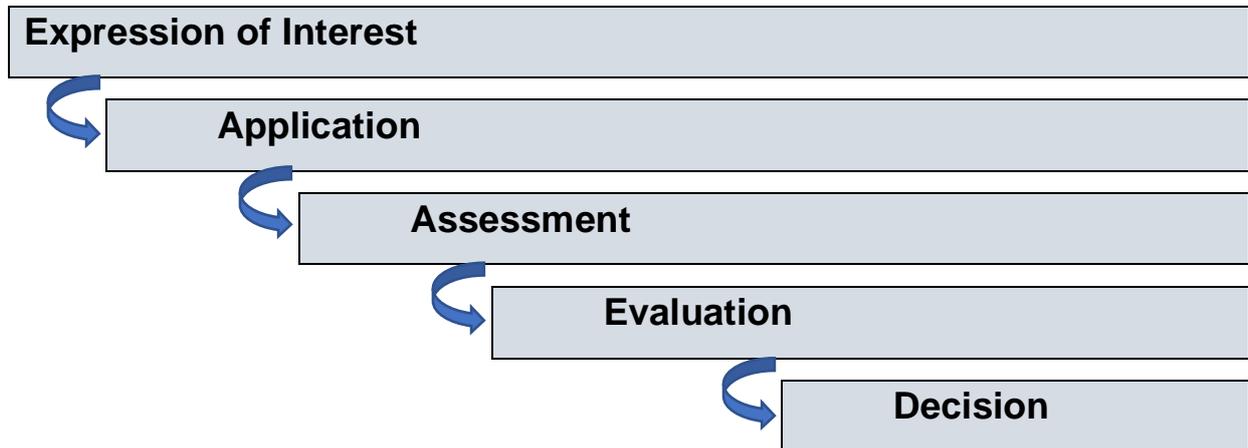
Your application will then be presented to County Kildare LEADER Partnership's Independent Evaluation Committee. This committee is comprised of voluntary representatives across a variety of sectors with a range of experience, skills and expertise such as banking, architecture, finance, agriculture, horticulture, enterprise, conservation and biodiversity, public administration and community development.

The committee will review each application across set criteria, and score each project accordingly. Projects which obtain a score of 65 are recommended for the next stage. If the recommended grant amounts exceed the available budget, the highest scoring projects go forward for a decision.

Decision

Projects which have been recommended by the Evaluation committee and which have completed the administrative check process are brought forward to the next available meeting of Kildare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) for a decision. The LCDC must adhere to the decision-making process and voting requirements set out in the RDP 2014-2020 operating rules. Projects approved by the LCDC may undergo a further administrative check to verify that the decision-making process was

in order. Projects approved for LEADER Grant Aid will receive a letter of notification/letter of offer and contract from Kildare LCDC. County Kildare LEADER Partnership will carry out a pre-commencement site visit, go through the contract information and advise on the next steps, including the claim process.



Appeals Process

A project promoter/applicant may seek a review of the decision from Kildare LCDC (the LAG) in the first instance. The LAG should advise the promoter/applicant, in writing, within two months of the request for review of the outcome of that review.

Where the promoter/applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the LAG review, they have the right to appeal the decision of the LAG in writing, to the Department's Appeal Officer within 21 days of the LAG's decision. The applicant or promoter must use the template appeal request form (available on request). The Department will only directly consider the appeal to on the basis of:

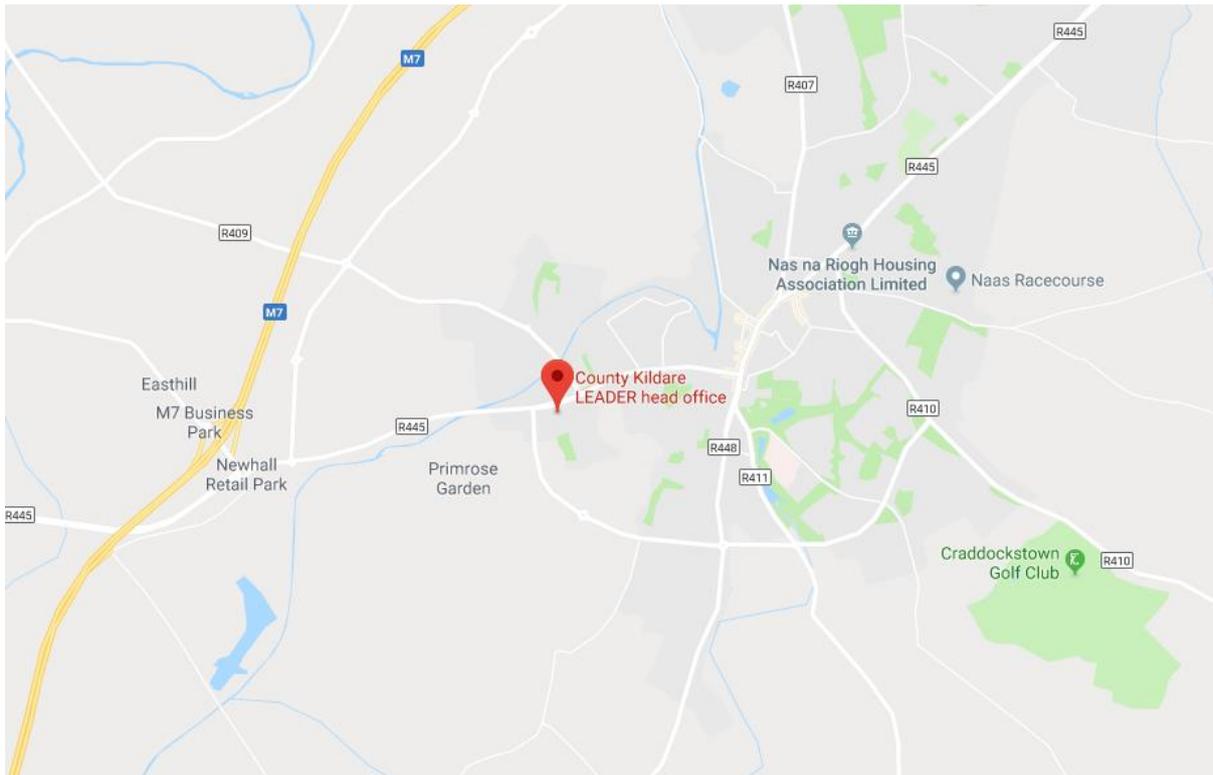
- the processes and procedures followed by the LAG in reaching its original decision and carrying out the review; and
- the LAG's interpretation of the relevant national/EU regulatory requirements.

The Department Appeal Officer will notify the applicant or promoter of their decision within 21 days of receipt of the appeal. This decision will be final and will not be re-considered by the Department.

Further Information

We are available to discuss your project idea, provide information and to support applicants through all stages of the process.

For further information contact County Kildare LEADER Partnership, Jigginstown Commercial Centre, Old Limerick Road, Naas, Co. Kildare W91A2XE.



Programme Manager

Brian Kelly

Email: brian@countykildarelp.ie

Phone: 045 895450

Mobile: 086 0411351

Development Officer

Helen Mulhall

Email: helen@countykildarelp.ie

Phone: 045 895450

Mobile: 086 8363910

Visit www.countykildarelp.ie to download an Expression of Interest form.