

Ireland's Transitional LEADER Programme

(Including amendments to 2014-2020 LEADER Programme)

Updated GUIDELINES FOR LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)

**This document updates the Outline of Transitional LEADER Programme
Guideline issued with Circular 15 - 2020**

**Version 2
April 2021**



**Rialtas
na hÉireann**
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



**'The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas'.**

**Funded by the Department of Rural
& Community Development**

Outline of Updated Transitional Programme

1. Background

Due to delays at EU level in agreeing the new CAP regulations and the wider EU budget for the period 2021-2027, there is a gap between the current 2014-2020 LEADER programme and the next EU LEADER programme. The next EU LEADER programme will not now begin until at least January 2023.

To bridge this time gap, an amendment has been submitted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to the European Commission to extend the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme, under which LEADER is funded, out to the end of 2022.

As part of that process, the LEADER Programme will be allocated a total of €70 million for 2021 and 2022, i.e., adding an extra €50 million to the initial funding of €20 million announced by Minister Humphreys in December 2020.

€20 million of this €70 million allocation will be funded from the European Union Recovery Instrument (part of the EU National Recovery and Resiliency fund), and will be used to support the recovery of rural communities and private enterprises from the effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Important Note

These allocations are being provided subject to the approval of the EU Commission of the extended Rural Development Programme.

The EURI funding requires further approval by the EU Members States of the “*Own Resources Decision*” and then subsequent approval by the EU Commission to spend the funds allocated, **the EURI funding must not be allocated by the LAGs until EU Commission approval for this funding is granted.**

When approval is granted by the EU Commission for the EURI element, the **Department will advise all LAGs of this.** The Department will also advise LAGs of the requirements under the EURI funding.

2. Updated funding for the Transitional LEADER Programme

Section 8 of the Transitional LEADER Programme issued on 16th December 2020, is updated as follows:

- I. The initial allocation of €20 million for the Transitional LEADER Programme, announced in December 2020, has been increased by €25 million to €45 million. Funding under the Transitional LEADER Programme **may be awarded by LAGs from 1st April 2021.**
- II. €20 million from the EURI fund is also being allocated in line with the EURI objectives (addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic & economic recovery) for delivery using the LEADER Model. **Funding under the EURI may not be awarded by the LAG until the commencement date notified by the Department to the LAGs.**
- III. The current €10 million LEADER Co-operation National Call, is being increased by €3 million to €13 million, and it will be operated on the same basis as the current €10 million LEADER Co-operation National Call (See Section 3).

- IV. An amount of €2 million is being ring-fenced for Preparatory Support funding for the new LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027. This funding will only be available for Preparatory Support for the development of next LEADER programme. Conditions for the utilisation of this funding will be notified by the Department at a later date.

Therefore, the amount of funding available for I and II above **totals €65 million** over 2021 & 2022.

75% of this €65 million (€48.75 million in total), is being allocated to new project activity, with the remaining 25%, or €16.25 million, available for Administration and Animation costs.

This funding will be distributed between the LAGs on a pro-rata basis, commensurate with the allocations made at the start of the 2014-2020 LEADER programme. See Appendix I, II and III for the breakdown per LAG. All LDS budgetary fields (project and administration) on the LEADER IT system will be updated by the Department shortly.

Projects and Administration and Animation costs approved under the Transitional LEADER Programme and EURI must comply with the LEADER Operating Rules, EU Regulations and any subsequent Circulars that may be issued by the Department.

Administration and Animation Funding

The allocation of Administration and Animation for 2021 (as per Section 8 of the Transitional LEADER Programme Guidelines issued on 16th December 2020) is **being revised** as follows, and will cover 2021¹ & 2022:

- I. LAGs with a balance² of Administration and Animation funding from the 2014-2020 Programme will be permitted to carry this forward into 2021 and 2022.
- II. LAGs will be allocated Administration and Animation (25% of the €65 million) to cover 2021 and 2022
- III. If **all** Administration and Animation available to the LAG has been fully utilised, LAGs will be Exchequer funded, on a monthly basis up to December 2022.

¹ From the 1st January 2021

² The balance is Administration and Animation budget allocated to each LAG at the start of the LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme, plus that allocated for Co-operation Measure (if any), plus that allocated for the LEADER Food Initiative (if any), plus that allocated for being one of the top 10 performing LAGs (if any), minus all monthly claims from July 2016 to December 2020. Any changes in monthly returns which are not finalised will reduce/increase this balance.

**Administration and Animation Exchequer funding
LAGs who have utilised all their funding allocation prior to the end of 2022**

To provide certainty to all LAGs on the amount of Administration and Animation funding that will be available to them up to the end of 2022, if the Administration and Animation budget allocated³ to a LAG is exhausted, Exchequer funded Administration and Animation monthly funding will be made available to the LAG.

(See Appendix 4 & 5 for the **maximum monthly contribution that will be provided to each LAG via Exchequer funding**).

This funding contribution cannot be claimed from the EU LEADER programme, but as it will be paid from Exchequer funding, the same requirements will apply including inter alia –

- Claims made by the LAG for this Administration and Animation funding contribution **must be** vouched and **must** comply with the LEADER Operating Rules, EU Regulations and any subsequent Circulars that may be issued by the Department.
- Such Monthly Return Claims **must** satisfy Article 48 Administrative Checking requirements and are subject to the same audit, inspection and compliance checks as if the funding was claimed under the LEADER programme.

As this maximum monthly contribution from the Exchequer will not be increased by the Department, LAGs and their Implementing Partners are advised to review their Administration and Animation expenditure and requirements so as to ensure that they are able to operate within their allocated budgets and to take corrective action in advance where required.

It will be a matter for each LAG to distribute the Administration and Animation funding to its Implementing Partners as appropriate.

It should be noted, where an allocation of LEADER Food Initiative or Co-Operation Administration and Animation allocated funding prior to 2021 is removed/reduced from the LAG allocation (due to LEADER Food Initiative and /or Co-operation project grant aid being less than awarded or the project not being delivered) this will affect the maximum Exchequer Monthly contribution allocation for Administration and Animation Funding calculation negatively.

It should be further noted that any Administration and Animation funding allocated to the LAG for Co-operation and LEADER Food Initiative projects from 1st January 2021 onwards is **not included** in the maximum monthly contribution calculation.

³ Administration and Animation budget allocated to each LAG at the start of the LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme plus that allocated for Co-operation Measure, plus that allocated for the LEADER Food Initiative, plus that allocated for being one of the top 10 performing LAGs, up to and including 31 December 2020 plus that allocated for the Transitional LEADER Programme plus that allocated for EURI.

3. LEADER Co-operation Measure

An additional €3 million of the Transitional Programme funding is being allocated to the €10 million LEADER Co-operation budget, bringing the total available for Co-operation projects to €13 million.

Applications for funding under the Co-operation Measure will continue to follow the process in place for the €10 million LEADER Co-operation National Call and continue to be evaluated by the Department on a first-come-first-served basis.

The only change to the LEADER Co-operation Measure is that there is an additional €3 million added to the Call. Therefore, to reduce the administrative burden, there is no requirement for LAGs to withdraw Co-operation applications already uploaded to the LEADER IT System and to submit a new application for funding for such projects.

LAG Administration and Animation funding for the delivery of Co-operation projects will be at the same rate as was the case for the €10 million LEADER Co-operation National Call.

The co-operation project (Preparatory Technical Support Project / Full Co-operation Project) selected by the LAG must be forwarded to the Department (cooperation1420@drccd.gov.ie) for final approval using the appropriate templates signed by the LAG Chairperson.

In assessing final approval, the Department will consider the available budget, the benefits to the local areas of the project being delivered as a joint action as opposed to separate projects in each area and the type of co-operation activity. The Department will consider such projects for approval on a first-come-first-served basis where **all** the required documentation and information is received from **all** the Irish Partner LAGs as was the position for the €10 million Co-operation Call.

The Article 48 checks must also have been successfully completed by all Irish Partner LAGs. Co-operation projects already with the Department for approval that did get approval under the €10 million LEADER Co-operation National Call will be reviewed by the Department on a first-come-first-served basis.

All projects approved under the LEADER Co-operation Measure must comply with the LEADER Co-operation Project Operating Rules, EU Regulations and any subsequent Circulars that are issued by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

4. Preparatory Support for new LEADER Programme (2023 – 2027)

Funding of €2 million is being set aside for Preparatory Support including development of Local Development Strategies for the new LEADER Programme (2023 – 2027). The Department will advise in due course when this funding will be made available as well as the Rules governing this funding.

5. Commencement Date and Duration

The key dates remain the same as per Section 5 of the Transitional LEADER Programme issued on 16th December 2020. The new Transitional LEADER Programme will commence on **1st April 2021**. Only projects approved on or after this date will be eligible for funding under the Transitional LEADER programme.

Projects under the Transitional Programme must to be approved by the LAGs on or before **31st December 2022**, with all projects to be completed before **31st December 2023**.

Final claims for payment must be submitted to the Department no later than **30th June 2024**.

6. Balance of 2014-2020 Project Funding

Where LAGs do not have all of their LEADER 2014 – 2020 project funding allocated by 31st March 2021, this funding can be carried forward to the Transitional LEADER Programme. The LEADER IT System will take account of this carry-over of project funding.

Carry-over of 2014-2020 project funding will **not** be permitted to be allocated to the EURI allocation.

In addition, for the duration of the Transitional LEADER Programme, LAGs will also be permitted to reallocate any funds approved under the LEADER 2014 -2020 Programme (this does not include Co-operation projects or LEADER Food Initiative projects – any de-commitments for these projects come back to the National Fund) which are subsequently de-committed from a project as a result of an underspend, or non-progression of a project to the Transitional LEADER Programme. However, reallocation of such funding will **not** be permitted to the EURI. Projects availing of this reallocated funding **must be approved by the LAGs on or before 31st December 2022 and completed by 31st December 2023**.

Final claims for payment must be submitted to the Department no later than **30th June 2024**.

Appendix 1 shows the Transitional LEADER Programme allocation per LAG

Appendix 2 shows the EURI allocation per LAG

Appendix 3 shows the total Transitional LEADER Programme and EURI Allocation per LAG

Appendix 4 shows the Monthly Administration and Animation funding available per LAG when moved on to Exchequer Funding

Appendix 5 provides examples of Administration and Animation funding for LAGs

Appendix 1 - Transitional LEADER Programme allocation per LAG

LAG	Breakdown by LAG of €45 million Transitional LEADER Programme allocation	Breakdown by LAG of Transitional LEADER Programme Project allocation (€45 M @75%)	Breakdown by LAG of Transitional LEADER Programme Admin & Animation (€45 M @25%)
Carlow	€1,312,528	€984,396	€328,132
Cavan	€1,743,195	€1,307,396	€435,799
Clare	€1,824,591	€1,368,444	€456,148
Cork North	€1,041,514	€781,135	€260,378
Cork South	€783,676	€587,757	€195,919
Cork West	€1,025,933	€769,450	€256,483
Donegal	€2,641,475	€1,981,106	€660,369
Dublin Rural	€1,303,044	€977,283	€325,761
Galway East	€1,565,969	€1,174,477	€391,492
Galway West	€928,643	€696,482	€232,161
Kerry	€2,090,428	€1,567,821	€522,607
Kildare	€1,076,236	€807,177	€269,059
Kilkenny	€1,593,731	€1,195,298	€398,433
Laois	€1,457,302	€1,092,976	€364,325
Leitrim	€1,226,961	€920,221	€306,740
Limerick	€1,897,485	€1,423,114	€474,371
Longford	€1,554,059	€1,165,544	€388,515
Louth	€1,248,108	€936,081	€312,027
Mayo	€2,274,838	€1,706,129	€568,710
Meath	€1,412,003	€1,059,002	€353,001
Monaghan	€1,553,056	€1,164,792	€388,264
Offaly	€1,643,884	€1,232,913	€410,971
Roscommon	€1,810,771	€1,358,078	€452,693
Sligo	€1,565,928	€1,174,446	€391,482
Tipperary	€2,066,613	€1,549,960	€516,653
Waterford	€1,538,754	€1,154,065	€384,688
Westmeath	€1,510,406	€1,132,804	€377,601
Wexford	€2,012,756	€1,509,567	€503,189
Wicklow	€1,296,112	€972,084	€324,028
Totals	€45,000,000.00	€33,750,000.00	€11,250,000.00

Appendix 2 - EURI allocation per LAG

LAG	Breakdown by LAG of EURI €20 M funding allocation	Breakdown by LAG of Project allocation (€20 M EURI @ 75%)	Breakdown by LAG of Administration & Animation allocation (€20 M EURI @ 25%)
Carlow	€583,346	€437,509	€145,836
Cavan	€774,753	€581,065	€193,688
Clare	€810,930	€608,197	€202,732
Cork North	€462,895	€347,171	€115,724
Cork South	€348,300	€261,225	€87,075
Cork West	€455,970	€341,978	€113,993
Donegal	€1,173,989	€880,492	€293,497
Dublin Rural	€579,131	€434,348	€144,783
Galway East	€695,986	€521,990	€173,997
Galway West	€412,730	€309,548	€103,183
Kerry	€929,079	€696,809	€232,270
Kildare	€478,327	€358,745	€119,582
Kilkenny	€708,325	€531,244	€177,081
Laois	€647,690	€485,767	€161,922
Leitrim	€545,316	€408,987	€136,329
Limerick	€843,327	€632,495	€210,832
Longford	€690,693	€518,020	€172,673
Louth	€554,715	€416,036	€138,679
Mayo	€1,011,039	€758,279	€252,760
Meath	€627,557	€470,668	€156,889
Monaghan	€690,247	€517,685	€172,562
Offaly	€730,615	€547,961	€182,654
Roscommon	€804,787	€603,590	€201,197
Sligo	€695,968	€521,976	€173,992
Tipperary	€918,495	€688,871	€229,624
Waterford	€683,891	€512,918	€170,973
Westmeath	€671,291	€503,469	€167,823
Wexford	€894,558	€670,919	€223,640
Wicklow	€576,050	€432,037	€144,012
Totals	€20,000,000.00	€15,000,000	€5,000,000

Appendix 3 - Total Transitional LEADER Programme Allocation per LAG over 2021 & 2022

LAG	Total Transitional LEADER Programme & EURI Allocation per LAG (€65 million)	Total Transitional LEADER Programme & EURI <u>Project</u> Allocation per LAG	Total Transitional LEADER Programme + EURI <u>Administration & Animation</u> allocation per LAG
Carlow	€1,895,874	€1,421,905	€473,968
Cavan	€2,517,948	€1,888,461	€629,487
Clare	€2,635,521	€1,976,641	€658,880
Cork North	€1,504,409	€1,128,307	€376,102
Cork South	€1,131,976	€848,982	€282,994
Cork West	€1,481,904	€1,111,428	€370,476
Donegal	€3,815,464	€2,861,598	€953,866
Dublin Rural	€1,882,175	€1,411,631	€470,544
Galway East	€2,261,956	€1,696,467	€565,489
Galway West	€1,341,373	€1,006,030	€335,343
Kerry	€3,019,507	€2,264,630	€754,877
Kildare	€1,554,564	€1,165,923	€388,641
Kilkenny	€2,302,056	€1,726,542	€575,514
Laois	€2,104,992	€1,578,744	€526,248
Leitrim	€1,772,277	€1,329,207	€443,069
Limerick	€2,740,812	€2,055,609	€685,203
Longford	€2,244,752	€1,683,564	€561,188
Louth	€1,802,823	€1,352,117	€450,706
Mayo	€3,285,878	€2,464,408	€821,469
Meath	€2,039,559	€1,529,669	€509,890
Monaghan	€2,243,303	€1,682,478	€560,826
Offaly	€2,374,498	€1,780,874	€593,625
Roscommon	€2,615,558	€1,961,669	€653,890
Sligo	€2,261,896	€1,696,422	€565,474
Tipperary	€2,985,108	€2,238,831	€746,277
Waterford	€2,222,644	€1,666,983	€555,661
Westmeath	€2,181,697	€1,636,273	€545,424
Wexford	€2,907,314	€2,180,486	€726,829
Wicklow	€1,872,162	€1,404,122	€468,041
Totals	€65,000,000	€48,750,000	€16,250,000

Appendix 4 - Monthly Administration and Animation funding available per LAG if moved on to Exchequer Funding*

LAG	Total Administration & Animation allocated from Start of Programme to 31 Dec 2020 (Inc. for Top 10 performing LAG, Co-operation and LEADER Food Initiative)	Average Yearly Admin over 4.5 years Inc. for Top 10 performing LAG , Co-operation and LEADER Food Initiative)	Maximum Monthly Exchequer Funding (Monthly Average over previous 4.5 years)
Carlow	€1,604,201	€356,489	€29,707
Cavan	€2,229,619	€495,471	€41,289
Clare	€2,304,626	€512,139	€42,678
Cork North	€1,460,386	€324,530	€27,044
Cork South	€1,035,166	€230,037	€19,170
Cork West	€1,308,303	€290,734	€24,228
Donegal	€3,398,729	€755,273	€62,939
Dublin Rural	€1,637,473	€363,883	€30,324
Galway East	€1,935,756	€430,168	€35,847
Galway West	€1,138,374	€252,972	€21,081
Kerry	€2,671,344	€593,632	€49,469
Kildare	€1,315,400	€292,311	€24,359
Kilkenny	€2,039,604	€453,245	€37,770
Laois	€1,796,839	€399,298	€33,275
Leitrim	€1,621,406	€360,312	€30,026
Limerick	€2,464,803	€547,734	€45,645
Longford	€1,900,518	€422,337	€35,195
Louth	€1,573,986	€349,775	€29,148
Mayo	€3,016,507	€670,335	€55,861
Meath	€1,725,781	€383,507	€31,959
Monaghan	€1,919,958	€426,657	€35,555
Offaly	€2,101,048	€466,900	€38,908
Roscommon	€2,239,462	€497,658	€41,472
Sligo	€1,935,690	€430,153	€35,846
Tipperary	€2,706,226	€601,384	€50,115
Waterford	€1,987,416	€441,648	€36,804
Westmeath	€1,856,006	€412,446	€34,370
Wexford	€2,526,637	€561,475	€46,790
Wicklow	€1,636,221	€363,605	€30,300

*Please note that the figures in the above Table are subject to review in the event of errors or omissions by the Department and may be subject to change where LEADER Food Initiative and Co-operation projects are not delivered at the level of funding approved. LAGs are required to check the figures above in relation to their own LAG and revert to the LEADER Policy & Operations Unit **within one month of the issue of this document** with their own calculation of Total Administration & Animation allocated from Start of Programme to 31 Dec 2020 (Inc. for Top 10 performing LAG

(€65,000), Co-operation Measure and LEADER Food Initiative) if it differs from those shown in table. All queries pertaining to the above should be forwarded to rdp1420@drcd.gov.ie

Appendix 5 – Examples of Administration and Animation funding

1. Maximum Monthly Contribution Allocation

This maximum monthly contribution allocation was arrived at using the formula set out below:

A = Initial Allocation for Administration and Animation at start of programme;

B = Any additional Administration and Animation funding allocated to the LAG from the start of the programme to 31 December 2020 for full Co-operation Projects, LEADER Food Initiative Projects and, the €65,000 Administration and Animation funding allocated for being in the top 10 performing LAGs where applicable.

C = 4.5 years (number of years from the start of the programme (July 2016 to 31 December 2020) ;

D = Number of months in a year to give the monthly value.

$\frac{A + B}{C}$ divided by D = Monthly Exchequer contribution allocation for Administration and Animation Funding

I. Example of this calculation:

LAG XYZ

A=Initial Allocation for Administration and Animation at start of programme = €1.5 million

B=Any additional Administration and Animation funding =€250,000

C=4.5 Years

D = 12 Months

$\frac{€1.5 \text{ Million} + €250,000}{4.5 \text{ years}}$ Divided by 12 months

= **€32,407**

In this example, when all the Administration and Animation is exhausted the **maximum** amount of Administration and Animation that LAG ABC can claim is **€32,407 per month**.

2. Examples of Administration and Animation funding for 2021 & 2022

Example A:

LAG A

Initial Allocation for Administration and Animation at start of programme = **€1.5 million**

Any additional Administration and Animation funding= **€250,000**

Spend to December 2020 (*including monthly returns not yet finalised up to and including December 2020 will be paid out of this allocation*) = **€1.4 million**

Balance remaining = **€350,000**

Allocation of Transitional Programme Administration and Animation = **€500,000**

Total Administration and Animation Allocation for 2021 & 2022 = € 850,000

In this example, LAG A will go onto Monthly Exchequer funding once the €850,000 is fully utilised

Example B:

LAG B

Initial Allocation for Administration and Animation at start of programme = **€1.5 million**

Any additional Administration and Animation funding= **€0**

Spend to December 2020 (*including monthly returns not yet finalised up to and including December 2020 will be paid out of this allocation*) = **€1,495,000**

Balance remaining = **€5,000**

Allocation of Transitional Programme Administration and Animation = **€500,000**

Total Administration and Animation Allocation for 2021 & 2022 = € 505,000

Revised Total Administration and Animation Allocation for 2021 & 2022 = €505,000

In this example, LAG B will go onto Monthly Exchequer funding once the €505,000 is fully utilised.