

Comhar na nOileán

Guide to LEADER in Donegal

Rural Development Programme (LEADER) 2014 – 2020

Welcome

Comhar na nOileán is delighted to announce the launch of the **Rural Development Programme (LEADER) 2014 - 2020** in County Donegal.

This LEADER programme is a little different from previous programmes, so we have developed this guide to give you an idea of what's included and excluded for LEADER funding.

Our team of LEADER Project Officers have years' of experience, and are available at the end of the phone, on email or for a meeting, to discuss your project idea.

We have a deep understanding of the LEADER programme's operating rules, and our LEADER Project Officers use this knowledge to support as many projects as possible, within the programme limits.

This LEADER budget is a lot smaller than previous programmes. However, as CEO of Comhar na nOileán, I am confident that it will still result in real benefits to the businesses and communities of the Donegal Islands and the hinterlands.

I now invite you to contact one of our LEADER Project Officers to see how the LEADER programme can benefit your business or community.

Is mise le meas
Máire Uí Mhaoláin
CEO, Comhar na nOileán

Tá fáilte romhat an Ghaeilge a úsáid linn i gconaí fiú muna bhfuil tú lonnaithe i gceantar Gaeltachta.

LEADER in Ireland

Three Themes

These three themes apply to the LEADER programme across Ireland.

Theme 1 - Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation

- Rural Tourism
- Enterprise Development
- Rural Towns
- Broadband

Theme 2 - Rural Environment

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

Theme 3 - Social Inclusion

- Basic services targeted at hard to reach communities
- Rural Youth

LEADER in County Donegal

Priority objectives for Donegal

Rural Tourism

- Provide for initiatives that contribute to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)
- Bring existing tourism providers / attractions up to quality standards
- Support communities to develop and implement localised tourism strategies and studies to identify potential projects and maximise the potential of the WAW
- Enhance and develop initiatives which provide Recreation / Outdoor Pursuits
- Establishment of motor home facilities / service bays
- Further development, refurbishment of on-shore, riverside and lakeside facilities
- Development of Marine Tourism and niche tourism specialisms
- Collective marketing and branding / bundling of specific tourism products / activities
- Develop further the eco-tourism network
- Training support to local tourism providers
- Development and promotion of flagship tourism attractions
- Promote cross border tourism
- Development of cultural / heritage / spiritual tourism and cultural infrastructure for tourism purposes
- Delivery of innovative, sustainable and quality festivals and events
- Nurturing and promotion of the Irish language, music, folklore, craft and artistic heritage
- Provision of specialist accommodation where there is an identified need such as green eco / carbon neutral accommodation, hostel accommodation, glamping sites, etc.

Enterprise Development

- Support for initiatives which promote the development of social enterprise in leisure, recreation etc.
- Supports for start-up and expanding innovative indigenous enterprises creative industries and visual arts enterprises including generation of flagship creative products
- Innovative enterprises in the renewable energy sector
- Diversification of the fishing and farming sector to broaden their economic base
- Establishment of cross border / transnational links in order to research new opportunities for profitability and production markets
- Support the growth of the creative industries, including provision of equipment, training, and cultural facilities to make rural communities more sustainable and address the challenge of depopulation and an aging population

Rural Towns

- Support general appearance upgrading and environmental and amenity improvement works to enhance the characteristics of towns and villages, and make them more vibrant and a more attractive place to live
- Creative actions on derelict buildings, streetscapes initiatives that make towns and villages more accessible, as well as develop access facilities which will enable people with disabilities to engage in recreational activity
- Develop town branded food and craft markets. Promote regeneration of vacant/derelict buildings
- Build on achievement of tidy towns

Broadband

- Support initiatives that assist people to become more digitally connected through the development of Community Digital Hubs
- Development of small scale “Futuristic Fáilte” type facilities in towns particularly those towns located along the WAW, and creating WIFI hotspots in towns and villages
- Provide digital skills training for hard to reach communities
- Use ICT to enable Donegal to become a low carbon county

Basic Services

- Support training activities to build the capacity and assist the sustainability of new and existing community organisations for example to develop recreational and leisure facilities, upgrade existing community facilities or provide new community facilities where none exist
- Support actions that develop community networks to share knowledge and good practice and promote active and healthier lifestyles etc.
- Provide alternative energy for new and existing community buildings.
- Promote the use of natural resources
- Support challenges to overcome and address specific island challenges and promote coastal economic growth
- Support language planning or alternative methods to increase and exploit the employment potential of islanders for example, through the provision of immersion education and learning
- Support the growth of social enterprises and rural diversification

Rural Youth:

- Support actions that encourage youth entrepreneurship including for example, practical training initiatives to pursue outdoor recreation as well as the development of work placement / ‘street work’ initiatives, volunteering programmes in private and community sector (in conjunction with secondary schools)
- Provide for training initiatives that facilitate the transfer of traditional skills, address identified skills shortages, life-skills training etc.

- Promote positive mental health, address isolation and improve communication skills through provision of social and recreational facilities such as development of youth facilities based on Men's Sheds model for younger men, youth cafes, outdoor play areas for teenagers e.g. with zip lines etc.
- Support rural transport initiatives in conjunction with existing providers to better enable young people to access services
- Support personal development initiatives, train the trainers in youth development, leadership training for youth in all fields; youth reskilling, encouragement self-employment for young people etc.

Protection and Sustainable use of Water Resources

- Support initiatives which create awareness of water management issues and encourage conservation.
- Support waste reduction methods (for example, water)

Protection and Improvement of Local Biodiversity

- Examples of support under this initiative include creating awareness and eradication of invasive species of plant, or encourage communities to develop 'more attractive areas' like the 'Golden Mile' initiative in Galway

Development of Renewable Energy

- Support initiatives that provide for efficient harvesting and minimal damage to woodland and wetlands, e.g. small scale equipment, initiatives which exploit the natural resource and create sustainable renewable energy resources for the benefit of the rural community for example adoption of renewable energy actions that promote the use of green technology in community owned buildings such as rainwater harvesting, & alternative energy provision
- Support growth of research and development as well as products to support renewable energy
- Develop Donegal's status as a leader in eco-accreditation

These objectives came from public consultation meetings in late 2015, and are part of the LEADER Local Development Strategy for Donegal

Don't see your project or idea listed?

These are just some examples of projects that are listed in the LEADER programme operating rules. If you have a project in mind that is not listed here, please contact us.

Eligible costs include:

- ✓ Construction or renovation work
- ✓ Purchase of machinery and equipment
- ✓ Professional/Technical Fees (up to 12% of project capital costs)
- ✓ Marketing (including group marketing activities)
- ✓ Tailored and specialised training programmes

- ✓ Analysis and Development (e.g. feasibility studies, prototypes)
- ✓ Voluntary Labour (community/farm diversification projects only)
- ✓ Donations (community projects only)
- ✓ Purchase of land (with/without buildings) - community only

Costs which are **not eligible** include:

- × Working capital (including stock, running costs and reclaimable VAT)
- × Conventional motor vehicles (including cars, vans and buses)
- × Planning application fees
- × Insurance costs
- × Loans or leasing

This information comes from the operating rules that apply to the LEADER programme in Ireland.

Sectors and activities which are **not eligible** include:

- × Mainstream Agriculture
- × Fisheries
- × Conventional retail operations (except community/farm based shops selling local produce)
- × Training which is part of normal education programmes, secondary or higher level systems
- × Horticulture (including bee-keeping)
- × Improvements to private residential property (except for heritage projects in exceptional cases)
- × Childcare
- × Healthcare activities
- × Nursing homes
- × Housing
- × Race and sport horse industries
- × Greyhound industry

Very Important

Costs already incurred are **not** eligible for funding.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do I apply for a LEADER grant?

The LEADER application process involves two steps as follows:

Step 1 - Expression of Interest

All applicants must complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) for each project.

Step 2 - LEADER Grant Application

If your Expression of Interest is eligible in principle, you will be invited to make an application for LEADER funding.

What happens when I send in my Expression of Interest?

We will acknowledge your Expression of Interest and it will be assessed for eligibility. If your project is eligible, you will be given an application form and invited to submit an application for LEADER funding.

What happens when I send in my application form?

When your application is complete, your Project Officer will present it to an Evaluation Committee. This committee makes a recommendation to the Donegal LCDC LAG whether to fund the project or not. The Donegal LCDC LAG Board makes the final decision on your grant application.

How long will it take to get approved for funding?

This depends on how quickly you can put the necessary information together. In general, it will take a number of months to work through the application process. Your Project Officer will guide and help you during this time.

Need help to apply for a grant? You will be assigned a LEADER Project Officer to help you with your application.

If my project is approved, what happens?

If your project is approved, you are given a contract (letter of offer), which must be signed and returned before you start your project or spend any money.

If my project is refused, what happens?

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

What are open calls?

This just means that we take each application as it comes in for funding. However, we can only do this for up to 60% of our funding. If your project type has been listed under our closed call programme, you will have to wait until that closed call is announced before you can progress your application.

What are closed calls?

At least 40% of the LEADER programme in County Donegal must be approved in closed funding calls. This is where projects of a certain type (for example community playgrounds or festivals) are all invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by the same deadline date. These EOIs are assessed together and successful applicants will be invited to make a full LEADER application. Applications must all be submitted by the same deadline date, and compete against each other for the funding available.

The reason for closed calls is to ensure that LEADER funding is targeted where it delivers the most value and secures equal opportunities for all potential applicants.

If you have more questions, just contact us and we will answer your LEADER queries.

Glossary of Terms

Donegal LCDC LAG - The Donegal LCDC LAG makes the final decision on LEADER grant applications in the county.

Implementing Partner - These are the companies that support Donegal LCDC LAG in managing the day-to-day operations of the LEADER programme in County Donegal.

Financial Partner - This is the group that is responsible to monitor and manage all the financial aspects of the LEADER programme.

Who do I contact for more information?

If you are based on the **offshore islands**, please contact us. All of our contact details are on the back of this booklet.

If you are unsure who to contact, just give us a call and we will point you in the right direction.

Contact Comhar na nOileán

Our Website: www.oileain.ie
Email Us: fios@oileain.ie
Call our main Office: 099 75096
Write to Us: Inis Oírr, Oileán Árann, Co. na Gaillimhe.

Meet our LEADER Project Officer for Donegal

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Follow us on Facebook

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/comharnanoilean>

Important

Please note that this is a summary guide to LEADER, and does not include every programme detail. If you have a project idea, but are not sure about eligibility, please talk to a LEADER Project Officer and they will be able to talk to you about your specific project.

All information is correct at time of printing, but may be subject to change. Comhar na nOileán accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

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