Early-Cycle Evaluation of Waterford Local Development Strategy

February 2019

Structure

- Part One - Introduction and context
- Part Two - Review of projects approved and rejected
- Part Three - Review of application, approval and drawdown process
- Part Four - Review of proposed re-allocations
- Part Five - Conclusion and recommendations

Part One

- Background
- Nature of the Evaluation
  - Evaluation methodology
  - Evaluation topics
- Context
- Schemes of financial support for development in rural areas
- Nature of the LDS and the LEADER Programme
- Vision of Waterford LDS

Methodology

- Through an analysis of the data provided by WLP with regard to the Expression of Interest calls, the projects approved and the extent of drawdown of approved funding.
- A review of a sample of both successful and unsuccessful application files
- Interviews with the Chief Executive of WLP
- Interviews with a sample of project promoters.

Part Two

- Projects by Theme and Local Objective
- Geographic distribution of approved projects
- Size distribution of approved projects
- Drawdown
- Project impact

Theme

Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation which was allocated 77% of the budget

Theme 2: Social Inclusion – which was allocated 17% of the budget and

Theme 3: Rural Environment which was allocated 6% of the budget.

Theme as allocated

Theme 1: Economic Development, Enterprise Development & Job Creation which was allocated 67% of allocated funding

Theme 2: Social Inclusion – which was allocated 26% of allocated funding and

Theme 3: Rural Environment which was allocated 7% of allocated funding.

Considerations

- The fact that the Strategy is predictive and seeks to identify likely outcomes and circumstances of the future
- The fact that the process relies to a significant extent on individuals and organisations approaching the process to seek funding
- The various factors which enter in to the decisions by commercial organisations to seek funding
- The fact that virtually no eligible applications were received from one area in Theme 1 to which €450,000 had been allocated – Investment in Digital and New Media. This aloe would account for the variation.

Projects by Local Objective

Local Objective	In WLDS %	Percentage of funds allocated to date	Percentage of available funds allocated
1	31	21.44	37.76
2	38	38.58	55.08
3	7	6.86	56.62
4	0	0.00	NA
5	16	24.76	90.50
6	2	1.51	46.18
7	0.21	0.34	85.83
8	1	0.00	0.00
9	4.7	6.52	76.53

Geographic distribution

District	Number of projects	Value of projects	Population per project	Value of projects by population
ungarvan/Lismore	24	1,168,271.84	1,210.91	40.2
omeragh	8	1,314,784.28	2,409.87	68.2
aterford etropolitan*	8	507,088.31	2,452.37	25.85
ull county	7	76,517.68	N/A	N/A

Comments

As noted previously, the use of the Municipal and Metropolitan Districts is somewhat arbitrary and use of a different set of boundaries could have given a somewhat different perspective.

A number of the projects in the Dungarvan/Lismore area are located close to the boundaries of other Districts

Dungarvan has a significant impact on its Municipal District with a third of the projects in that area coming from Dungarvan and its immediate hinterland. Other Districts do not have such a dominant centre.

The CEO of WLP has advised that the Waterford Metropolitan District Area received a considerable amount of funding under the last programme and this may have impacted on the projects at a developed stage for this programme

Account must be taken of the impact of the FLAG Programme in the different areas. While all of the Districts have areas which are eligible for FLAG funding, the Waterford Metropolitan District seems to have availed of the programme to a greater extent with 13 successful application, in comparison with 4 and 3 such applications in the Dungarvan/Lismore and Comeragh areas respectively.

Distribution by size

Grant size	Number of projects	Value of Projects
Less than €10,000	11	€63,764.01
€10,000 - €20,000	10	€145,506.24
€21,000 - €40,000	5	€138,893.86
€41,000 - €60,000	5	€237,697.37
€61,000 - €100,000	3	€211,100.50
€100,000 +	13	€2,269,700.13
Total	47	€3,066,662.11

Area	Allocated	Paid	% Paid
Tourism	657,533.65	350,780.98	53.35
orise opment	1,399,348.36	919,597.95	65.72
Inclusion	799,480.10	324,725.26	40.62
onmental	210,300.00	10,300.00	4.90

Drawdown

1. The date when projects were approved i relevance. Thus, for example, over 80% of fun which was approved in 2017 has been drawn d as opposed to 25% of funding approved in 2018

2. In addition, of the projects approved in 2 only two have not commenced drawdown of funding. These are two small projects which a unlikely to seek interim funding.

3. Of the projects approved in 2018 six hav commenced to draw down funds as opposed to which have not.

4. One major project in the environmental which accounts for 95% of the funding under th heading was held up by planning challenges. T seem to have been resolved in the last few we and the environmental drawdown should impr radically in the near future.

Impact

TOO EARLY TO SAY

CLEARLY SOME EMPLOYMENT IMPACT – NEW AND RETAINED

ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO CRITICAL MASS IN SOME INSTANCES

Part 3

- Stages in the process
  - EoI
  - Workshop
  - Application
  - Project Officer evaluation
  - WLP Board
  - Evaluation Committee
  - Pobal engagement
  - LCDC
  - Approval and drawdown

Comments

- Overall very good
- EoI seemed to work quite well
- Communication with promoters clear, comprehensive and timely
- Very positive comments on Project Officers by promoters
- Files almost totally complete and process – including difficulties – clear
- Both Evaluation Committee and LCDC minutes comprehensive and clear. Obvious that matters were fully considered.
- Changes made on solid basis on occasion
- Where there were gaps in applications it was made clear to project promoters
- Appropriate requests of different scales of organisation and project
- Consistency throughout including for WLP promoted projects
- Some difficulties experience by promoters but usually not of WLDS doing

Part Four

- Proposed re-allocations generally based on -
  - An insufficient number of eligible applications received under some specific headings
  - Small amounts of funding remaining under particular headings which are unlikely to be spent under that heading as they are likely to be too small
  - One smaller project which were envisaged as Leader company projects but which are now unlikely to go ahead
  - The allocation of the additional funding to two key areas - Community Service Hub Development and Enterprise Development and to a new SA under LO7
- In addition some wording changes proposed for a small number of SAs

Strategic Action	Total Funding Available	Allocated 2017/2018	Net Funding Available	Proposed Reallocations	Revised Net Funding	Revised Gross funding	Comment
	€	€	€	€	€		
Tourism	607,500.00	- 203,637.05	403,862.95	-	403,862.95	607,500.00	No change
& Heritage Product Development	472,500.00	- 261,314.60	211,185.40	-	211,185.40	472,500.00	No change
ism Product Development	54,000.00		54,000.00	- 40,000.00	14,000.00	14,000.00	Small amount of budget remaining
Community Hostels/Visitor Centres, RV Park, Glamping/Camping	607,500.00	- 192,582.00	414,918.00	-	414,918.00	607,500.00	No change but the wording of the SA has been significantly change range and increase its focus
nvestment in Existing Start -Up Technology, Graduate Orientated Rural Buisiness	1,280,000.00	- 946,600.36	333,399.64	421,399.35	754,798.99	1,701,399.35	Increase proposed for a key area of focus of the Leader programm are likely to emerge from this area if additional funding provided
nvestments in Development of Rural Food Businesses	405,000.00	- 236,422.50	168,577.50	- 168,577.50	-	236,422.50	Proposals to be directed to Department Food Business Fund
ent in Digital & New Media	405,000.00	- 11,125.50	393,874.50	- 393,874.50	-	11,125.50	Appropriate applications not received
to Develop a Social Enterprise Network	26,000.00	- 13,000.00	13,000.00	- 13,000.00	-	13,000.00	Adequate activity carried out in this area
g a Local Enterprise Culture	32,000.00	- 8,000.00	24,000.00	-	24,000.00	32,000.00	Adequate activity carried out in this area
nvestment in the Redevelopment if 1 Industrial Heritage Building into Modern se Space	150,000.00		150,000.00	- 150,000.00	-	-	Eligible project unlikely
nvestment in the Development of 1 new Indistrial/Office Facility in a Rural Village	187,500.00	- 178,200.00	9,300.00	- 9,300.00	-	178,200.00	Small amount of budget remaining
tion & Training of 4 Geographic Clusters to Form Economic Development Zones	28,000.00		28,000.00	-	28,000.00	28,000.00	No change
g Local Strategy at Village Level	6,000.00	- 6,000.00	-	-	-	6,000.00	No change
ging Competition in the Rural Market place	-		-	-	-	-	No change
entified Locations to Submit Bids for Investment Support into Community Service Hubs	780,000.00	- 753,301.95	26,698.05	493,103.33	519,801.38	1,273,103.33	Identified need in this area which is likely to result in eligib;e applic
ity Leadership Training for Established Voluntary Groups	34,000.00		34,000.00	- 10,000.00	24,000.00	24,000.00	Small reduction will maintain adequate funding for this activity
for Communities to Support Delivery Service Hubs	25,000.00		25,000.00	- 25,000.00	-	-	Incorporated into other areas of activity
for Young Rural Dwellers to Support Employment Placement	30,000.00		30,000.00	-	30,000.00	30,000.00	No change
uth Service Delivery Model	50,000.00	- 46,178.15	3,821.85	- 3,821.85	-	46,178.15	Re-allocation of small amount of budget remaining
to Establish a Pilot Care Farming Programme	20,000.00		20,000.00	-	20,000.00	20,000.00	No change
for Local Communities on the Needs & Benefits of Bio-diversity	12,000.00	- 10,300.00	1,700.00	- 1,700.00	-	10,300.00	Small amount remaining after activity completed
on for Capital Projects in the biodiversity area	-		-	61,346.00	61,346.00	61,346.00	Identified capital project which will benefit from and be simulated
on & Sustainable Use of Water Resources	12,000.00		12,000.00	-	12,000.00	12,000.00	No change
r Small Scale Community Project on Water Conservation	40,000.00		40,000.00	-	40,000.00	40,000.00	No change
ment of Renewable Energy	261,346.00	- 200,000.00	61,346.00	- 61,346.00	-	200,000.00	Scale of funding required for such projects is large. One major proj maximum support level. This is the remaining amount
tion from administration by Dept	60,180.68		60,180.68	- 60,180.68	-		Technical re-allocation to projects
tion fromunderspend in Preparatory Budget	39,048.15		39,048.15	- 39,048.15	-		Technical re-allocation to projects
	5,624,574.83	- 3,066,662.11	2,557,912.72	-	2,557,912.72	5,624,574.83	

lew allocations by theme

Theme	Original Percentage	Proposed Percentage
conomic Development, nterprise Development Job Creation	77	69
ocial Inclusion	17	25
ural Environment	6	6

Recommendations

The potential difficulties for project promoters, particularly those from the private sector, in providing evidence of co-funding in advance of approval should be highlighted and reported to the Department.

The next round of EoI calls should emphasise

- That this is the last round of calls under this programme
- That not all eligible applications may receive funding
- That the rate of funding may not be the maximum possible

Particular attempts should be made to promote the programme and the next call in the Comeragh and Waterford Metropolitan districts and emphasise that smaller as well as larger project proposals are welcome.

Consideration should be given to providing some geographic weighting for projects arising from the Comeragh and Waterford Metropolitan districts.

Consideration should be given to running specific workshops in procurement for applicants who have been deemed eligible under the EoI process to assist them in finalising their projects in a timely manner

The likelihood of the take-up of all funding allocated to the Rural Tourism Local Objectives should be considered and re-allocations made if a significant lack of take-up is anticipated

The proposed re-allocations of funding should be proceeded with including the re-wording of SAs and the adoption of the new SA

The fact that an independent architect will be appointed by the funder and paid for by the promoter to certify draw-down claims should be highlighted early in the implementation process

All project files should be checked and any required documentation which is missing from any file should be provided for the record