An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Circular No: **09 - 2019**

From: **LEADER Policy and Operations Unit**

To: **All LAGs and Implementing Partners**

Date Issued: **26 June 2019**

Subject: **Voluntary Labour**

The use of Voluntary Labour in the delivery of LEADER projects is an area which led to considerable difficulties and audit findings under the 2007-2013 programme. A number of steps have been taken to further clarify the requirements in respect of the use of Voluntary Labour so that the same issues do not arise in the current programme.

Regrettably, a number of examples of the continued misuse of Voluntary Labour as a project cost have come to light. These include the following:

- Project administration and management costs being submitted under Voluntary Labour – these are not eligible. This includes the time spent by the promoter in managing the finances of the project and co-ordinating activities in the delivery of the project, While supervision is permitted under Voluntary Labour, this refers to supervision in a professional capacity such as by an engineer supervising a construction project;
- Clearly excessive and unrealistic hours being claimed for work purported to have been undertaken using Voluntary Labour. The LAG, and the Evaluation Committee in particular, must consider if the hours included in the application for support are realistic and justifiable;
- The costs of the work being claimed as Voluntary Labour not satisfying the reasonableness of cost condition e.g. where the cost attributed to

Voluntary Labour exceeds what an external contractor would normally charge for the same service. The LAG, and the Evaluation Committee in particular, must consider if the Voluntary Labour included in the application for support represents value for money (the rationale for their decision must be clearly documented).

- Work being claimed as Voluntary Labour which does not relate to the work approved and accepted in the Letter of Offer;
- Claiming Voluntary Labour for works that have been undertaken by the paid contractor.

These examples suggest that, in some instances, the Voluntary Labour provision is not being applied in the spirit in which it is intended. Ultimately, it is the community groups and farm diversification applicants using Voluntary Labour that will be disadvantaged where the provisions are not applied correctly.

This poses a significant risk to the funding to be provided to the project promoters and for the accreditation of the programme itself. LAGs are requested to pay particular attention to the issues identified above and are advised that the Voluntary Labour provision will be removed from certain LAG areas or from the programme overall if these issues persist.

LAGs are advised to contact the LEADER Unit if they require any further clarification.

Thank you for your continued co-operation.

LEADER Policy & Operations Unit