

LEADER Transitional Programme

2021 -2023

Overview

The Transitional LEADER Programme will operate initially from 1st April 2021 until 31st of December 2023. Final allocations will be made by mid 2022.

In 2021, and early 2022, it will operate concurrently with the current LEADER Programme, as the payments for the RDP1420 will be completed over the coming months and into early 2022.

The Transitional Programme is a hybrid of the programme just ended, RDP1420, and a snapshot of the future trajectory of the next programme from 2023 to 2027/28.

As a result, the Transitional Programme is made up of two funding strands:

- RDP 1420 Type Actions – E1,239,388.66
- EURI Fund Actions – E512,918

While there is familiarity with existing RDP Type actions (They will be outlined below), E.U.R.I. or European Union Recovery Instrument Funds have a very specific focus. The E.U.R.I. funds have not yet been approved by the E.U., so the funds allocated by D.R.C.D nationally are provisional, so Waterford L.C.D.C. cannot commence the Call, Evaluation and Review of such applications.

With regard to RDP Type Actions, they are approved and the normal Call, Evaluation and Review process can commence.

However, it is important to have a short transitional plan in place for both sets of funding so that Waterford can commence preparations for the next programme on a sound footing. In order to put this transitional programme in action, it is first of all important to outline the possible **actions** under each sets of funding.

RDP 1420 and the Transition Fund

Under the Transition Funds, existing unspent Dept of Agriculture Funds have been reallocated to LEADER1420. Under the reallocation, the initial allocations made by LAGS would focus on their current RDP Plan and transition to the objectives outlined by the Department in the Circular December 2020, Transitional Programme.

The aim of the Transitional LEADER Programme is to allow locally-led rural development projects to continue to be delivered using the current LEADER model until the new EU programme commences in

2023. The Transitional Programme provides a particular opportunity for LAGs and Implementing Partners to:

- a) Work closely with communities, and particularly those who have not previously benefited from LEADER funding, to build their capacity in preparation for the next programming period and ensure that weaker communities are not left behind.
- b) Promote projects which support communities in a post-COVID-19 environment.
- c) Support job creation, entrepreneurship, enterprise development and innovation in a post-COVID-19 and/or post-Brexit environment.
- d) Explore and develop projects for funding in thematic areas which are likely to feature strongly in the next EU-funded programme. In this regard, projects which address the *climate agenda, digital transformation and projects that utilise the Smart Village¹* approach to local area development should be encouraged. The transitional period will also provide an opportunity to review the 2014-2020 LEADER programme and to draw on learnings from that programme, as well as enabling arrangements for the next EU-funded programme to be put in place, including the drafting of a new national LEADER programme and Operating Rules, and new Local Development Strategies (LDSs).

Priorities for the Transitional Programme

While it is the responsibility of each LAG to decide on the projects it supports and the level of funding provided to those projects, the Transitional LEADER Programme should seek to address the challenges facing rural Ireland in the coming period and to complement the forthcoming Rural Development Policy which will place an emphasis on *job creation, remote working, and maximising the potential of broadband in rural communities*.

In this regard, LAGs are required to consider the following actions in the context of their existing Local Development Strategies and to seek amendments to their Strategies where appropriate. This is not an exhaustive list and LAGs may consider other actions that seek to address key issues:

- 1. Supports to rural businesses seeking to reach new markets, expand, innovate and/or diversify in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or Brexit, with a particular emphasis on providing support to businesses in the food sector.**
- 2. Community based projects that seek to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. 1 Smart Villages are rural areas and communities, which build on, and enhance their existing strengths and assets through creative thinking and by embracing innovation to create desirable places for rural people to live and work.⁴**
- 3. Supports and capacity building for communities that have not previously received assistance under LEADER or other rural programmes, using the Transitional Programme for the LAGs and Implementing Partners to engage directly with new applicants to develop projects and enhance collaboration within communities.**

4. Support for new and innovative projects in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and the green economy.

5. Maximising the potential of broadband and the digital economy in communities, including through skills development and building awareness and usage of available remote working facilities.

6. Projects that develop the concept of the Smart Village initiative or Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs)² which could serve as proof-of-concept for more substantial proposals in the context of the next EU-funded LEADER Programme. Collaboration between LAGs within their own project budgets will be encouraged in relation to bullets 5 and 6 in particular.

Transitional Plan

As can be seen by the above excerpt paragraphs from the Department's December 2020 circular, the LAG has the task of blending or transitioning from the RDP 1420 to the objectives under the new RDP Programme post 2023. This transition while challenging, is already under way in terms of the SMART Village Strategy, REDZ, etc. and in fact is an evolution, not a revolution.

Proposed Budget Allocation RDP Transition Programme

RDP1420 Objectives	Transition Fund Objectives	Budget
LO 1 Tourism as a key driver of Economic Development LO 2 Strategic & Collaborative Investment in Rural Enterprise Development to foster Rural Job Creation in local villages L.O. 6 Rural Youth - Jobs	Supports to Businesses and Tourism Initiatives.	E692,925.77
Transferred to DRCD Food Fund	Food	Separate Application to the Dept. of Agriculture Funding Sub Head through DRCD
New	Community Projects COVID-19	E.U.R.I. Funding
LO 5 Underpinning Social Inclusion initiatives in Rural Areas through investment in Physical and Human Capita	Community Projects that have not received LEADER Assistance	E396,462.89

LO 7 The promotion of greater environmental awareness through training and exemplar projects LO 8 The promotion of greater awareness around water and water usage through training and exemplar project LO 1 Tourism as a key driver of Economic Development LO 2 Strategic & Collaborative Investment in Rural Enterprise Development to foster Rural Job Creation in local villages	New and Innovative Projects under Climate Change, Environment and the Green Economy	E.U.R.I Funding
New	Maximising the potential of Broadband and reducing the Digital Divide	E100,000
LO 3 The revitalisation of local Villages through the development of Human Capital, and Capital Investment in two infrastructural projects	REDZ and SMART Villages	E50,000
Total		E1,239,388.66

*E85,323.66 of the above figure is derived from Decommittments from RDP1420

Proposed Allocation of the European Union Recovery Investment Fund(DRCD Awaiting E.U. Agreement)

E.U.R.I. Fund Objectives	LAG Objective	Budget
<i>job creation, remote working, and maximising the potential of broadband in rural communities.</i>	New New and Innovative Projects under Climate Change, Environment and the Green Economy	E200,000
<i>Community Projects Covid-19</i>	E.U.R.I. Criteria to come	E166,455.11
<i>Smart Villages are rural areas and communities, which build on, and enhance their existing strengths and assets through creative thinking and by embracing innovation to create desirable places for rural people to live and work.4</i>		RDP Funding above
<i>Supports and capacity building for communities that have not</i>		RDP Funding above

<i>previously received assistance under LEADER or other rural programmes, using the Transitional Programme for the LAGs and Implementing Partners to engage directly with new applicants to develop projects and enhance collaboration within communities.</i>		
<i>Support for new and innovative projects in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and the green economy.</i>	New	E146,462.89
<i>Maximising the potential of broadband and the digital economy in communities, including through skills development and building awareness and usage of available remote working facilities.</i>	New	RDP Funding
<i>Projects that develop the concept of the Smart Village initiative or Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZs)² which could serve as proof-of-concept for more substantial proposals in the context of the next EU-funded LEADER Programme. Collaboration between LAGs within their own project budgets will be encouraged in relation to bullets 5 and 6 in particular.</i>	L.O. 3	RDP Funding
Total		E512,918

****** On Enterprise and Tourism Projects, where the applicant is a private company and is seeking more than 50% grant aid, it is proposed in an agreement with the L.E.O.(Currently being worked on) that the applicants will have had to completed a certified baseline programme either through the LEO(Under 10 Employees) or LEADER over 10 employees on the business's carbon footprint and have put in place a

detailed plan to reduce same. If the applicant has not completed this process, they cannot receive more than 50% grant aid.

***On Communities that have not benefitted substantially from the current programme, Dungarvan, Portlao and Tramore have been identified as key locations. (This does not guarantee funding, it identifies a preference under the Calls as stipulated by the Department in their Circular).

****One Rural Youth Initiative with a progression element towards certification and work.

***** Broadband Element. LEADER will not be involved in Broadband provision. The Focus will be on the need to bridge the digital divide for older people and rural dwellers who increasingly have to migrate to online services from their traditional local services that are retreating from the main street to the Cloud.