



Circular No: 01-2024

From: LEADER Policy and Operations Unit

To: All LAGs, Implementing Partners and Article 48 Checking Bodies

Date Issued: 09 January 2024

Subject: Closure of the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme

This Circular is being issued to inform recipients of:

1. Key Dates for the 2014-2022 LEADER programme
2. Progress of projects already approved by the LAG
3. Monthly returns
4. Projects that have applied for funding under the 2014–2022 LEADER programme and have not been awarded funding

1. Key Dates for the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme

In order to facilitate an orderly wind down of the current programme and smooth transition to the 2023-2027 LEADER programme, the following should be noted:

- The last date for LAGs to approve projects for funding was 31 December 2023.
- All projects must be fully completed by 31 March 2024.
- Final claims for payment must be submitted to the Department no later than 30 June 2024.
- LAGs/Implementing Partners should be mindful of the above dates and ensure that final claims for payment are with the Article 48 Checking Body in sufficient time so that all claims are with the Department no later than 30 June 2024.



2. Progress of projects already approved by the LAG

LAGs / Implementing Partners are advised to contact all project promoters of projects that have not been completed to date to remind them that they must have their project completed by 31 March 2024.

LAGs should also contact project promoters who have completed their project, but have not submitted their final claim requesting them to submit their claims for payment in sufficient time to ensure that they are with the Article 48 Checking Body in sufficient time so that all claims are with the Department no later than 30 June 2024.

3. Monthly Returns

From January 2024, most LAGs will be selected to deliver the 2023-2027 LEADER programme.

LAGs will also be finalising claims with project promoters in relation to the 2014-2022 programmes.

Once the new LAG has been appointed in a sub-regional area, the administration costs must be apportioned between both the 2014-2022 programmes and the 2023-2027 programme.

In order to reduce the administrative burden on LAGs in identifying the portion of time or other costs associated with administering each programme, the Department will permit a general arrangement of apportionment of costs based on the national average of project completions at the end of 2023. This has been determined by the percentage of projects fully completed and final payment claim paid by the Department. At the end of 2023 the national average rate of completion was 82% at the end of 2023. On that basis, LAGs will be permitted to apportion their monthly costs; 82% of their costs



charged to the 2023-2027 programme and 18% of their costs charged to the 2014-2022 programme.

A 'How to Guide' will issue to all LAGs and Implementing Partners in the coming weeks outlining the practical steps to be undertaken on the LEADER IT systems for recording administration costs from February 2024, but the following should be noted:

a) LAGs currently on Exchequer funding

Exchequer funding at the monthly amount approved by the Department will continue to be provided to those LAGs who require it up to the end of January 2024 to cover costs related to the delivery of the 2014-2022 LEADER programme.

b) Exchequer funding in 2024 for LAGs selected to deliver the 2023-2027 LEADER programme

Exchequer funding will continue to be made available to LAGs who require it to cover costs relating to the 2014-2022 LEADER programme. Where it is required to deliver and close out the programme up to 30 June 2024, or the date the programme is concluded in the LAG area whichever is the earlier, the amount of Exchequer funding will be provided pro-rata based on the following:

- i. The amount of monthly Exchequer funding already allocated to the LAG; and
- ii. The national average percentage of projects completed and final claims paid at 31 December 2023.

Example of calculation for monthly Exchequer Funding

The amount of monthly Exchequer funding already allocated to the LAG is **€30,000**. The national average percentage of projects completed at 31 December 2023 is **82%**.



Therefore, 18% may be attributed to the 2014-2022 programmes, i.e. €30,000 x 18% = €5,400 per month.

In the above example, the LAG will be provided with €5,400 per month to 30 June 2024 to cover the costs of closing out the 2014-2022 LEADER programmes.

c) LAGs not on Exchequer funding

LAGs who still have programme funding remaining to cover their administration and animation costs will be permitted to use this funding in 2024 to cover costs relating to the delivery and closure of the 2014 – 2022 LEADER programme. This funding must not be used to cover costs outside of this programme. Any funding that is not utilised by 30 June 2024, or the date the programme is concluded in the LAG area, whichever is the earlier, will no longer be available to the LAG. Notwithstanding that LAGs may have sufficient funding to cover all their monthly costs from their remaining 2014-2022 allocations they will only be permitted to charge costs based on the national average completion rate to this programme once the new LAG is appointed in their sub-regional area, with their remaining costs being attributed to the 2023-2027 programme.

The same formula as outlined in b) above, will apply for LAGs not currently on Exchequer funding but who apply to go on Exchequer funding during 2024.

d) LEADER Food Initiative and Co-operation Administration and Animation funding

From February 2024, any administration and animation funding accrued from the LEADER Food Initiative and Co-operation activities must be utilised to cover administration costs relating to the 2014-2022 LEADER programmes before Exchequer funding is provided.



e) Programme Administration & Animation funding not used

LAGs will not be permitted to drawdown any Administration and Animation funding (i.e. Exchequer or programme funding) for work relating to delivering and closing the 2014-2022 LEADER programme post June 2024.

4. Projects that have applied for funding under the 2014 – 2022 LEADER programme and have not been awarded funding

Project promoters who have not been awarded funding for their project under the 2014-2022 LEADER programme and wish to be considered for funding under the 2023-2027 LEADER programme must go through the full application process for the 2023-2027 LEADER programme.

As both programmes are separate, the project promoter will be required to go through the EOI process. If the project promoter is successful in that process, they will be required to go through the application process, evaluation process, administrative check process and be presented to the 2023-2027 LEADER LAG for their decision.

Any queries in relation to the application of this Circular should be submitted to rdp1420@dracd.gov.ie

LEADER Policy & Operations Unit