



Circular No: 07-2025

From: LEADER Policy and Operations Unit

To: All LAGs, Implementing Partners and Administrative Check Bodies

Date Issued: 13 August 2025

Subject: 2023-2027 LEADER Programme implementation and delivery requirements

This circular is being issued to remind LAGs of their responsibilities in respect of specific requirements relating to the implementation and delivery of the LEADER programme. The following categories were identified based on recent trends and/or findings of non-compliance:

1. LAG decision making
2. Reasonableness of Costs
3. Logos, e-mail signature, websites
4. Publicity requirements
5. Project claim payment to promoter
6. Durability of investment / Asset register
7. Monthly administrative return process
8. Local Development Strategy (LDS) publication

1. LAG decision making

Single interest groups

The composition of the LAG is made up of public and private partners. It should be seen as a dynamic body, which adapts itself to local specificities with representatives from the economic, social, cultural and environmental sectors with no single interest group controlling the decision-making process.



For the purposes of securing an inclusive and representative decision-making process, any decisions taken by the LAG must:

- be voted on by at least 50% of LAG members – this applies to decisions validated by the LAG membership after all relevant conflict of interest issues have been addressed; and
- be carried by majority vote; and
- be non-discriminatory and transparent; and
- ensure that no single interest group controls the decision making process.

Single interest groups refer to the representatives on the LAG from various sectors in society, such as but not limited to: community & voluntary, environmental, economic, social, cultural, agricultural, youth, etc. The procedures of LAGs must ensure that no single interest group controls the decision-making process of the LAGs.

Therefore, the minutes of LAG decisions on specific projects do not need to refer to public/private criteria of the LAG decision making members. The LAG members details, including the single interest group they represent, will be noted in the LAG Decision Making Meeting Attendees Template and LAG Decision Making Meeting Conflict of Interest Abstentions Template.

Processing applications

The LAG is responsible for designing and implementing the LEADER Local Development Strategy (LDS), making decisions on actions funded through the LDS and managing the funding allocated to the LDS.

Where the LAG is in doubt as to the eligibility of any sector or activity, it is recommended that guidance is sought from the Department prior to processing the application. However, LAGs are reminded that the response from the Department is strictly guidance to assist the LAG in



making their decision. Any guidance is not to be forwarded to a project promoter stating the Department deemed the project application eligible / ineligible.

Note also, the appeals process does not apply to guidance provided by the Department in response to queries.

2. Reasonableness of Costs

There has been a notable increase in the volume of requests for a retrospective verification of the reasonableness of LAG Administration & Animation costs.

As stated in Section 17.2 of the 2023-2027 LEADER Operating Rules, salary and administration costs must be independently assessed by the Department when a change occurs, i.e. new position in the delivery of LEADER; newly recruited staff member replacing an existing position; contract for service that has a combined value of over €5,000 over a two year period, including if an existing goods/service has a change of service provider or an updated/renewed contract.

It is necessary for the Department to independently review new cost items at their inception and make a determination as to the reasonableness of these costs.

LAGs and their Implementing Partners are reminded to adhere to Reasonableness of Costs requirements at all times.

3. Logos, e-mail signature, websites

Further to Circular 01-2025, LAGs should ensure full compliance with information and publicity requirements, including:

- Correct naming convention for the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme.
- Correct use of logos and visual identifier for LEADER as per Section 24 of the 2023-2027 LEADER Operating Rules.



It is noted from recent website searches and e-mail engagement that some websites and e-mail signatures include inaccurate information. LAGs and their Implementing Partners must ensure that their websites and social media accounts are updated accordingly.

In September, the Department will be reviewing LEADER information on websites and e-mail signatures. LAGs/IPs will be contacted directly if inaccurate information is still displayed.

4. Publicity requirements

The LAG must ensure all project promoters comply with the programme's information and publicity requirements. The following table outlines the visibility requirements dependent on the amount of total public expenditure, including LEADER funding, a project receives:

Total Public Expenditure	Requirement
€500,000 or above	Display durable plaques or billboards clearly visible to the public, including logos, as soon as the physical implementation of the operations starts or purchased equipment is installed.
€50,001 – €500,000*	Display an explanatory plaque, or equivalent electronic display, with information about the project, including logos.
€10,001 – €50,000	Display at a location clearly visible to the public at least one poster of a minimum size A3, or equivalent electronic display, with information about the project, including logos.
€0 – €10,000	No requirement

**Note that there is no requirement on the plaques minimum size for projects in the €50,001 - €500,000 category. All information and publicity must be clearly visible*

The LAG must also ensure that all information leaflets, explanatory plaques and advertisements are bilingual, i.e. in Irish and English



5. Project claim payment to promoter

It is important that all LAGs ensure the date in the field '*Promoter Payment Processed On*' is inserted on the 2023-2027 LEADER IT System when the project claim is paid to the promoter.

A screenshot of a web form for the LEADER IT System. The form contains several fields: 'Promoter Payment Due Date' with a lock icon, 'Promoter Payment Processed On' with a lock icon and a text input field (highlighted with a red box), 'Payment Type' with a lock icon and a dropdown menu showing 'Final Payment', and 'Final Payment Processed' with a lock icon and a checked checkbox.

In the Department's claim to the EU Commission, it is imperative that all payments made to promoters in a specific quarter are:

- the correct date for the specified quarter, and
- moved onto stage 12 by the LAG User as soon as the promoter is paid

This ensures that the Department can include the payment in the claim to the EU Commission.

6. Durability of investment / Asset register

To minimise the risk of the project promoter not satisfying the period of durability of investment the LAG must express in the funding agreement or contract with the project promoter the requirements for the capital investment (i.e. for infrastructure or productive investments) to operate as funded for five years from the date of final LEADER grant payment.

The project promoter must also put safeguards in place to ensure that LEADER funded assets are not misappropriated by maintaining an asset register of all LEADER funded assets and designate a location where assets will be available for inspection. The existence of this asset register must be verified by the LAG.



7. Monthly administrative return process

A reminder that Circular 03-2025 provided best practice guidance to facilitate the payment of Monthly Administrative Returns in a timely manner, including the following:

- Submission of Monthly Returns should be done early in the relevant month.
- Care should be taken when uploading the relevant documentation.
- If there is an issue, please bring it to the attention of Pobal/the Department.

8. Local Development Strategy (LDS) publication

All LAGs are required to publish their Local Development Strategies. LAGs must ensure to redact any personal data from the LDS prior to uploading to their websites.

A PDF copy of the redacted version should be submitted to LEADER2327@drcdg.gov.ie so that DRCDG can also publish the LDS on the Department's webpage www.gov.ie/LEADER.

Any queries in relation to the application of this Circular should be submitted to OR2327@drcdg.gov.ie

LEADER Policy & Operations Unit