



Circular No: 01-2025

From: LEADER Policy and Operations Unit

To: All LAGs, Implementing Partners and Administrative Check Bodies

Date Issued: 27 March 2025

Subject: LEADER LAG responsibilities

This circular is being issued to inform LAGs of their continued responsibilities in respect of delivering LEADER.

In this context please note that for projects funded under the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme, the LAG who entered into contract with the project promoter retains responsibility for matters arising in relation to that project, including the following:

1. Data Protection and Retention of documents and files
2. Durability of Investment
3. Debts
4. LEADER IT System

Additionally, the circular addresses LAG responsibilities for the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme in relation to:

5. LDC led LAG reporting to LCDC
6. Logos, e-mail signature, websites



1. Data Protection and Retention of documents and files

The LAG who entered into contract with the project promoter under the 2014-2022 Programme retains responsibility for matters relating to data protection and retention of documents and files.

The LAG and Implementing Partner must be aware of and comply with national legislation and other statutory requirements in respect of data protection, as information provided on LEADER projects may contain personal data and sensitive personal data as defined by the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. As an authorised Data Processor, the LAG and Implementing Partners must maintain a robust system for ensuring the security of data received.

All documents and files relating to the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme regarding expenditure grant aided in respect of both project and LAG Monthly Administration must be retained by the LAG and/or the Implementing Partner until five years from the date of the final claim payment for inspection and audit purposes. This relates to both hard copy and soft copy files.

These documents and files must be made available to the EU Commission, the European Court of Auditors, the Certifying Body, the Department, its agents and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine at any period during this time.

With regard to project expenditure and projects that availed of phased payments, or projects that received a single payment (i.e. first and final), the five-year retention requirement commences from the date of the final payment.

Example – Related Project Payments

Payment Type	Date of Payment	Payment Amount
Phased Payment 1	25/10/2022	€51,580.27
Phased Payment 2	30/03/2023	€35,252.24
Phased Payment 3	28/10/2023	€17,151.36
Final Payment	15/01/2024	€16,016.13
As the project has no identified irregularity or finding of negligence, and received its final payment on 15/01/2024, all related project records may be securely disposed with effect from 15/01/2029.		



2. Durability of Investment

The LAG who entered into contract with the project promoter under the 2014-2022 Programme retains responsibility for matters relating to durability of investment.

LAGs should ensure that projects adhere to the durability of investment requirement (section 14.5 of 2014-2022 LEADER Operating Rules), which stipulates that projects in receipt of LEADER funding for capital investment (i.e. for infrastructure or productive investments) must operate as funded for five years from the date of final LEADER grant payment.

The LAG is obliged to inform the Department immediately, if within a five-year period of the date of the final grant payment, a beneficiary ceases or relocates the activity outside of Ireland, or substantially changes or modifies the investment in a way which affects the nature, objectives or implementation conditions and undermines the original objectives of the LEADER Programme, or sells, leases or otherwise changes ownership without the Department's prior approval.

If a request is received to sell/trade/modify a LEADER funded project, the LAG that maintains responsibility for projects funded under the 2014-2022 LEADER Programme must progress the request. Department approval obtained and the minutes of the LAG meeting whereby requests are approved, will have to be uploaded to the LEADER IT system by the LAG.

3. Debts

The LAG who entered into contract with the project promoter under the 2014-2022 Programme retains responsibility for matters relating to debts.

If during the course of an ex-post inspection, a project promoter is found to have claimed for ineligible items, not complied with correct process or procedures, or breached the term of durability of investment, a proportion of the grant will be calculated to be ineligible. A debt letter will issue to the LAG advising any ineligible amount and outlining repayment to the Department. Interest will start to accrue on the ineligible amount once 60 days from the date the debt letter issued has elapsed.



4. LEADER IT System

Read only access to the 1420 LEADER IT system will be granted to users up until 2030 and will be available until that time as a document repository. Further information will issue in due course.

5. LDC led LAG reporting to LCDC

In a sub-regional area where the Local Authority is not the Lead Financial Partner (LFP), provisions are made in the LAG's funding agreement for the Local Development Company (LDC) to report to the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) on a biannual basis. This is to provide for a level of consistency between the objectives of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and the implementation of the Local Development Strategy, and to ensure engagement between both parties.

6. Logos, e-mail signature, websites

LAGs should ensure full compliance with Section 24 of the 2023-2027 LEADER Operating Rules which covers Information and Publicity. This includes the correct use of logos and adherence to the guidance provided for the complementary visual identifier for LEADER, e.g. the old LEADER logo must no longer be used.

All material and references to the Programme must have the correct naming convention, e.g. year first. The correct name is *2023-2027 LEADER Programme*.

Any publicity material providing context to the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme should refer to Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023–2027, i.e. there should no longer be a reference to Rural Development Programme (RDP).

All personnel working on the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme should update their e-mail signature to ensure compliance with the correct name convention and logos.



LAGs and their Implementing Partners must also ensure that their websites and social media accounts are updated accordingly.

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

LEADER Policy & Operations Unit