



Circular No: 05-2026

From: LEADER Policy and Operations Unit

To: All LAGs, Implementing Partners and Administrative Check Bodies

Date Issued: 27 August 2026

Subject: LEADER IT system housekeeping and phased payments update

This circular is being issued to remind recipients of their requirements to maintain accurate records on the LEADER IT system and inform recipients of a change to the phased payments section of the 2023-2027 LEADER Operating Rules.

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1. Moving projects at stage 1

There are currently over 1,680 Expressions of Interest at stage 1 of the LEADER IT system. To facilitate housekeeping in relation to this, in the coming weeks Pobal will issue to each LAG a list of EOIs submitted prior to January 1st, 2026.

The Department is asking that LAGs identify the appropriate course of action for each EOI at stage 1, i.e., move to stage 2, 16, or 18, or for it to remain at stage 1.

If the course of action appropriate to a particular EOI is for it to remain at stage 1 the Department would ask that the reason for this be noted. The list should be returned to Pobal, who will take the appropriate action on the LEADER IT system.

This exercise may be repeated intermittently for housekeeping purposes.



2. Project description field

Further to the e-mail from Pobal titled '*2327 LEADER - System update Project Description is editable up to Project Stage 06*' that was issued on Friday 10 July, DRCDG requested edits to be made at later stages to reflect changes that may occur as the project details submitted on the EOI progresses to a final application submitted for LAG approval.

Therefore, all LAGs are required to maintain accurate descriptions of each project in accordance with the following best practice:

- At stage 6, the LAG manager should check that the project description on the LEADER IT system accurately reflects the project.
- Administrative checkers should verify the accuracy of the description as part of their checks.
- While the description field has maximum character limitation of 4,000, it is advised to input concise details of the project, i.e. it is not necessary to copy all details of the EOI / application form or provide paragraphs outlining the background to the project or the project promoter.

3. Section 14.6 - Phased Payments

Following feedback and a further review of phased payments, the next version of the 2023-2027 LEADER Programme Operating Rules will include updated text to allow LAGs to request Departmental approval for phased payments to apply to a project that is sourced outside of Ireland (e.g. the purchase of a bespoke piece of machinery) with significant LEADER grant aid requested.

This text will be valid from the date of this circular.

Start of revised section

The LAG may make phased payments for the efficient and effective delivery of the Programme subject to:

- a request by the project promoter
- the phased payment exceeds €1,000



- at least 20% of total eligible costs have been incurred by the project promoter
- the number of phased payments on a project will be five or lower
- for projects involving construction where the LEADER grant aid is in excess of €100,000, a sign-off by a suitably qualified person (e.g. an architect / engineer) verifying that the works are satisfactorily completed prior to each phased payment
- ~~for projects where standalone elements are procured outside of Ireland, the element must be finalised and delivered to the promoter before submitting a claim for it.~~
- for projects with multiple elements, if any of those elements are sourced outside of Ireland, each element must be finalised and available for inspection in Ireland before submitting a claim for it.
 - ~~phased payments are not permitted for projects, or elements of projects, that are still outside of Ireland, e.g. machinery valued at €80,000 being manufactured (50% complete), a phased payment request for €40,000 would not be permitted.~~
- Notwithstanding the preceding provision, where a project consists of only one element and it is sourced outside Ireland, phased payments are only allowed with prior approval from the Department. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with each approval stipulating the evidence that will be required to support a phased payment claim. Requests must be submitted to OR2327@drcdg.gov.ie.

The LAG must notify the project promoter, and include as a condition of the funding offer, that the project promoter must repay all phased payments received in the event the project is not completed. In this context, the LAG should consider requiring a bond to be effected by a project promoter needing phased payments.

The LAG Authorised Officer may approve a change of payment to a project promoter for an approved project from one-off to phased payments. This approval must be clearly recorded on the LEADER IT System document repository.

The LAG will be required to recover all monies paid if the project promoter fails to complete the project.

End of revised section

4. Guidance provided by DRCDG in response to queries

Please be reminded that responses to queries, specifically relating to the eligibility of a project or project promoter, is guidance from the department to the LAG/IP and should not be communicated to the applicant as a department decision. Communication with the promoter



should be consistent with how all other EOI or application decisions are communicated, i.e. a decision from the LAG/IP.

Failure to follow normal procedures may cause difficulties should a decision be appealed. Per section 23.1 *Right of Appeal*, the “appeal facility does not apply to guidance provided by the department in response to queries, e.g., guidance on the eligibility of a project for funding.”

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

LEADER Policy & Operations Unit