

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who can apply for LEADER funding?

Individuals, businesses, social enterprises, and community groups are all eligible to apply for LEADER funding. Discuss your potential project with your local Rural Development Officer.

How much funding can I/we apply for?

Rates and Levels of Aid

Measure	Applicant Type	Maximum Rate of Aid	Maximum Funding
Community & Environment	Community	75%	€200,000
Enterprise Development	Private & Community	75%	€75,000
All Measures	Private & Community	Up to 100%	€200,000
All Measures	Private & Community	Up to 90%	€30,000

What are the steps involved in applying for LEADER 2023-2027?

1. Discuss your project with our Rural Development Officer.
2. Complete and submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to assess eligibility.
3. If the EOI is eligible in principle, you will be invited to submit an application for LEADER funding.
4. The formal application is reviewed by both the Evaluation Committee and the Sligo LCDC.
5. If successful, you will be advised formally by the LAG with a copy of your Contract for signing (Letter of Offer).
6. The Letter of Offer will specify the timeframe within which you must complete your project.
7. When the project is completed fully within the contract period, the claim documentation can be submitted to drawdown your grant.

Is there support available to fill out EOI and application forms?

LEADER staff at County Sligo LEADER Partnership are available to assist and advise promoters on the completion of necessary paperwork. However, the SLP staff are not able to complete EOIs and application forms on behalf of promoters. If professional advice is necessary, then the promoter must source and pay for this themselves.

What is the Procurement Process?

National Procurement Guidelines apply for all LEADER projects. Your Rural Development Officer can advise you.

If we have been approved and/or received funding from another source, can I/we apply for LEADER funding?

If a project involves economic activity, the promoter will have to declare whether he/she has or has not received State Aid. Where the promoter has received State Aid, he/she will have to state the amount of aid and the dates it was received and sign a declaration accordingly.

How long does it take to get a decision on my application?

It may take several months between the time that you make your first enquiry, get invited to make an application, and when a final decision is made.

I have received confirmation that my LEADER project is approved - what next?

On receipt of your Letter of Offer, it must be signed and returned within 15 working days of the date of the letter to confirm your acceptance. Project works cannot commence until the Acceptance of the Letter of Offer form has been signed and returned.

What is my Contract Completion Date?

Your Contract Completion Date will be specified on your Letter of Offer. This is the timeframe during which you must fully complete the project (including all payments to contractors/suppliers). If you anticipate any delays that may result in the project not being completed within this timeframe, it is important to contact Sligo LEADER Partnership as soon as possible to get advice on potential extensions to the date. All works, including payments, MUST be completed prior to your Contract Completion Date.

What if suppliers/contractors are unable to fulfill quotes/tenders?

If original suppliers/contractors are unable to fulfill the quote or tender as per application, it is important to contact your local Rural Development Officer to seek advice. Where the preferred tender/quoter withdraws from the process, the project promoter is permitted to go to the next successful tender/quoter and use them. If their costs are higher, the amount of grant aid approved by the LAG cannot be increased. Any potential changes to your contract (Letter of Offer) should be discussed, as LAG approval may be required to ensure eligibility.

Can I change the items/quantity of items from what was on my original quotation/tender?

The items on your invoice must match the items approved for funding by the LAG and listed on the approved procurement quote and/or tender documentation and specified in your Letter of Offer. Please contact your Rural Development Officer to seek advice if any changes are required. Your Letter of Offer is your contract, and any unapproved changes to this may result in some items being deemed ineligible.

Can I pay for goods/services in cash?

A ceiling of €1,000 applies per project and must be accompanied by an appropriate receipt. Any cash payments above this ceiling will be deemed ineligible.

Can I get a phased payment of my grant?

Yes, this is possible, but please discuss it with your Rural Development Officer. At least 20% of the total eligible costs must be incurred prior to making a phase payment claim (minimum €1,000). In the event that the project does not fully complete, you will be required to repay any phase payment previously received.

When can I submit my claim?

Claims can be submitted after the project is fully completed (or where the phased payment option is agreed upon as outlined above).

What do I need to make a claim?

Your Development Officer will advise on what is required. The claim needs to evidence that the project has completed in accordance with the quote/tender submitted and approved in your Letter of Offer. Sample information required includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Evidence of works completed (photos/reports/marketing/site visit, etc.)
- Invoices/receipts
- Bank statements
- Engineer/architect reports and certificates
- Compliance with all Letter of Offer terms and conditions

What is the Durability Clause?

LEADER funding for capital investment (i.e., for infrastructure or productive investment) stipulates that the investment must operate as funded for five years from the date of the final LEADER grant payment. Any funding offer is conditional on repayment if within a five-year period of the date of the final grant payment:

- The beneficiary ceases or relocates the activity outside of Ireland; and/or
- Any LEADER-funded assets are sold/leased or otherwise change ownership without the Department's prior written approval; and/or
- The investment is substantially changed or modified in a way which affects the nature, objective, or implementation conditions of the investment and undermines the original objectives of the LEADER funding provided.

Please refer to the Letter of Offer for full details.

I received LEADER funding previously; can I apply again?

Previously successful applicants are not precluded from reapplying. Please talk to your Rural Development Officer to discuss any potential project.