Introduction

**WHAT IS LEADER?**
LEADER is an acronym for Liaisons Entre Actions de Development de l’Économie Rurale (Links between actions for the development of the rural economy). The programme provides support and funding for individuals and rural communities to become involved and take ownership for the development of their own area.

**LEADER in Offaly**
Offaly LCDC is the contract holder for the LEADER Programme and Offaly Local Development Company is implementing the programme on their behalf. The programme has 3 themes and will operate in the County from 2016 – 2020 with a total budget of €8,000,037.

**THEME 1: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENTERPRISE SUPPORT**

**THEME 2: SOCIAL INCLUSION**

**THEME 3: RURAL ENVIRONMENT – WATER, BIODIVERSITY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**RATES OF GRANT AID**
Private projects and projects that have economic activity can apply for maximum grant rate of 50% for capital projects up to a maximum of €200,000 and 75% for Analysis and Development (A&D) projects up to a maximum of €30,000.

Community projects (where there is no economic activity) can apply for a maximum grant rate of 75% for capital projects to a maximum of €200,000; A&D up to 90% and Training up to 100%.

**DE MINIMIS**
Most grant assistance is subject to the EU “de minimis” rule which stipulates that aid to any one beneficiary must not exceed €200,000 from all grant-giving agencies over any three year period.
What projects can be funded?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligible costs for grant application include:</th>
<th>Grant applications for the following will not be considered:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Construction and fit out costs</td>
<td>- Agriculture</td>
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<td>- Professional fees (subject to conditions)</td>
<td>- Fisheries</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Machinery and Equipment</td>
<td>- Conventional retail operations, excluding community based shops and farm shops selling locally produced produce</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Marketing and promotion</td>
<td>- Courses for instruction or training which form part of normal educational programmes or systems at secondary or higher levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Training</td>
<td>- Horticulture (including bee keeping)</td>
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<td>- Analysis and Development.</td>
<td>- General maintenance works of public bodies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Childcare</td>
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<td>- Health Care</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Nursing Homes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Housing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Race and sport horse industries</td>
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<td>- Greyhound industry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Projects that already have other EU funding either directly or through a national programme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Grant applications for the following will not be considered:

- Loans
- Planning application fee
- Working capital including stock
- Payment for gifts, donations or personal entertainment
- Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages
- Legal expenses in respect of litigation
- Costs associated with meeting a legislative or statutory requirement
- Reclaimable VAT
- Improvements / refurbishment of private residential property
- Insurance for project promoters
- Overhead or running costs
- Conventional motor vehicles including cars, industrial/farm/construction vehicles, vans and buses

Please note Offaly LCDC may also adopt policies that deem other activities ineligible.
LEADER Application Process

1. COMPLETE AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
2. MEET AND DISCUSS PROJECT IDEA WITH OLDC
3. PREPARE / AMEND BUSINESS OR COMMUNITY PLAN
4. DISCUSS PLAN AND PROJECT WITH OLDC
5. POBAL CARRY OUT CHECK ON THE PROJECT
6. PROJECT ASSESSED BY EVALUATION COMMITTEE
7. SUBMIT APPLICATION
8. PUT TOGETHER NECESSARY PAPERWORK
9. PROJECT PRESENTED TO OFFALY LCDC
10. RECEIVE GRANT OFFER
11. COMMENCE WORK ON PROJECT
12. COMPLETE WORK ON PROJECT
13. DRAWDOWN PROJECT GRANT
Project Application Checklist

PROMOTER INFORMATION
- Completed, signed and dated application form.
- A business plan, or in the case of a community voluntary group, a community / project plan. Enclosed copies of plans / drawings / maps for your project.
- Tourism projects - evidence of consultation with other relevant bodies.

TAX AND INSURANCE
- Company Registration Number (if applicable).
- If NOT registered for VAT, written confirmation from your local Tax Office (Revenue) confirming this.
- Copy of Memorandum & Articles of Association (if Ltd Company) or Group Constitution.
- Copy of Charitable Status (if applicable).
- Copy of current insurance policy documents OR a quotation for the provision of insurance cover.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT (PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED OUTLINED REQUIREMENTS)
- Enclose the required number of quotations for each item of expenditure.
- Enclose Tax Reference Number and Tax Access Code from your suppliers.

DE MINIMIS
- Details of all grants and sources of public funding received in the last 3 years.

OWNERSHIP
- If you own the property / land involved in this project, please enclose a certified copy of the folio / stamped deed of the conveyance / indenture and outlined map. Alternatively, a letter and outlined map from your solicitor certifying you are the owner.
- If you are leasing property / land, please enclose the lease agreement and outlined map signed by both parties and certified by a solicitor. Please note the lease must remain in place for a minimum of 5 years from the date of the final grant payment.
- If you neither own the property / land nor have a formal lease on it, a signed licence agreement is required with outlined map from the person / entity who owns the property (witnessed by a solicitor) declaring that you have permission to carry out the project activities concerned and that these works will remain in place for at least a period of a minimum 5 years from the date of the final grant payment.

PLANNING PERMISSION
- Copy of your planning permission OR confirmation from local authority that planning permission is not necessary.

FINANCE
- 3 months bank / credit union statements showing confirmation of match funding requirement.
- Confirmation of access to finance to undertake the project – bank rolling facility.
- Most recent 3 years financial accounts in the case of an existing business.
- 3 years income and expenditure projections in the case of a new business.
- Voluntary Group 3 years – or if newly formed most recent – Treasurers Reports detailing group income and expenditure.
Procurement

This document is only intended as a guide and is not a substitute for professional procurement advice. It is recommended that promoters who require assistance in relation to public procurement seek the services of a professional in this area.

**PROMOTER CATEGORIES**

There are two procurement categories which are applicable to project promoters;

**Category 1**

Project promoters that may be awarded total funding of **more than 50%** of the project costs (from LEADER and/or other public sources)

**Category 2**

Project promoters that may be awarded total funding of **50% or less** of the project costs (from LEADER and/or other public sources)

**NATIONAL PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES – CATEGORY 1**

The National Procurement Guidelines apply where the award of total public funding (from LEADER and public matching funds) is more than 50% of the project costs.

### NATIONAL PROCUREMENT THRESHOLDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Type</th>
<th>Amount (excl. VAT)</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplies &amp; Services</td>
<td>Less than €5,000</td>
<td>Obtain written quotations from a minimum of 2 suppliers (these can be sought verbally but responses must be obtained in writing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€5,000 - €25,000</td>
<td>Obtain written quotations from a minimum of 3 suppliers on the basis of responses to written specifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Related Services</td>
<td>Less than €50,000</td>
<td>Obtain written quotations from at least 5 firms on the basis of responses to written specifications, or follow the eTenders process – Open Procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Professional fees etc.</td>
<td>€50,000 – EU Threshold* (currently €209,000)</td>
<td>Publish Contract Notice on eTenders <a href="http://www.etenders.gov.ie">www.etenders.gov.ie</a> – Open Procedure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where a project exceeds the EU threshold, the LAG must agree the appropriate procurement requirements with the Department as per Section 15.3.

KEY ISSUES

Project promoters are advised, where necessary, to obtain legal or specialist advice and to pay particular attention to the following tendering requirements:

a) For construction the winning tender must be selected solely on the basis of the lowest price tendered. For more technically complex works projects, and where the promoter wishes to select on the basis of MEAT, this is allowable.

b) For Works above €50,000, it is recommended, but not mandatory, that project promoters use the prequalification document circulated by the Department (Works Declaration LEADER (WDL)).

c) For Works-Related Services, the winning tender must be identified on the basis of Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT).

d) For Supplies and Services Contracts, project promoters may award contracts on the basis of either lowest price tendered or MEAT.

e) Email responses to requests for quotations are acceptable where accompanied by clearly identifiable date and source information.

f) Post-tender negotiations are not permitted i.e. any dialogue that could be construed as “post tender negotiation” on price or that might result in significant changes to the published tender request.

g) Successful and unsuccessful tenderer(s) must be notified of the result of the tender process; these notification letters must be placed on file.

REASONABLENESS OF COSTS

Low Number of Tender Responses

Where the procurement process results in less than 3 responses/tenders, the promoter must demonstrate the additional steps taken to ensure that the project costs are reasonable e.g. letter from a suitably qualified professional outlining that, in their professional opinion, the quotations / tenders received represent good value for money and are in keeping with a project of this nature and scale.
### LEADER PROCUREMENT REQUIREMENTS – CATEGORY 2

Specific LEADER procurement rules apply in respect of project promoters who are in receipt of 50% or less of total public funding for a project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Type</th>
<th>Amount (excl. VAT)</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplies &amp; Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 2 suppliers (these can be sought verbally but responses must be obtained in writing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than €10,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>€10,000 - €50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 3 suppliers on the basis of responses to written specifications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above €50,000</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 5 suppliers on the basis of responses to written specifications and place notice on local or national newspaper. Alternatively can publish Contract Notice on eTenders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Works &amp; Works Related Services</strong></th>
<th>Less than €10,000</th>
<th><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 2 firms (these can be sought verbally but responses must be obtained in writing).</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€10,000 - €100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 3 firms on the basis of responses to written specifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above €100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Obtain</strong> written quotations from at least 5 firms on the basis of responses to written specifications and place notice in local or national newspaper. Alternatively, publish Contract Notice on eTenders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It is recommended that tenderers should complete the pre-qualification document – Works Declaration LEADER (WDL) – as circulated by the Department.*
KEY ISSUES

- For all contracts, the winning tender may be selected on the basis of the lowest price tendered or the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT); however the following is advised:
  - Works Contracts - project promoters should select the winning tender on the basis of the lowest price tendered.
  - Works-Related Services Contracts - project promoters should select the winning tender on the basis of MEAT.
- It is recommended that tender respondents should be afforded a reasonable period of time to submit their responses (e.g. 21 calendar days); the time period should reflect the nature and complexity of the proposed project.
- Where a notice is required to be placed in a local or national newspaper, it should refer to the essential details of the contract together with relevant contact details for further information regarding requirements.
- Email responses are acceptable where accompanied by clearly identifiable date and source information.
- Promoters should be aware of the National Health and Safety requirements that apply for Works projects – these are referred to in the pre-qualification document (WDL).
- Successful and unsuccessful tenderers must be notified of the result of the tender process; these notification letters must be placed on file.

REASONABLENESS OF COSTS

Low Number of Tender Responses

Where the procurement process results in less than 3 responses/tenders, the promoter must demonstrate the additional steps taken to ensure that the project costs are reasonable e.g. letter from a suitably qualified professional outlining that, in their professional opinion, the quotations / tenders received represent good value for money and are in keeping with a project of this nature and scale.
Local Development Strategy – Offaly

**LDS Vision:** To develop a strategy which will “reflect the need to engender a culture of entrepreneurship and the development of SMEs and indigenous enterprise; develop within communities the capacity for action and subsequently initiating action to overcome social exclusion; stimulate community resilience and support communities to take responsibility for their own areas”.

The LDS has nine key objectives outlined below. These are aligned with relevant local, regional, national and EU strategies.

### Local Objective 1
To support enterprise development and job creation in Offaly, that will generate economic activity in rural communities; encourage entrepreneurship at all stages from new start-ups to established enterprises and maximise the County’s potential opportunities in this area; through a range of community based and private projects; targeted and sector specific based initiatives and collaborative actions.

**Overall budget allocation:** €800,000.

- **Expanding the SME Base**
- **Supporting Sectorial Growth – Food, Craft and Creative Industries**
- **Developing Social Enterprise**

### Local Objective 2
To develop tourism and the tourism product (amenities, accommodation, facilities and activities) as a key economic and employment generator for the County; combining the natural resources available, diversification of rural land uses, the County’s cultural and heritage assets and the central location.

**Overall budget allocation:** €1.2m.

- **Tourism Products, Services and Events**
- **Branding and Marketing County Offaly**

### Local Objective 3
To animate and facilitate the development of a Rural Towns Initiative in Offaly that seeks to promote the regeneration and sustainability of these areas; enabling the local community to develop the resilience and capacity to find local solutions to local issues and capitalise on local opportunities.

**Overall budget allocation:** €600,000.

- **Facilitating Community Planning**
- **Fostering Community Engagement**
- **Revitalising Town Resources**

### Local Objective 3
To support local actions in Offaly that will complement the national strategies on broadband so as to enhance the social and economic development of rural areas in the County.

**Overall budget allocation:** €200,000.

- **Facilitating Community-Based Broadband**
| Local Objective 5 | To promote social inclusion, reduce exclusion and improve quality of life and access to services for people living in Offaly, through actions that provide for basic services tailored to meet the needs of communities and individuals within those communities in both an urban and rural context. Overall budget allocation: €1.2m.  
- Supporting the social, economic, physical and recreational development of communities in Offaly  
- Capacity Building |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Objective 6 | To provide tailored supports that meet the needs of rural young people including those target groups who are at risk of early school leaving and / or not in education, employment or training (NEETS). Overall budget allocation: €600,000.  
- Addressing Young People’s Needs |
| Local Objective 7 | To support the protection and sustainable development of Offaly’s water resources based on creating an awareness of their value and contribution the overall environmental development of the County. Overall budget allocation: €350,000.  
- Community-based water resource management |
| Local Objective 8 | To provide a package of environmental actions that support the protection, awareness, enhancement and development of the natural landscape and wildlife, the flora and fauna integral to this landscape and the ecosystems that these support; as a key contributor to sustaining the rural environment of Offaly. Overall budget allocation: €350,000.  
- Environmental Conservation and Management |
| Local Objective 9 | To promote and support the development and use of community based renewable energy initiatives as a basis for contributing to the long term sustainable development of rural communities in Offaly – yielding social, economic and environmental results for communities, rural businesses, households and target populations. Overall budget allocation: €700,000.  
- Promoting Community-Based Renewable Energy |