

WEST LIMERICK RESOURCES

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST:

TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT

KEY DATES

Call Announcement:	2 nd January 2017
Deadline for Submission of Expression of Interest (EOI):	Rolling - Expressions of Interest will be assessed on an on-going basis.
Deadline for Submission of Full Application:	Rolling – Full applications will be invited from those Expressions of Interest deemed eligible.
Proposed Overall Allocation for this Grant:	€60,000

Terms of Reference

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of this document, it is provided for information purposes only and as a guide to expected developments. It is not intended, and should not be relied upon, as any form of warranty, representation, undertaking, contractual, or other commitment binding in law upon West Limerick Resources, Limerick Local Community Development Committee, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs or any of their respective agents.

All responses to this Call for Submission of Proposals will be treated in confidence and no information contained therein will be communicated to any third party without the written permission of the applicant except insofar as is specifically required for the consideration and evaluation of the proposal or as may be required under law, including the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.

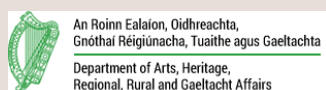


TABLE OF CONTENTS

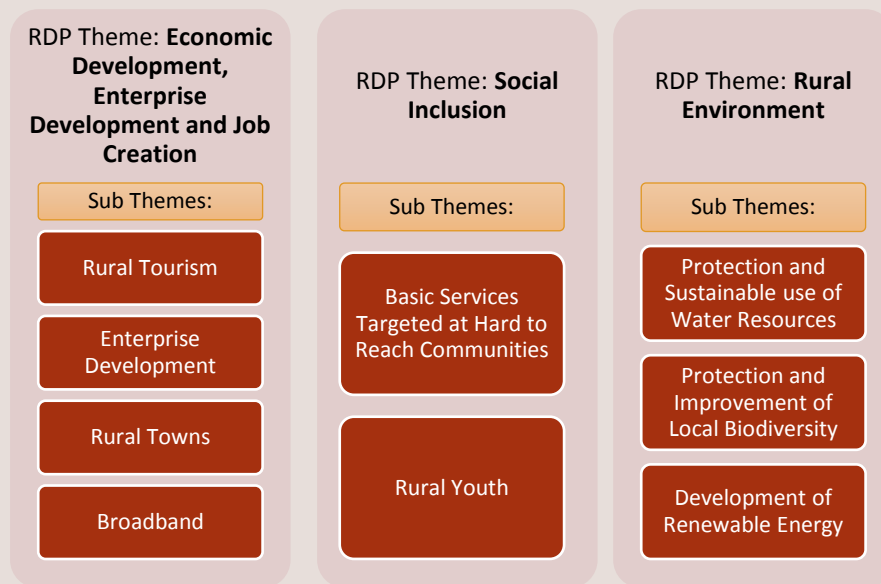
Key Dates	1
1. Introduction	3
2. The Technical Feasibility Study Grant (2016)	4
3. Link to Local Development Strategy (LDS)	4
4. What Projects Will We Fund?	5
5. What Funding Is Available?	6
6. How to Apply for Funding	7
7. How Will We Evaluate Your Application?	9
Appendix 1: Eligibility Criteria	10
Appendix 2: Standard Conditions Attaching to Grant Offer	11
Appendix 3: Contacts and Further Information	13
Disclaimer	13

1.5 WHAT IS LEADER?

LEADER is a community-led approach to local development funded through Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It supports locally identified initiatives that seek to address locally identified needs and challenges.

The LEADER programme 2014-2020 has identified a number of strategic objectives and priorities for European Union (EU) rural development and is included under priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (RDP) which promotes social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

Under the current programme, local projects may be funded under three RDP themes and nine sub-themes:



2. THE TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT (2016)

Technical Feasibility Study Grants are provided to assist a business or community organization to engage in planning efforts or advance collaborations. They support the design, development and implementation of concrete projects and programmes by helping to scope out potential investment opportunities. Technical assistance grants help fund the hiring of an outside consultant with specialised expertise. These grants cannot be used to pay staff or board salary to conduct the work of a consultant.

The purpose of the Technical Feasibility Study grant is to support the identification and development of projects and initiatives which are potentially fundable under the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme capital and training grants.

3. LINK TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (LDS)

This grant potentially underpins the roll out and achievement of all of the Local Objective Statement of the Limerick LDS.

- 1. Leader Theme(s):** Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation

Sub-theme(s): Rural Tourism, Enterprise Development, Rural Towns, Broadband

Strategic Action (s): Tourism Product Development, Indigenous and Social Enterprise, Community Socio Economic Planning, Broadband Access and IT Skills Capacity.

- 2. Leader Theme(s):** Social Inclusion

Sub-theme(s): Basic Services Targeted at Hard to Reach Communities, Rural Youth

Strategic Action (s): Community Animation, Capacity Building and Training; Youth Infrastructure – Facilities & Services

- 3. Leader Theme(s):** Rural Environment

Sub-theme(s): Protection & Sustainable Use of Water Resources; Protection & Improvement of Local Biodiversity; Development of Renewable Energy

Strategic Action (s): Protection & Sustainable Use of Water; Protection & Improvement of Local Biodiversity; Renewable Energy Use; Renewable Energy Supply

4. WHAT PROJECTS WILL WE FUND?

4.1 ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

To be eligible for funding under the Technical Feasibility Study Grants, the activity or area which is the subject of the research/ analysis must be eligible under the LEADER Programme. Applicants must demonstrate a clear need for technical assistance and that the relevant analysis or development has not already been undertaken.

LEADER must not fund projects that are eligible under other EU funded schemes. Similarly, LEADER must not fund projects that are eligible under another National programme or scheme.

Eligible activities include:	Ineligible activities include:
Analysis & Development of Rural (Rurally Sourced) Products	Preparation or publication of historical books or other media
Feasibility Studies	Architectural Plans
Development Plans	Development of Websites
Resource Audits	Staff Salaries
Development of Prototype Products and Services	Foreign travel/Subsistence
Assessment and exploratory works necessary to inform a detailed	Capital items/equipment e.g. laptops, servers

heritage related project proposal e.g. Archaeological Assessment, investigation of structure, development of appropriately detailed repair specifications and methodologies, ecological survey	
Analysis of the Commercial Feasibility of a Project	

Please note that a detailed list of ineligible sectors and activities is included in Appendix 1.

Please note where a project receives a technical feasibility study grant there is no commitment to fund any project that may arise on foot of the analysis or development work until an application for the subsequent project has been received and approved by the LAG.

4.2 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- All proposals proceeding to full application must clearly outline the rationale and advantages to supporting the activity outlined in the application form. Proposals should also address a specific identified need relating to the LEADER themes and sub-themes.
- The rules relating to procurement of services/tendering must be followed. A summary of these are described in section 6.3.
- Proposals proceeding to full application (stage 2) should also describe the training, skills, track record or experience of the external consultant engaged.
- A copy of the resulting report must be provided to the LAG and LEADER Network (where appropriate) so as to avoid duplication and overlap in relation to studies funded.
- Applicants applying for funding will be expected to attend information events related to LEADER funding which will be run by West Limerick Resources in advance of the launch of funding applications.

4.3 DEADWEIGHT

Grant-aid will not be awarded to projects that are capable of proceeding without LEADER funding (i.e. where 'deadweight' would apply). Applications must be accompanied by a declaration by the applicant that the project is not capable of proceeding without LEADER funding.

4.4 DISPLACEMENT

Funding will not be awarded if it will result in an unacceptable level of displacement e.g. closure or loss of business for another enterprise elsewhere, whether it is within West Limerick or a neighbouring area. In the assessment of project applications, displacement will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

5.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The Technical Feasibility Study Grant is open to applications from the private and community sectors based in the West Limerick area subject to the exclusion of ineligible sectors and activities specified in the LEADER Operating Rules which are set out in Appendix 1.

5.2 HOW MUCH FUNDING CAN I RECEIVE?

The rate of grant aid is governed by the type of applicant and will be based on eligible costs specific to the project. Please note the community rate only applies where there is no commercial basis for the project.

Where an external consultant has been engaged, their fees must be inclusive of travel and subsistence and all out-of-pocket expenses. VAT must be included in the overall price of the consultancy quotation.

Funding for Community Socio Economic Plans is set at €5,000. Minimum grant aid under this call is €5,000.

Type of Project	Applicant	Maximum Rate of Aid	Maximum Funding
Analysis and Development	Private	Up to a maximum of 75%	€30,000
	Community	Up to a maximum of 90%	

Funding cannot be awarded to public bodies.

IMPORTANT: Project activity undertaken or commenced, or the purchase of goods or services engaged by the project applicant prior to the date of contract signing, shall not be eligible for LEADER funding.

IMPORTANT: Applicants awarded funding will be required to repay all or part of the funding amount if the duration of the investment does not persist for a minimum of five years i.e. if a funded activity or enterprise closes, is sold, leased or substantially changed within five years of the final grant payment.

Grants are paid on completion of the project or a phased basis on completion of an agreed phase. In order to claim grant payment the promoter must provide the relevant documentary evidence required including, but not limited to, original invoices, receipts and copies of bank statements showing payment leaving the account.

Bridging Finance: Evidence that the applicant has adequate resources (or bridging finance) in place to deliver the project will be required at Stage 2 Application.

5.3 PROJECT MATCHING FUNDING

LEADER funding is a contribution to the cost of delivering a project and should be matched by non-Programme funds to meet the full cost of the project. "Matching

funding” is required for all projects and can be sourced privately or from other public funds (other than EU funds).

Public Sources of Match Funding:

The Programme may not co-fund with other EU funds. Accordingly, funding from other EU sources cannot be used to match-fund or co-fund LEADER projects. Matching funding from other public funded sources (e.g. Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland etc.) is permitted for community-led projects only providing it does not derive from an EU fund.

5.4 STATE-AID AND DE-MINIMIS REQUIREMENTS

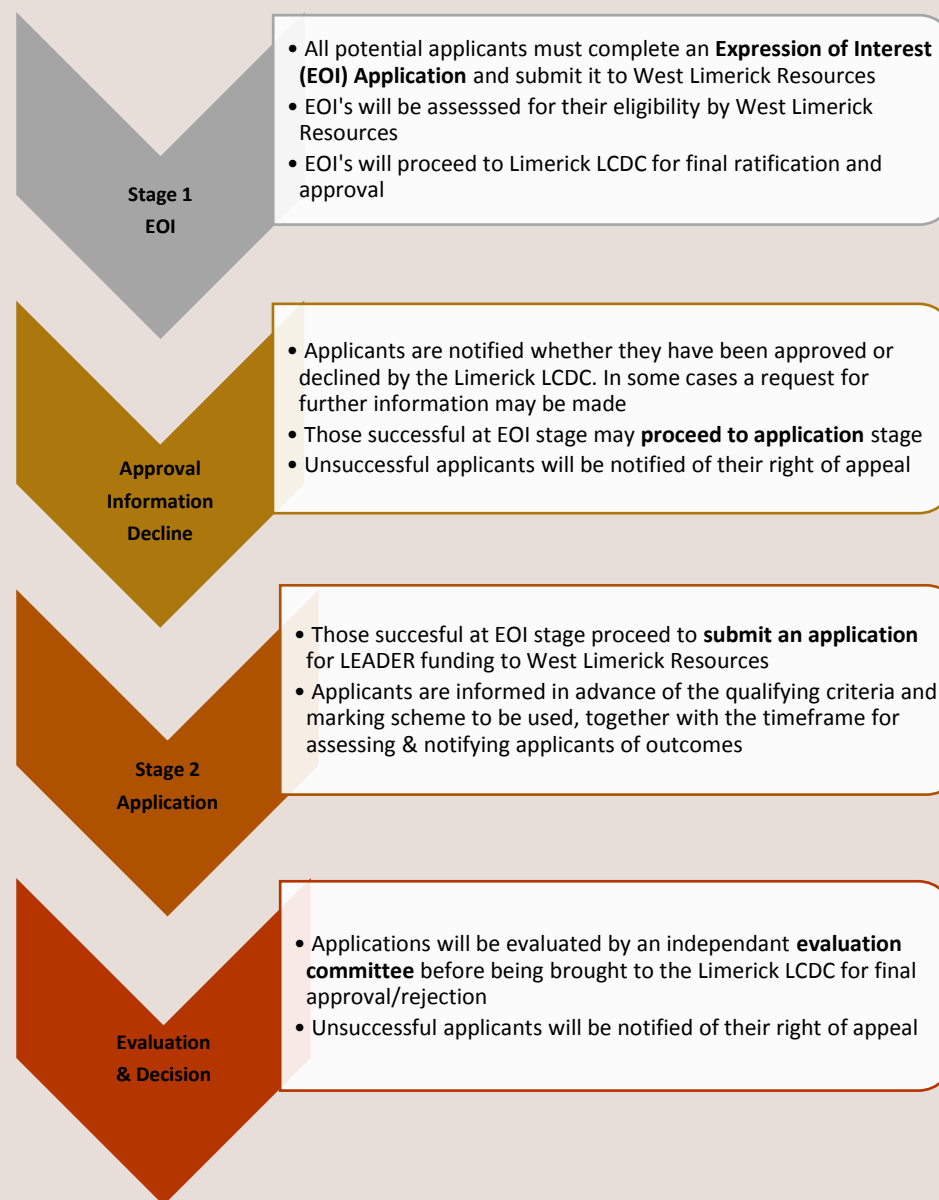
State aid rules apply to LEADER funding and determine what types of projects are eligible and what support can be provided. The state aid rule applies to project promoters involved in economic activity, irrespective of its legal form, how it is financed, or whether or not it has a for-profit orientation. Essentially, any activity that offers goods or services on a market is an economic activity.

To comply with State Aid (De Minimis) rules, applicants must declare at application stage whether or not they have received State aid, so as to determine that LEADER funding sought will not increase the total aid received by the applicant from all public sources during the previous three-year fiscal period above the €200,000 *de minimis* ceiling.

6. HOW TO APPLY FOR FUNDING

6.1 APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications under this grant will follow a two stage process as outlined in the following diagram.



IMPORTANT: Project activity undertaken or commenced, or the purchase of goods or services engaged by the project applicant prior to the date of contract signing, shall not be eligible for LEADER funding.

6.2 DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

The following documentation must be provided at **Stage 1** of the Application Process:

- Completed Expression of Interest (EOI) Form
- Signed Data Protection Consent Form (contained within EOI form)
- Copy of Governing Document (e.g. Constitution)

The following documentation must be provided at **Stage 2** of the Application Process:

- Completed Application Form
- Proof of Matching Funding
- Proof of access to Bridging Finance
- Evidence of title/lease/agreement to lease (for capital projects)
- Signed Business Plan including 3 year cash flow projections or project plan (as appropriate)
- Copy of audited accounts or management accounts for past 3 years (as appropriate)
- Copy of all bank statements relating to the business (previous 3 months)
- Proof of Tax Clearance
- Original Quotations/Tenders
- Evidence of Procurement Process (where applicable)

- Confirmation of VAT exemption (if applicable)
- Evidence of planning /other permissions
- Building Plans (if applicable)
- Voluntary Labour Calculation (if applicable)

6.3 PROJECT PROCUREMENT

- Quotations/Tenders must be obtained for each item of expenditure for which grant aid is sought. These must be signed and dated and show the VAT element separately.
- Applicants must demonstrate compliance with EU Public Procurement law and national procurement guidelines where appropriate. Further information is available at www.etenders.gov.ie and www.procurement.ie
- The relevant procurement procedures for contracting and non-contracting authorities are outlined in the following tables.

Procurement Procedure for Contracting Authorities*		
Services & Supplies	€0-25,000	Obtain a minimum of 3 written quotations. Emails are acceptable (covering email must be attached)
	Greater than €25,000	Advertise on e-tenders website for a minimum of 21 days
*A state, regional or local authority or a body governed by public law		

Procurement Procedure for Non-Contracting Authorities

Services & Supplies	€0-25,000	Obtain a minimum of 3 written quotations. Emails are acceptable (covering email must be attached)
	Greater than €25,000	Advertise on e-tenders website for a minimum of 21 days

- Applicants are advised to verify that any external procurement expertise used has the necessary skills and experience.
- Further details on project procurement will be made available to projects progressing to Stage 2 of the Application Process. The importance of following correct procurement procedures cannot be over emphasised for LEADER funding.

7. HOW WILL WE EVALUATE YOUR APPLICATION?

STAGE 1 (Expression of Interest): Expressions of Interest will be reviewed by Limerick LCDC based on the following criteria:

Score Criteria	Weighting	Min Score
Meets the criteria set out in the local development strategy	Pass/Fail	Pass
Eligible under Programme Operating Rules	Pass/Fail	Pass
Eligible under Call Criteria	Pass/Fail	Pass

STAGE 2 (Full Application): An independent Evaluation Committee will assess and evaluate all applications that progress to Stage 2. They will complete a formal evaluation scoring record, based on objective criteria. The recommendation of the evaluation committee is submitted to the LAG for final decision.

A project must score a minimum of 70% of the total marks to be recommended for approval. Projects will be ranked in order of highest to lowest in terms of evaluation criteria. Where the total grant aid sought exceeds the amount available under the grant, funding will be allocated to those achieving the highest scores.

7.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA SCORING RECORD

The following figure outlines the evaluation criteria which will be used in assessing projects at Stage 2. Each evaluation criterion carries a weighting (in brackets).

Score Criteria	Weighting	Min Score
Meets the criteria set out in the local development strategy	Pass/Fail	Pass
Eligible under Programme Operating Rules	Pass/Fail	Pass
Eligible under Call Criteria	Pass/Fail	Pass
Deadweight – Is the project capable of proceeding without LEADER funding?	Pass/Fail	Pass
Displacement/Competition – Will the project be in direct competition with an existing local business and could it result in displacement of jobs or activities elsewhere?	Pass/Fail	Pass
Innovation of the proposal - Is the proposal innovative in its nature? Is there something new about the project?	15	70%
Experience of the applicant - Does the applicant have the training, skills, track record or experience to deliver the proposed project successfully?	20	70%
Financial viability of the project – – Has the applicant demonstrated the projects value for money and the projects financial viability from development through to operation?	15	70%

Sustainability of the project – Does the business/project plan demonstrate that the project is viable and sustainable in to the future?	15	70%
Requirement/Market - What evidence has been provided that the project is filling an identified need, market or demand?	15	70%
Project Impacts - Has the applicant demonstrated how the project will benefit the local community - socially, economically and environmentally?	10	70%
Specific Added Value to the Call – Will the outcome of the proposed study benefit the local area/economy?	10	70%

This is a competitive process with a limited fund. Projects that score above the minimum score criteria of 70% will not be guaranteed funding. Subject to Departmental Approval, LEADER grant offers will be issued following the final decions of approval by Limerick LCDC. There will be an appeals process for unsuccessful applicants.

APPENDIX 1: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

INELIGIBLE SECTORS AND ACTIVITIES FOR ALL LEADER FUNDING

The following table lists the ineligible sectors and activities for which LEADER funding shall not be awarded or paid. This list applies to all project applications under the LEADER programme and is not specific to this grant:

Ineligible Sectors and Activities
Agriculture
Fisheries

Conventional retail operations, excluding community based shops and farm shops selling locally produced produce
Courses of instruction or training which form the part of normal education programmes or systems at secondary or higher levels. Note: this includes the rural development diploma and degree
Loans
Working capital (including stock)
Insurance for project promoters
Horticulture (including bee-keeping)
Payments for gifts, donations or personal entertainments
Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages
Legal expenses in respect of litigation
Costs associated with meeting a legislative or statutory requirement
Planning application fee
Reclaimable VAT
Improvements/refurbishment of private residential property
Projects that already have other EU funding either directly or through a national programme
Conventional motor vehicles, including cars, industrial/farm/construction vehicles, vans and buses
General maintenance works of public bodies
Childcare
Health Care
Nursing homes
Housing
Race and sport horse industries
Greyhound Industry

Project activity undertaken or commenced, or the purchase of goods or services engaged by a project applicant or Local Action Group (as project promoter) prior to the date of the contract, shall not be eligible for LEADER funding.

COMMUNITY APPLICANTS

To be eligible as a “community” applicant, the applicant must be:

- A non-profit distributing group; and
- Institutionally separate from the State; and
- Coming together, or has come together, to pursue a common cause or interest for the good of their community; and
- Autonomous and engaged in voluntary activity; and
- Promoting the interests of the wider community rather than the commercial interests of its members; and
- A group, or project, whose membership does not consist of any secondary economic beneficiaries e.g. local business people coming together as a ‘community body’ to apply for funding to bring tourists into an area – business people acting in a private capacity on a community body are not considered secondary economic beneficiaries.

APPENDIX 2: STANDARD CONDITIONS ATTACHING TO GRANT OFFER

GRANT OFFER & PROJECT COMMENCEMENT

A valid commitment of LEADER funding to a project applicant only exists when the LAG has made its decision and a letter of offer or contract, clearly stating the funded activity or items, has issued to the applicant and the offer or contract has been accepted in writing and returned by the applicant within the period prescribed by the LAG in the letter of offer, fifteen working days from the date of the offer is suggested.

The LAG will only offer funding in respect of specified costed investments for which the beneficiary has sought grant aid. The LAG may issue a funding offer subject to conditions.

Project activity undertaken or commenced, or the purchase of goods or services engaged by a project applicant prior to the date of the contract, shall not be eligible for LEADER funding.

If a beneficiary is found to have intentionally made a false declaration, the operation in question shall be excluded from support of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and any amounts already paid for that operation shall be recovered. Moreover, the beneficiary shall be excluded from receiving support under the same measure for the EAFRD year in question and for the following EAFRD year.

CONTRIBUTION IN KIND

Contributions-in-kind may be accepted as a source of matching funding on community-led and farm diversification (farmer’s labour only) projects and can include the donation of works, goods, services, land or real estate. There must be a minimum cash contribution of 5% of the total eligible project costs. The maximum rate allowed for Contribution-in-Kind in the form of voluntary labour is €14 per hour. The total to be claimed for Contribution in Kind must be included in the application and must be agreed before the project is approved.

Contributions-in-kind are eligible if:

- The LEADER funding does not exceed the final total eligible project cost, excluding contributions –in-kind and the 5% cash contribution; and
- The value assigned to the contribution-in-kind does not exceed the market cost of the works, goods, services or land and real estate in question; and

- The value and the provision of the contribution-in-kind has been independently assessed and verified. The LAG must obtain and retain documentary evidence to this effect.

EXPIRATION OF CONTRACTS

The LAG will impose a completion date for all funding commitments in the contract of funding offer. The progress of all projects will be monitored and reviewed by West Limerick Resources in their support role to funding applicants of the LEADER programme. Expenditure incurred outside the contract timeframe is ineligible.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Funding applicants will be required to provide information on their projects over the life time of the funding as and when required by the LAG or West Limerick Resources, as it's implementing Partner. This may include qualitative elements, whereby progress, achievements and the associated learning will be described by the funding applicant.

All projects funded under LEADER are subject to administrative checks and audit. The LAG reserves the right to arrange for the inspection at all reasonable times of any land, premises, plant, equipment, receipts for purchased items and records of participants. Recipients of grant aid must permit the Minister, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the EU, their officers and agents to inspect all activities and records of the beneficiary, relating to the project.

APPEALS PROCESS

The right of appeal applies to all funding decisions by the LAG. An appeal template will be made available to project applicants if required. Full details of the appeals process are available on request.

PUBLICITY REQUIREMENTS

Recipients of grant aid must comply with the Programmes information and publicity requirements.

Public support exceeding €10,000: Where LEADER funding exceeds €10,000, promoters must erect at least one poster with information about the operation (minimum size A3), highlighting the LEADER funding received at a location readily visible to the public, such as the entrance area of a building.

Public support exceeding €50,000: Where LEADER funding exceeds €50,000, the promoter must place an explanatory plaque at the project site with information about the project and highlighting the financial support from LEADER.

Posters, plaques, publications (including reports) and webpages must carry a description of the funded project as well as the following logos

- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas
- The European Emblem and LEADER logo
- The Departments Logo
- Limerick Local & Community Development Committee (LCDC)
- West Limerick Resources

Copies of the relevant logos are available on request.

Information must be bilingual and cover at least 23% of the poster, plaque or webpage. The cost associated with these may be included as an eligible project cost.

Details of beneficiaries will be published on the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine's Website. In addition the details of the project and project promoter may also be publicised on the Department, the LAG's and the Implementing Partners websites.

Recipients of grant aid may also be required to take part in publicity relating to the programme.

DATA PROTECTION

All information supplied will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. Applicants will be required to complete a Form of Consent in relation to the processing of their Data. Under section 4 of the Data Protection Acts, on making a written request, an individual is entitled to a copy of their personal information on computer or in a relevant filing system.

APPENDIX 3: CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

To arrange a meeting to discuss this grant scheme in relation to your project or to request an Expression of Interest form, please contact Suzanne Rowley, West Limerick Resources' Rural Development Programme Co-ordinator at rdp@wlr.ie

For further information regarding the LEADER Programme, please see <http://www.wlr.ie/rural-development-leader-programme-2014-2/>

Contact Information for West Limerick Resources:

West Limerick Resources
St Mary's Road
Newcastle West
Co Limerick
Tel: 069 62222
E-mail: info@wlr.ie

DISCLAIMER

Please note that this is a summary guide only and does not include full programme details and operating rules. Information is correct at time of printing but may be subject to change.