



# OUTER HEBRIDES 2014-2020 LEADER AND EMFF PROGRAMME



## CO-OPERATION PROJECTS

Funding is available for supporting groups who would like to develop project and ideas with other partner organisation in Scotland, UK or further afield.

If you have an idea that you wish to discuss, please contact a member of the [LEADER team](#). The Scottish Rural Network are also available to provide assistance for those seeking partners to undertake Co-operation Projects, more information on this can be found on the [Scottish Rural Network/cooperation](#).

Applications for co-operation projects are submitted in the same way as other LEADER project applications however your LEADER officer will be able to support you through this process.

### TYPES OF CO-OPERATION PROJECTS

- 1. Preparatory Support** - Support for exploring the feasibility and development of the main Co-operation project
- 2. Inter-territorial Co-operation: Scotland** - Projects involving Scottish Local Action Groups (LAGs) only.
- 3. Inter-territorial Co-operation: UK** - Projects involving LAGs in England, Wales and/or Northern Ireland.
- 4. Transnational Co-operation** - Projects between territories in several Member States and/or with territories in third countries i.e. outside the EU.

### FUNDING AVAILABLE *(subject to State Aid Regulations):*

- up to **90%** of Total eligible Project costs for **Community** applicants up to £125,000
- up to **70%** of Total eligible Project costs for **Business** applicants up to £100,000
- **Preparatory Projects** up to **100%** of eligible costs to a maximum of **£5000**

### PREPARATORY SUPPORT

If your proposal is in line with the Local Development Strategy(ies) of the different LEADER areas where the project will take place then you may wish to access support to allow you to develop your co-operation ideas. However, this is not mandatory and not all co-operation projects will require preparatory support. You can apply to the LAG for support for application development, engagement within local stakeholders and potential co-operation partners, covering a range of costs, including:

- venue/equipment hire
- catering
- travel
- publicity
- accommodation
- subsistence
- translation/interpreters' fees
- participation
- feasibility studies

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A formal cooperation partnership should not be in place at the preparatory support application stage. Correspondence for other LAGs indicating interest in a potential cooperation project may help support the need for there to be an actual project following completion for preparatory support. Preparatory support applications are only eligible to the lead applicant to investigate the feasibility of the co-operation project and develop the activities and therefore no partners should be involved at this stage.

Whilst it is preferable that the main Co-operation project takes place, receiving preparatory support does not imply an obligation to carry out the project (for example if it proves not to be viable) and therefore the recipient of the preparatory support will not have to repay funding. Evidence will be sought to prove the project is unviable and unfeasible and that attempts were undertaken to make the project work.

The intervention rate for preparatory support will be 100%, subject to a State Aid Assessment, up to a maximum of £5,000 per application. Reasonableness of costs must be demonstrated for all applications.

### CO-OPERATION APPLICATION (*main project*)

Co-operation projects have a non-capital (revenue) focus to encourage innovation, feasibility studies and collaboration.

Co-operation is an essential element of the LEADER approach and is concerned with adding scale to projects, building social cohesion between people in different areas and unifying them around a common purpose. In the past, actions have tended to focus on capacity building/knowledge exchange, joint working with a spatial and/or thematic focus. As with other project types any co-operation actions are considered eligible if they fit with the Local Development Strategy. Further information, examples of past co-operation projects and support can be found here:

[www.ruralnetwork.scot/cooperation/what-cooperation](http://www.ruralnetwork.scot/cooperation/what-cooperation)

### The LEADER Co-operation Projects Application Process:

The following are the stages of the application for any co-operation project which includes two or more Scottish LAGs. *Trans-national projects, which include no other Scottish LAGs, will generally follow the steps below with slight modifications however please contact the LEADER team to discuss this further.*

#### 1. Expression of Interest

Prior to submitting any application you must submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) via the Scottish Rural Network website ([Outer Hebrides LEADER - expression-of-interest](#)) and in doing so identify all the LAG areas that you think your proposal will cover. Submitting an EoI will allow your LAG or other LAGs to check that the proposal is in line with the [Outer Hebrides LEADER & EMFF 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy](#) and the other areas [Local Development Strategy](#)(ies). Submitting an EoI will

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also allow the Scottish Rural Network Support Unit to contact you and, where appropriate, work with you on developing your idea and finding potential partners (particularly in other parts of the UK & EU).

### 2. Meeting with LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) and partners

This stage will involve meeting with all partners and LAGs to discuss the project and way forward. It will also include discussing how the project will take place, what it will involve, timescales and which groups, roles and also the LAGs roles and responsibilities including who will be the lead applicant and lead LAG to manage the application and project. Discussions will also take place to agree the LEADER intervention rate between all LEADER partners. Partners will begin developing and designing the project, compiling and creating all relevant documentation for the application and Co-operation Partnership Agreement.

### 3. Application Submission and Decision

The lead applicant group compiles and submits the online application and documentation on behalf of all partners. The LEADER team will be able to support you through this process. Once submitted the LEADER LAGs will review the application to come to a decision which will either be to Approve, Reject or Defer the project and you will be notified of the decision following the meeting.

### 4. Approval and Co-operation Partnership Agreement

If funding is approved the Lead Applicant for the project will receive the offer of grant which will require to be signed and returned to the LEADER office before the project can begin. This will be accompanied by a partnership agreement which will also be required to be completed, agreed and signed by all parties. The project must commence within 3 months of this date. Evidence will be sought at the first claim to show this.

### 5. Claims

The lead applicant will manage the project, collate monitoring information and submit claims for reimbursement of funding. LEADER funding is retrospective and therefore evidence of defrayal including signed invoices, receipts and bank statements will be a requisite. The LEADER team will provide guidance on how to complete the claims, documentation and the evidence required.

The final 10% of the approved LEADER grant cannot be claimed until after the project has completed and submission of the final project claim.

All standard LEADER scheme project requirements also apply to Co-operation Projects; this includes complying with all procurement and publicity requirements. Failure to do so may result in loss of the grant or some items becoming ineligible. Information on this will be provided with your grant contract.

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### Scottish Rural Network – Commonly Asked Questions

#### What is LEADER cooperation?

Cooperation is a partnership between two or more applicants. There is no defined upper limit on the number of partners a project may have but the project must be manageable.



#### Who can be a partner?

Applicants may cooperate with partners from anywhere. Partners from within the EU may be located in both rural and urban areas (subject to local rules). Partners outside the EU must be located in rural areas. They must be a group of local public and private partners in a rural territory that is implementing a strategy akin to a Local Development Strategy.

#### Can you cooperate with a LAG from your own region or Member State?

Yes, partnering with other LAGs from Scotland is referred to as 'Inter-territorial Scotland Cooperation'. You can also cooperate with LAGs from other Member States, this is referred to as 'Transnational Cooperation'. Cooperation between LAGs from different regions of the UK is referred to as 'Inter-territorial UK Cooperation' as it takes place between regions of one Member State.

#### What are the benefits of a cooperation project?

There are many potential benefits from participating in cooperation projects. Cooperation is a way to:-

- Widen local views in order to improve local strategies;
- Get access to information and new ideas;
- Learn from other regions or countries;
- Stimulate and support innovation; and
- Acquire skills and means to improve delivery

#### How do you apply for a cooperation project?

The application process used is determined by each Member State. For Inter-territorial Scotland a single application is submitted, supported by the LAG Funding Agreement between Scottish LAG Partners.

For Transnational and Inter-territorial UK projects, each applicant must submit an application for funding towards their element of the overall project budget. This will include any costs that are directly attributable to their area, as well as any agreed contribution to common costs (i.e. those costs which are shared out amongst the partnership e.g. cost of professional advice, publications, web development, etc.).

#### What is the currency of a cooperation project?

The budget for each partner LAG must be stated in their national currency. This means that applicants in Scotland must calculate their budgets in Pounds Sterling (£). This will be noted in the Partnership Agreement.

#### What kind of project could you undertake?

Any project which fits within the Priorities/Measures/Schemes of your own [Local Development Strategy](#) and meets the eligibility criteria of the EU Regulations and National operating rules.

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### **What help is available/where can I get help to develop a project idea?**

The Network Support Unit (NSU) at the [Scottish Rural Network](#) have a number of tools and services available to help applicants who wish to develop a cooperation project. Your [local LEADER team](#) will also offer technical support to applicants to help them through the process.

The [European Network for Rural Development \(ENRD\)](#) website contains useful resources on LEADER and cooperation as well as organising and promoting a range of seminars and networking events which could help support applicants in preparing for and undertaking a cooperation project.

### **How do you go about finding possible project partners?**

Applicants often find potential partners through their engagement in networking activity organised through the national rural network structures or develop partnerships based on existing personal contact with LAGs from other areas.

Where this is not possible, an online Partner Search Request facility is available from the [Scottish Rural Network](#) and also on the [ENRD website](#). The SRN and ENRD will list your project idea on their website and include it in mailings or newsletters. They will also proactively identify and seek suitable potential partner areas/applicants based on the information provided within the Partner Search Request.

### **Is networking part of cooperation?**

A key element of the animation activity of the LAG is networking. This provides the opportunity for LAGs to identify and develop links with other LAGs and organisations. Networking is considered as the starting point for cooperation activity.

### **Is there specific grant assistance to help develop a project?**

Preparatory Technical Support funding is available to support applicants to develop project ideas and partnerships to the point where they can submit a full project application. Preparatory support must precede the cooperation project and can only take place prior to partnerships being agreed.

As in all circumstances, reasonableness of costs must be demonstrated.

### **Is Preparatory Technical Support mandatory?**

Applicants are not obliged to make use of all or any of the preparatory support available in developing their cooperation projects. If the project details are sufficiently worked up and a project partnership is already in place then an applicant can move straight to the submission of a full project application.

### **What is the anticipated timescale for a cooperation project?**

It is not unreasonable to expect, from initial networking/contact through to the completion of a Preparatory Technical Support project, a period of six months.

A full cooperation project can take several months to develop and depending on the nature and complexity of the project, delivery could typically fall into the range of 18-24 months.

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## Successful Cooperation Activity – Key Characteristics

Cooperation projects have quite distinct characteristics. The table below highlights some factors for you to consider when developing a project proposal for either for inter-territorial or transnational cooperation projects.



**PLEASE INCLUDE THIS COMPLETED TABLE WITH YOUR CO-OPERATION PROJECT APPLICATION**

| DOES YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT?                              | CONSIDERATIONS   | YES | NO |
|--|--|-----|----|
| Involve on the ground activity in two or more LAG areas? | Are the LAGs in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Scotland or the UK (inter-territorial)</li> <li>➢ In Europe (transnational)</li> </ul>   |     |    |
|  | Is the applicant one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A single organisation already working in both areas and the project idea is a development of existing activity or new activity</li> <li>• A single organisation working with different groups in the LAG areas</li> <li>• Two or more groups in more than one LAG area coming together to develop a project</li> </ul> |     |    |
| Follow a territorial approach:                           | Cooperation projects should fit well with each LAG's local development strategy. Projects should address challenges in LAG areas in order to ensure their relevance and added value.<br><br>Is there a reason to cooperate and is this built into your LDS delivery plan?  |     |    |
| Have a strong and clear project idea:                    | The idea must contribute to the realisation of the objectives of the LAG's local development strategies. A general topic (even if it will be adapted at a later stage with the partners) may fail to provide such a contribution.<br><br>Is there a demonstrable bottom-up approach and community involvement in developing the project and engagement with groups in the LAG areas?                   |     |    |
| Go beyond simple   | Projects should include common concrete actions  |     |    |

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|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>exchanges:</b>   | which create tangible results that aim to find answers to the challenges of rural areas (joint acquisition of technology, creation of common events or products, joint experimentation/piloting etc.)   |  |  |
| <b>Plan properly for human resources:</b>                               | Consider the development, coordination, implementation and management from the early stages of project development  |  |  |
| <b>Build a strong partnership with participating LAGs/organisations</b> | <p>The project outline should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define the profile of your desired partner(s) to make the partner search easier;</li> <li>• negotiate and distribute roles and responsibilities between the partners while developing the project (and include these in the partnership agreement); and</li> <li>• maintain and manage the partnership during the implementation of the cooperation project</li> </ul> |  |  |
| <b>Improve local delivery:</b>  | Skills development, programme development, improved management and administration   |  |  |
| <b>Inspire innovation:</b>  | New solutions, use of models of delivery from elsewhere, new approaches, new perspectives on rural issues   |  |  |
| <b>Support and strengthen rural networks:</b>                           | Develops partnerships and/or finds new markets for regions, products and services   |  |  |
| <b>Capitalise on economies of scale:</b>                                | Cost reduction for project implementation at LAG level  |  |  |
| <b>Help achieve critical mass:</b>                                      | Allows a project to go ahead which would not be feasible at single LAG level or enhances a single LAG project through access to resources/expertise   |  |  |
| <b>Encourage capacity building:</b>                                     | Enables training, knowledge transfer and shared expertise. Broadens awareness   |  |  |
| <b>Contribute to profile raising:</b>                                   | Raises profile of territory, European networks  |  |  |
| <b>Encourage pride in place:</b>  | Fosters pride in place through representation of an area, fosters a sense of citizenship within a region, nation or EU.   |  |  |

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