



Project Appraisal Process

1. Expression of Interest Stage

Task 1: The Administrative Body will ensure that the initial Stage 1 Expression of Interest (EOI) form has been completed, verifying that the project sponsor is in a position to deliver the project idea if funding is awarded.

Task 2: The Administrative Body will check that the project is eligible for State Aid exemption. On confirmation of such, the project sponsor will be asked to complete a Stage 2 Expression of Interest (EOI) form as fully as possible.

Task 3: The Administrative Body will forward LAG members a copy of the completed Stage 2 EOI, the Stage 2 Appraisal Criteria* and a blank Stage 2 Member Score Sheet, by email. These forms will be sent at least 10 days before the scheduled LAG meeting at which the EOI is due to be discussed.

***Stage 2 Appraisal Criteria and Score Sheet**

The Stage 2 Appraisal Criteria will assist members when scoring each answer to the questions on the EOI. Scores should be placed on the blank Member Score Sheet, a separate score sheet is needed for each EOI.

Each member should refer to pages 19 – 25 of the Member's Handbook for information relating to Section 2 of the EOI, which deals with LEADER/Regenerate NPT objectives. These pages outline the type of actions that can be supported with LEADER funding in NPT. Members will need to decide if the project addresses at least 1 of the overall **LEADER objectives**, at least 1 of the **Regenerate NPT priorities** and at least 1 of the **Regenerate NPT objectives**.

Task 4: Members will evaluate and score the EOIs against the Stage 2 Appraisal Criteria and return their completed Score Sheets to the Administrative Body at least 2 days before the scheduled LAG meeting, preferably via email. The Administrative Body will then collate all scores and comments and make them available to facilitate discussion at the LAG meeting.

Task 5: At the LAG meeting members will review the collective scoring and comments, considering any issues and inconsistencies. The Chair will facilitate discussion of the appraisal scoring:

- A project score of an average of 38 or above will move to the full application stage;
- A project score of an average of between 25 and 37 means the LAG can recommend that the project applicant resubmits the EOI, providing guidance on the areas/issues that need to be improved upon;
- If a project scores an average of between 11 and 24 it will be rejected. In accordance with the Appeals Process, the project sponsor has the right to appeal the decision by contacting the Administrative Body in the first instance.

These scores are used as a guide, the LAG can make alternative decisions as a result of their discussions.

Task 6: The LAG Manager will prepare and send confirmation letters to project applicants, informing them of the LAGs decision. Overall scores and comments (anonymised) will be available to project applicants as feedback, on request.

2. Final Application Stage

Task 1: Prior to appraisal the Administrative Body will check the application for the basic eligibility criteria such as:

- The group is valid and properly constituted
- A bank account is held and current
- Items to be funded by LEADER are eligible expenditure
- Letters of support have been received and where necessary supporters have been contacted
- All consents have been received
- Completion dates are within the programme dates
- Match funding is available and according to budgets
- There is no duplication with other activity undertaken or planned locally
- All quotations and financial evidence are supplied as required
- VAT costs are accurately presented

Task 2: The Administrative Body will forward LAG members a copy of the completed Stage 3 Application, the Stage 3 Appraisal Criteria and a blank Stage 3 Member Score Sheet, by email. These forms will be sent at least 10 days before the scheduled LAG meeting at which the Application is due to be discussed.

Task 3: Members will evaluate and score the applications against the Stage 3 Appraisal Criteria and return their completed Score Sheets to the Administrative Body at least 2 days before the scheduled LAG meeting, preferably via email. The Administrative Body will then collate all scores and comments and make them available to facilitate discussion at the LAG meeting.

Task 4: At the LAG meeting sponsors will be required to give a short presentation. Members will review the collective scoring and comments, considering any issues and inconsistencies. The Chair will facilitate discussion of the appraisal scoring by using the following guidelines:

- A project score of an average of 45 or above will be approved.
- A project score of an average of between 30 and 44 means the LAG can recommend that the project applicant resubmits providing guidance on areas/issues in the application that need to be improved upon.
- If a project scores an average less than 29 it will be rejected. In accordance with the Appeals Process, the project sponsor has the right to appeal the decision by contacting the Administrative Body in the first instance.

These scores are used as a guide, the LAG can make alternative decisions as a result of their discussions.

Task 5: The LAG Manager will prepare and send confirmation letters to project applicants, informing them of the LAGs decision. Overall scores and comments (anonymised) will be available to project applicants as feedback, on request.