



Rural Payments
Agency



West of England
Rural Development Programme
Investing in communities, business and the countryside

Rural Development Programme for England (2014 - 2020)

LEADER APPLICANT HANDBOOK

**Guidance for applicants applying to the West of England Rural Development
Programme Local Action Group (LAG)**

West of England Rural Development Programme

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**The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas**



A word from Graham Clark, LAG Chair.

As Chair of the West of England Local Action Group I wish to welcome you to our new Rural Development Programme and the LEADER fund. The aim of this fund is to address barriers to growth and well-being in the rural parts of the West of England by supporting employment creation, business and community innovation, and to help make rural communities more resilient to climate change.

This handbook is designed to help you understand if the fund can help you develop your business or community support ideas and how to go about making an application to the fund.

Decisions about local funding priorities and assessing applications for funding are made by the Local Action Group, a partnership of local organisations with strong ties into the rural businesses, communities and networks of the area. This group has already agreed a set of local priorities which are fully described in the West of England Local Development Strategy. The strategy and information on the members of the Local Action Group are described in more detail on our website.

The LEADER funding is a new and significant opportunity for the area and we would strongly encourage you to explore its potential. Together with my colleagues on the Local Action Group and our staff team, we will advise and support you to prepare an application.

Graham Clark CLA

Local priorities

- Policy 1 - An expanding, future proofed food, farming and horticultural sector.
- Policy 2 - Rural micro and small businesses making the most of the goods, services, diversity and traditional richness of the West of England's rural landscape
- Policy 3 - A mature and successful tourism infrastructure based on the local distinctiveness.
- Policy 4 - Well connected, healthy, active and resilient rural communities, where people are able to mutually support each other and develop creative solutions.
- Policy 5 - A diverse and vibrant range of culture and heritage resources based on people, communities, traditions, properties and landscapes
- Policy 6 - An innovative and sustainable forestry (and woodland) sector in the West of England

Cross Cutting Policy 1 - Maximising the benefit from the close linkages between the Cities and the rural areas

Cross Cutting Policy 2 - A thriving social enterprise sector underpinning the rural economy

Together with the national priorities these will be used to help assess applications to the fund.

Defined rural areas in the West of England

The West of England includes the unitary authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire but funding is only available for certain areas defined as rural by Government.

This funding is not available for projects within the major towns or cities. Thornbury, Paulton, Yatton and Congresbury are included as the defined rural area.

Before you start your application please [contact us](#) to check whether your project falls within the defined rural area.

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What is LEADER?

Under LEADER, Local Action Groups (LAGs) can allocate grant funding to local businesses and organisations to help them carry out projects which create jobs, help the business to grow and which benefit the rural economy.

The LEADER scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Money from the programme is given to Local Action Groups (LAGs) so that they can award grants locally to businesses and organisations that apply for it. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages the LEADER scheme nationally on behalf of Defra and will make the payments to successful applicants.

A LAG is made up of local public, private and civil society representatives, who work together to fund projects that help to improve their local rural economy.

LEADER is a French acronym which roughly translates as 'Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'.

There is no automatic right to a LEADER grant and not all applications will be successful. The LAG will decide which projects should receive grant funding by assessing each application. This handbook gives more detail about how applications are assessed and what the criteria are.

What will LEADER fund?

LEADER will fund farmers, growers, foresters, other local rural businesses and rural community organisations to help:

- create jobs;
- develop and grow rural businesses; and
- support the rural economy.

To be successful, applications must contribute to one or more of Defra's 6 priorities for LEADER, which are to:

- increase farm productivity;
- support micro and small businesses and farm diversification;
- boost rural tourism;
- provide rural services;
- provide cultural and heritage activities; and
- increase forestry productivity.

How much funding is available?

The grant amount will depend on:

- the type of project;
- the size of the business; and
- the costs involved (NB: not all the costs of a project may qualify for funding).

The minimum grant that can be applied for is £10 000. The maximum grant amount is £100 000 but in order to fund as many projects as possible, it is anticipated that most grant awards will be in the region of £10 000-£30 000.

Grants will typically be limited to a maximum of 40% of the project's total eligible costs. However some types of projects can get higher rates – read the sections on specific priorities later in this handbook for more information about individual grants.

Following the terms of a grant funding agreement

Successful applicants who are offered a grant will need to follow the terms of the grant funding agreement throughout the whole period – and for 5 years after the date of the final payment. This will be explained in more detail when a grant is offered.

If the terms aren't followed for the entire period, the LAG may withdraw the grant offer or recover some – or all – of the money paid.

Paying for the project

Grant payments are paid in arrears and therefore applicants need to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to pay for the project costs until grant payments are received. It is expected that a maximum of 3 claims will be paid per project.

Grant payments can only be claimed:

- in agreed stages (typically quarterly); and
- after the work being claimed for is complete and paid for.

If any equipment used in the project is bought using lease purchase or hire purchase, applicants must own the equipment outright before any grant money is paid towards it. That means that the applicant will need to have paid all instalments for the equipment and show that title to the equipment has passed to them before being paid any grant money towards it. If you are considering funding your project this way, **please contact us before you apply.**

Second –hand equipment

If an applicant is proposing to buy second-hand equipment, at the point of claiming their grant, they must provide a declaration from the seller that proves:

- the original proof of purchase;

- it hasn't been bought using public funds in the last 7 years;
- it meets current health and safety legislation;
- it has at least 5 years' useful life remaining from the date of the final grant payment; and
- it doesn't cost more than the market value for new equipment.

Who can apply?

To apply for LEADER funding the applicant, or their project or beneficiaries - must be in a LAG area.

Applications can be made by farmers, growers, foresters, other local rural businesses and rural community organisations who are in the **West of England Rural Development Programme area**. They could be:

- private businesses;
- public organisations;
- voluntary organisations;
- groups of businesses
- charities or
- someone who wants to start a business.

Applicants must be a 'legal entity' and able to sign a legally binding contract.

Not all of the Rural Areas in England are covered by a LAG. The project you are applying for must be in a LAG Area. **Please contact the West of England Rural Development Programme to check whether your project is within the eligible rural area.**

You could apply for more than one grant from the West of England Rural Development Programme, as long as they are for different projects.

How to determine business size?

Under some priorities the grant amount and eligibility will depend on the size of the business. The size of the business depends on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees it has and its financial performance.

What is an FTE employee?

Anyone who works a minimum of 30 hours per week counts as 1 FTE employee. A person working 30 hours a week for 3 months of the year would be 0.25 FTE employee. FTEs include business partners and directors. If a business partner, director or other employee works more than 30 hours per week they still count as 1 FTE employee.

Applicants should use the table to check which category they are in.

Number of FTE employees	Turnover or balance sheet Total	Business category
Fewer than 250	€50 million (about £39 million) or less	Medium
Fewer than 50	€10m (about £7.9 million) or less	Small
Fewer than 10	€2m (about £1.6 million) or less	Micro

Linked Businesses

The business will be treated as one legal entity if it is linked with one or more other businesses. The applicant therefore needs to take into consideration the FTE employees and financial information of any other businesses to which they are formally connected.

Two or more businesses are considered to be linked when they have any of the following relationships:

- one business holds a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another;
- one business is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another;
- a contract between the business, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the businesses, enables one to exercise a dominant influence over the other; and
- one business is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in another.

Further guidance on what is deemed as a formal connection is provided within the guidance 'The new SME definition – user guide and model declaration' at <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/10109/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>.

Who can't apply?

Government Departments cannot apply for grants under the LEADER Scheme:

Producer Organisations or their members under the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme can't apply to receive a grant towards any items also funded by that Producer Organisation.

If an applicant already has public funding

Applicants will be asked to declare whether they or any businesses they are formally linked with have received funding from EU or other public sources when they apply. Applicants will need to explain in detail what this funding was used for and whether or not it has been awarded under **agricultural or industrial de minimis** state aid. If it has,

reductions may have to be made to the amount of grant that can be offered to ensure that it does not exceed the state aid permitted. Further information about state aid is available from www.gov.uk/state-aid. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. De minimis rules mean that a single undertaking can only receive up to 200,000 Euros over a three year fiscal period.

Available grants

There are grants available for many different types of activity, but they each support at least one of the 6 LEADER priorities.

This handbook gives some examples of the kinds of projects that are likely to be supported by the West of England Rural Development Programme. The scope of LEADER is very wide however, so we are not able to give a list of all types of projects that may be eligible for funding.

Applicants are encouraged to [contact the West of England Rural Development Programme](#) to discuss their project idea at an early opportunity.

LEADER funding is limited and will be prioritised towards applications that contribute the most [to the West of England Rural Development Programme's strategy](#).

The types of project that the [West of England Rural Development Programme](#) might fund, and how much funding it might offer for these, fit into one of the 6 national priorities. These are set out later in pages [7 to 26](#) of this handbook.

Costs which can't be claimed

The following are not eligible for **any application under any priority**:

1. **costs that are incurred before the date of the grant funding agreement;**
2. costs for standard agricultural or horticultural inputs, like animals, seed, feed, fertiliser, sprays and annual crops;
3. costs of agricultural production rights and payment entitlements;
4. costs of getting any consents needed, for example planning permission;
5. costs for anything that's a standard industry obligation, for example requirements of the Basic Payment Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/basic-payment-scheme>;
6. financial charges, such as interest, fines and maintenance;
7. reclaimable VAT;

8. any items already subject to EU or national funding;
9. projects the applicant is required to do to meet a legal or statutory requirement;
10. like for like replacements of existing items such as buildings, equipment and machinery;
11. costs connected with a leasing contract, such as lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges;
12. salaries and running costs for commercial projects;
13. long term salaries and running costs for community or not for profit projects;
14. the delivery of training activities

Note - Some limited salary costs or running costs MAY be eligible in limited and specific circumstances. Eligibility of these costs will be considered on a case by case basis and will only be considered where the business need is clearly articulated and directly linked to supporting rural jobs and growth. Please talk to [the West of England Rural Development Programme](#) before submitting an outline application if your project involves salary costs or running costs.

15. like for like relocation of the business;

Note - if the business needs to relocate in order to expand it can only apply for funding towards the costs of the expansion.

16. own labour;
17. in-kind contributions;
18. renewal of licence fees, subscriptions and service charges;
19. standard computers, standard business computer software e.g. for management of accounts, and mobile telephone equipment;
20. costs for plant and equipment directly associated with the generation of energy from renewable sources.
21. standard, non-specialised domestic vehicles, such as cars, (including 4 X 4), motorbikes;
22. moveable fittings such as soft furnishing, beds, tables, chairs, curtains, television and audio equipment, crockery, cutlery, small domestic kitchen equipment (eg toasters, kettles, food mixers etc.);
23. contingency budgets

Please check the following pages for details of any other costs which are ineligible under specific priorities. If you have any queries about eligibility then please [contact the West of England Rural Development Programme](#).

Priority 1- Support to increase farm productivity

These grants will support a wide range of farm investments. They are particularly for businesses that want to invest in **innovative business practices** and **new technologies** to help them become more sustainable and productive. Any application will have to demonstrate how it contributes to the growth of the business and preferably job creation. Grants are not available for investments in standard agricultural or horticultural practices.

Please note that not all eligible applications will be funded. LEADER is a competitive process and funding will depend on the priorities of individual LEADER groups.

There are 4 main types of projects that could be supported under priority 1:

- 1a) a project to improve the overall performance and sustainability of an agricultural holding;
- 1b) an investment to support animal health and welfare improvements;
- 1c) the processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products; or
- 1d) an investment in reservoirs and irrigation systems

a) A project to improve the overall performance and sustainability of an agricultural holding

Who can apply

- Farmers
- Groups of Farmers
- Horticultural producers

Grant limits

The maximum grant rate is capped at 40% of the eligible project costs. The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.

What is eligible

Applications for grants could include the following, which are given as examples:

- equipment and machinery to improve the efficiency of the use of energy, water, fertiliser and other direct inputs (*for example precision farming or new technologies, GPS linked to variable application monitors, air scrubbers & heat exchangers, Variable speed vacuum pumps, LED lighting in livestock housing, thermal screens in livestock and horticultural buildings, replacement of bell drinkers with nipple*

feeders in poultry systems, remote crop sensing systems, crop robotics, water filtration in pigs and poultry);

- equipment and machinery to reduce impacts on soils and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (*for example specialist drills to enable low or zero tillage farming*);
- Investments to improve the management of slurry and manures to reduce the reliance on artificial fertilisers ; (*for example trailing shoe slurry system including macerators as part of the application equipment, slurry separator but not associated reception pit and storage facilities, pumps or associated distribution pipework, shallow injection systems for slurry , dribble bars, GPS for use with slurry and manure application,*) and
- Investments to mechanise production and increase productivity (*such as robotic milking parlours, crop robotics.*)

Costs could include:

- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2);
- general costs such as, engineer and consultation fees (limited to 15% of the project's total eligible costs);
- intangible investments including acquisition or development of non-standard computer software;
- acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights and trademarks.

What isn't covered

In addition to the list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 to 6 the following are defined as standard agricultural or horticultural practice and are not eligible under Priority 1a.

<u>General</u>	
tractors	cow tracks
material handlers	basic footpaths
excavation and earth moving equipment	general purpose buildings including storage sheds for inputs, hay, fodder
flat bed trailers	workshops and sheds for maintenance equipment
tipping trailers	All fencing and gates
hedge cutter	post driver

hedge trimmer	
<u>Arable/Grassland</u>	
combine harvesters	bale lifter
grain trailers	bale rake
forage harvesters	bale wrapper
crop harvesting equipment including potato , sugar beet, vegetable and salad crop harvesting	balers; conventional, round and square
cultivator	flat bed trailers
subsoiler	backhoe loader
plough	front end loader
mole plough	forklift/material handlers
soil aerators	grain handling equipment including grain buckets
land drainage equipment	on farm grain store
basic seed drill	on farm grain dryer
harrows	Stand alone GPS systems which cannot be linked to either slurry and manure application systems or application rate monitors to aid precision farming.
rotavator	nutrient sensors
roller	potato planter
sprayer	mower and mowers with conditioners
fertiliser spreader	rake
grass rakes and turners	buck rake
<u>Slurry/ manure management</u>	
manure/slurry spreader	slurry stores/reception pits
slurry tanker	pumps and associated distribution pipework for handling of slurry and manures.
<u>Dairy sector</u>	
new livestock buildings or structural improvements to old buildings	milk pumps
bulk milk tank	milk jars

milking parlour	automatic cluster removers
livestock feed preparation and rationing equipment including feed mixer wagons, mill, pelleters, mixers and complete diet feeders	in parlour recording and monitoring.
<u>Livestock</u>	
new livestock buildings or structural improvements to old buildings	buildings and structures used for fodder storage and bedding storage
livestock feed preparation and rationing equipment including feed mixer wagons, mill, pelleters, mixers and complete diet feeders	dirty water systems (as these tend to be different to slurry handling)
livestock trailer	
yard scraper	silage pits/clamps
feed troughs	
<u>Horticulture</u>	
Greenhouses	Polytunnels

b) An investment to support animal health and welfare improvements

The aim of this priority is to improve farm productivity and therefore growth of the business by improving animal health and welfare.

Who can apply

- Farmers
- Groups of farmers.

Grant limits

The maximum grant rate is capped at 40% of the eligible project costs. The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.

What is eligible

Applications for grants could include:

- Equipment and machinery to improve the monitoring of the consumption of animal feed and water (*such as real time monitoring of pig production; collar based rumination systems*)
- Equipment to improve animal welfare (*such as gait analysis systems, calving detectors, oestrus detection in suckler cows, cluster flush systems in dairy parlours, robotic milking parlours (but not the parlour building), automatic footbaths, interventions to prevent injurious pecking in poultry (eg variable intensity lighting, verandas) duck showers*)
- Equipment and machinery to improve animal handling above 'standard equipment' (*such as mobile handling systems, ,electronic weigh systems linked to EID and automatic/shedding drafting gates linked to EID readers, EID readers, foot trimming crush, side access crush, sheep turner, sheep weigher*) (Please note £500 will be deducted from the eligible costs of complete static crush systems to cover the costs associated with a basic cattle crush)

Costs could include:

- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand machinery and equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2)
- general costs such as , engineer and consultation fees (limited to a maximum of 15% of the project's total eligible costs);
- intangible investments including, acquisition or development of specialist computer software;
- acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights and trademarks.

What isn't covered

In addition to the costs which can't be claimed on page 5 and 6 and the ineligible costs listed under Priority 1a the following are defined as standard agricultural practice, and are not eligible.

- basic cattle crush
- livestock trailers
- de-horners
- castrators
- teat sprays and teat dips
- upgrading of cubicles or installation of new cubicles
- slatted floors
- concrete grooving
- pig units or pig pens

c) The processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products

The aim of this Priority is to help businesses in the food and drink and horticulture sectors to develop and grow through investment in infrastructure, equipment and machinery. These grants are for on-farm or off-farm processing businesses that add value to an annex 1 product (such as milk, meat, vegetables, fruit, grapes or cereals).

Who can apply

- Farmers
- Landowners
- Micro and small processing businesses
- Someone who wants to start a processing business.

Grant limits

The maximum grant rate is capped at 40% of the eligible project costs. The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.

* [De minimis state aid regulations](#) mean that a maximum of €200,000 (currently around £145,000) of Public Funds is available to any one undertaking in any rolling period of 3 financial years. If an applicant has had other public funding this may count towards the de minimis aid amount and reduce the amount of money they can apply for from LEADER. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. Please also note that any de minimis state aid received by linked businesses may also count towards the de minimis maximum amount.

What is eligible

Applications for grants could include:

- investment in equipment, technologies or processes to develop new or higher quality agri-food products
- investment in equipment, technologies or processes to reduce waste;
- marketing activity, excluding hard copy material, associated with the above investments;
- construction or conversion of buildings to be used for processing activities
- investments in the production, processing and marketing of non-timber forest products, particularly wild venison. This could include on-holding cold storage and butchery facilities
- Investments in collaborative grain processing facilities which benefit a number of farmers

Costs could include:

- construction, acquisition (including leasing) and/or improvements to buildings
- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2);
- general costs such as architect, engineer and consultation fees (restricted to a maximum of 15% of total project costs);
- intangible investments including, acquisition or development of specialist computer software;
- acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights, trademarks.

What isn't covered

The list of costs which can't be claimed is on pages 5 and 6.

d) Investments in reservoirs and irrigation

The aim of this priority is to improve the management of water resources on farm through investments in reservoirs or improved irrigation.

Who can apply

- Farmers
- Groups of Farmers
- Horticultural producers

Special Conditions

Special conditions for priority 1d are provided in a separate document, available to download from the West of England Rural Development Programme [website](#).

Priority 2 - Support for micro and small businesses (non-agricultural) and farm diversification

Funds under this priority will be used to provide grants for:

- developing or starting rural micro and small businesses; and
- farm diversification projects (for example, farm shops, contracting services using technologies that are eligible under priority 1a or 1b).

Who can apply

These grants are for:

- micro and small businesses based in rural locations, including social enterprises;
- people who want to start a business that is in a rural area; and
- farming or horticultural businesses that want to diversify (expand into non-farming or non-horticultural activities).

Grant limits

Grant awarded under this priority to projects making an economic gain are awarded under de minimis state aid rules* or capped at 40% of the project's eligible costs, whichever is the lesser. **The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.**

A higher percentage grant rate may be available for projects which are not commercial and that will not generate an economic gain.

State aid rules

* [De minimis state aid regulations](#) mean that a maximum of €200,000 (currently around £145,000) of Public Funds is available to any one undertaking in any rolling period of 3 financial years. If an applicant has had other public funding this may count towards the de minimis aid amount and reduce the amount of money they can apply for from LEADER. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. Please also note that any de minimis state aid received by linked businesses may also count towards the de minimis amount.

What is eligible

Grants can be used for:

- starting a new business
- developing an existing business

- diversifying an agricultural or horticultural business;
Types of business could include, amongst others:
- processing and marketing of agricultural products;
- social service provision;
- developing craft and handicraft activities;
- setting up an IT business; and
- leisure, recreational and sport activities.

Costs could include:

- construction, acquisition (including leasing) or improvement to buildings;
- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand machinery and equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2);
- general costs such as architect, engineer and consultation fees (restricted to a maximum of 15% of total project costs);
- intangible investments including, acquisition or development of specialist computer software;
- acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights, trademarks;

What isn't covered

In addition to the list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 and 6, the following are also not eligible under priority 2

- moveable fittings such as soft furnishing, beds, tables, chairs, curtains, television and audio equipment, crockery, cutlery, small kitchen equipment (e.g. toasters, kettles, food mixers etc.) ;
- computers, software and printers used for the general running of the business such as processing orders and accounts
- consumables
- if funding agricultural contractors, equipment for standard agricultural or horticultural practice, including any of the ineligible items listed under Priority1

Priority 3 - Support for rural tourism

The kinds of tourism business start-up and business development projects that are likely to attract funding will be those developing high quality visitor products and services that link tourism providers, extend the tourism season and encourage visitors to stay.

Who can apply

These grants could be for:

- new or existing micro or small businesses (this includes farm businesses diversifying into tourism activities);
- community groups;
- a group of rural tourist businesses working together to develop joint activity;
- local authorities;
- charities
- public-private partnerships;
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs);
- organisations in charge of tourist and recreational development, for example a destination organisation (that is, an organisation whose role is to promote tourism in a particular location or area).

Grant limits

The maximum grant rate will depend on whether or not the project is a commercial project which aims to generate an operating surplus, regardless of the type of applicant organisation. Grants limits are:

- up to 40% of the eligible project costs for commercial tourism projects and awarded under de-minimis state aid rules.
- up to 80% for non-profit making projects that have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider local tourist economy, (for example events and festivals) and where there is some income to offset costs.
- up to 100% for projects that have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider local tourist economy where there is no income, such as paths, cycle paths, signage and interpretation boards for paths and trails, visitor information centres.
- The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.

*[De minimis state aid regulations](#) mean that a maximum of €200,000 (currently around £145,000) of Public Funds is available to any one undertaking in any rolling period of 3

financial years. If an applicant has had other public funding this may count towards the de minimis aid amount and reduce the amount of money they can apply for from LEADER. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. Please also note that any de minimis state aid received by linked businesses may also count towards the de minimis amount.

What is eligible

Eligible areas of support include:

- developing high quality visitor products and services that encourage visitors to stay longer, link tourism providers together and extend the tourism season;
- developing quality accommodation where there are clearly defined wider benefits to the local tourism economy and where activities do not displace existing accommodation;
- supporting tourism activities / niche products linked to quality local food, culture, sport heritage and rural crafts / assets such as heritage events and festivals promoting local culture;
- supporting shops, catering services - restaurants and cafes where there are wider benefits to the local tourism economy;
- developing access infrastructure to help people connect to the natural environment such as paths and cycle - ways;
- small scale tourism infrastructure, such as small buildings for tourist information centres, visitor centres, shelters and signage and interpretation boards.
- small IT infrastructure such as e-booking systems for tourist services.
- supporting tourism information centres and associated visitor information;
- developing culture, leisure, heritage, visitor activities or attractions and the associated marketing and signposting of these;
- supporting events and festivals; and
- developing innovative technology that enhances collaboration between businesses and provides information to attract visitors.

Costs could include:

- construction, acquisition (including leasing) or improvement to buildings;
- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand machinery and equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2);
- general costs linked to facilitating investments such as architect, engineer, consultation fees, but these can't add up to more than 15% of the project's total eligible costs;
- marketing and promotion (excluding printing) where these are part of a larger project;
- capital costs involved in supporting events and festivals (for example equipment hire, marquee hire, marketing development costs);

- short term salaries associated with project development for example for events and festivals; and
- intangible investments including, acquisition or development of specialist computer software and acquisition of patents, licences, copyrights, trademarks.

What isn't covered

In addition to the list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 and 6 the following costs are not eligible under this priority:

- computers, software and printers used for the general running of the business such as processing orders and accounts;
- moveable fittings such as soft furnishing, beds, tables, chairs, curtains, television and audio equipment, crockery, cutlery, small domestic kitchen equipment(e.g. toasters, kettles, food mixers etc.);
- landscaping – unless it is part of 'making good' for an application for a major attraction or accommodation expansion. In which case, only the landscaping contractor's fees would be eligible excluding the costs of plants, seeds, turf or trees;
- projects to solely meet statutory requirements for disabled access, fire regulations or emergency exits, unless the costs of providing access, exit and complying with regulations forms part of the normal costs for a major expansion project; and
- salaries and office overheads of applicant staff employed to run events and festivals.

Priority 4 - Provision of rural services

These grants are for projects that aim to alleviate some of the difficulties faced by rural communities, particularly the lack of access to services and the provision of infrastructure. Projects should make a contribution to growing the local economy. They could include, the development of community buildings, public spaces, or cultural or tourism amenities.

Who can apply

These grants could be for:

- new or existing micro or small businesses;
- rural community organisations;
- charities
- public or private entities working in partnership with small and micro business and rural community groups; and
- local authorities (in exceptional circumstances, where for example the project outcomes are enhanced by their inclusion, or the local authority can show that the project and the funding required is in addition to their statutory requirement to provide rural services).

Grant limits

The maximum grant rate will depend on whether or not the project is a commercial project which aims to generate an operating surplus, regardless of the type of applicant organisation. . Grants limits are:

- up to 40% of the eligible project costs for commercial activities where there is the intention to generate a profit or surplus, (for example a transport or social care service operating commercially) awarded under *de-minimis state aid rules.
- up to 80% for non-profit making projects that have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider rural community, and where there is some income to offset costs but no profit or dividend (for example a community hall where any income covers operating costs and maintenance).
- up to 100% for projects that have a benefit in terms of value added to the wider rural community where there is no income, such as playgrounds, free transport services where there is no charge made for the service.
- **The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.**

State aid rules

*[De minimis state aid regulations](#) mean that a maximum of €200,000 (currently around £145,000) of Public Funds is available to any one undertaking in any rolling period of 3 financial years. If an applicant has had other public funding, this may count towards the de minimis aid amount and reduce the amount of money they can apply for under LEADER. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. Please also note that any de minimis state aid received by linked businesses may also count towards the de minimis amount.

What is eligible

Types of projects could include:

- plans for the development of municipalities and villages in rural areas and their rural services;
- setting up, improving or expanding of essential rural services for the local community;
- projects that involve visits to farms for educational purposes so that the public has a greater understanding of the countryside and rural areas;
- creation, improvement or expansion of small-scale village infrastructure projects, including amenity buildings and village access (for example footpaths);
- developing village infrastructure and access to key services, which may include tourism projects that increase services for the local community and contribute to village renewal;
- setting up, improving or expanding essential services (for example transport) for the local community.

Costs could include:

- construction, acquisition (including leasing) or improvement to buildings;
- the purchase or hire purchase of new and second hand machinery and equipment (please see further guidance on hire purchase and second-hand equipment on page 2);
- general costs linked to facilitating investments such as architect, engineer, consultation fees, but these can't add up to more than 15% of the project's total eligible costs.

What isn't covered

In addition to the general list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 and 6 the following costs are not eligible under this priority:

- computers, software and printers that are used for the general running of a business, such as processing orders and accounts;
- salaries associated with the on-going running of projects;

- access to broadband services;
- landscaping - unless it is part of 'making good' for an application for a major attraction or accommodation expansion. In which case, only the landscaping contractor's fees would be eligible excluding the plants, seeds, turf or trees;
- projects to meet statutory requirements for disabled access, fire regulations or emergency exits, unless the costs of providing access, exit and complying with regulations form part of the normal costs for a major expansion project.

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Priority 5 - Support for cultural and heritage activity

This focuses on the promotion, enhancement and maintenance of cultural heritage assets and events where this promotes growth in the tourism economy and:

- creates a sense of local identity through raised awareness of their importance; and/or
- helps protect cultural heritage features against damage and degradation.

Who can apply

- landowners;
- rural community groups;
- local authorities (in exceptional circumstances, where for example the local authority can show that the project and the funding required is in addition to their statutory requirement to provide this kind of activity and the project will be of benefit to farmers, landowners and/or rural communities).

Please note it is assumed that the activity will not take place on an agricultural holding. Any farmers that are seeking grant support for activity under this priority should talk to Natural England in the first instance as funding may be available under Countryside Stewardship.

Grant limits

If the grant amount is less than €200,000 then the grant rate can be up to 100% and is awarded under de minimis state aid rules.* **The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.**

All investments must be able to demonstrate a benefit to the wider local economy.

State aid rules

*[De minimis state aid regulations](#) mean that a maximum of €200,000 (currently around £145,000) of Public Funds is available to any one undertaking in any rolling period of 3 financial years. If an applicant has had other public funding, this may count towards the de minimis aid amount and reduce the amount of money they can apply for under LEADER. Please note that Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments do NOT count towards the de minimis limit. Please also note that any de minimis state aid received by linked businesses may also count towards the de minimis amount.

What is eligible

- the costs of construction and / or restoration of buildings and other physical assets, including general costs such as architects and engineering fees;
- the costs to enhance, restore and upgrade the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes and high nature value sites;
- the conservation of small scale built heritage;
- the costs to enhance cultural and community activities and investments to enhance venues providing cultural an heritage activity; and
- the costs of events linked to cultural activity.

What isn't covered

In addition to the general list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 and 6 the following costs are not eligible under this priority:

- computers, software and printers that are used for the general running of a business, such as processing orders and accounts;
- salaries associated with the on-going running of projects;
- access to broadband services;
- landscaping - unless it is part of 'making good' for an application for a major attraction or accommodation expansion. In which case, only the landscaping contractor's fees would be eligible excluding the plants, seeds, turf or trees; and
- projects to solely meet statutory requirements for disabled access, fire regulations or emergency exits, unless the costs of providing access, exit and complying with regulations form part of the normal costs for a major expansion project.

Priority 6 - Support for increasing forestry productivity

Forestry is making an increasing contribution to rural growth - it is helping to diversify the farm economy and reduce the carbon footprint of local communities. More than 80% of England's woods are privately owned. Funding under LEADER will aim to deliver permanent new supply chains and jobs that, at the same time, restore regular management to local woods and encourage a greater degree of added value to the timber output.

Who can apply

- Owners or tenants of private forestry holdings
- Micro, small and medium-sized forestry contracting businesses.

Grant limits

- Applicants can apply for a maximum of 40% of the projects' eligible costs. The maximum grant that West of England Rural Development Programme will offer is £100 000. Grants will typically be within the range of £10 000 and £40 000. Higher grant amounts will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where significant outcomes will be generated.

What is eligible

- investments in machinery and equipment to help the production, extraction, mobilising, processing and marketing of timber and non-timber forest products;
- the processing, mobilising and marketing of products for new forestry technologies;
- investments that enhance forestry potential or add value to forest products by processing, mobilising or marketing;
- the costs of developing wood-fuel supply chains;
- transportation of wood within a forest by specialised forestry equipment, excluding standard transport activities;

Examples of eligible items include:

Eligible items	Comments
Winches and associated equipment for extraction (including skyliners);	
Trailers designed specifically for hauling timber or logs;	
Tractor or trailer mounted Cranes designed for extracting timber from woodland.	
Wood chippers;	should produce woodchip that meets European chip size standards for biomass heating systems for the chips to have an end use.
Trommel or other types of chip-screening equipment.	
Firewood processors;	
Mobile saw bench or mobile saw mill.	
Timber processor and harvesting heads for primary processing of felled trees;	these items must meet all Health and Safety Executive guidelines on rollover, operator and falling objects protection to be eligible
Forwarders (log-moving vehicles);	
Forest harvesters;	
Skidders – these must be used in line with UK Forestry standards;	
Tractor-mounted forestry grabs or tongs.	
Log decks;	
Forestry tractors	Forestry guarding must be factory fitted and meet CE standards.
Racks;	
Log conveyors;	
Log lifters;	
Bagging shoots.	
Firewood and wood splitters;	
Kindling machines;	
Bagging equipment associated with firewood processors;	
Covered areas for processing, storing and seasoning; including solar kilns	
Hard standing for processing, storing and seasoning;	
Moisture meters.	
Force drying systems	

What isn't covered

In addition to the list of costs which can't be claimed on pages 5 and 6 the following costs are not eligible under this priority:

- large scale or industrial processing undertaken by static machinery with an annual processing capacity that is more than 10,000m³.
- hand tools (including chain saws, strimmers and brush cutters) and consumables;
- investments in woodland creation or the management of woodland itself;
- the preparation of woodland management plans
- Personal protective clothing
- Standard or small scale tractors
- All-terrain vehicles
- Tipping trailers
- Flat bed trailers
- Box trailers
- Wood-fired boilers

Please note that woodland owners will need to submit a woodland management plan with their application.

How to apply

There are two stages to the application process – an outline application and a full application. Applications are assessed at both stages and only the highest-scoring at the full application stage will be successful.

Applicants will need to fill out 2 application forms to apply for a LEADER grant:

1. an outline application; then, if successful,
2. a full application.

Stage 1 – the outline application

Applicants must download the outline application form from the West of England Rural Development Programme [website www.westofenglandrdp.org.uk](http://www.westofenglandrdp.org.uk) or, contact the West of England Rural Development Programme for a copy using the details on the front cover of this handbook.

There are specific periods over which the programme is 'open' for applications. Deadlines for applying are available on the [West of England Rural Development Programme website www.westofenglandrdp.org.uk](http://www.westofenglandrdp.org.uk)

On the outline application form, applicants will need to give the following details about their proposed project:

- their business or organisation details;
- the location;
- what the objective is;
- how it will be done;
- who will benefit from it (for example, how it will help the business to grow and create jobs, or what difference the project will make to the rural economy);
- how it will benefit other businesses, including suppliers;
- how much it will cost;
- why a grant is needed to fund it; and
- how much funding is needed, for how long and what the money will be spent on.

The outline application form **must be** submitted electronically, as an Excel spreadsheet. After the form has been submitted, applicants will receive an email acknowledgement within **five** working days.

The form will then be checked to make sure it includes all the right information. If information is missing, the application will be returned to the applicant to supply the

missing information. If the complete application isn't received by the application deadline given by the **West of England Rural Development Programme**, it may be rejected and the application will not be progressed. For further details on how to complete the outline application please go to page [39](#).

How outline applications are assessed

Outline applications will be assessed and not all outline applications will necessarily be asked to proceed to the full application stage.

The assessment will cover a range of factors including:

- if the business and the proposed project activities are eligible under the scheme; and
- how the project fits the **West of England Rural Development Programme's Local Development Strategy** for the priorities for LEADER.

LEADER funding aims to increase economic activity including business and jobs growth. An application will not be successful if the proposed project simply moves activity from one place to another, or replaces similar activity at either a national or local level.

Once they have assessed the application, the **West of England Rural Development Programme** will either:

- invite the applicant to submit a full application **by a set deadline**. (The invitation may include conditions the applicant will need to address); or
- explain why the project can't be supported.

If an outline application needs more work, the LAG will suggest areas for improvement and explain where applicants can get more help and support before the application can be resubmitted.

Stage 2 – the full application

Being invited to submit a full application is no guarantee of grant funding.

If the outline application is successful, applicants will be sent a full application form **with a deadline** for when it needs to be submitted together with all of the supporting information.

The full application form asks for more detail about the project - building on the information given at the outline stage.

It will also ask if there have been any changes to the project since the outline application, what they are and how they will enhance the project. **Please note that if there are significant changes to the project a revised outline application may be required before proceeding.**

After the form has been submitted, the applicant will receive an acknowledgement by email within **five** working days. **The West of England Rural Development Programme** staff will check the form to make sure that it includes all the right information.

If any information is missing, the form will be returned to the applicant and the **West of England Rural Development Programme** staff will ask them to return it with the missing information, giving a timescale for when the missing information is needed by. If the detail requested isn't received within this timescale, the application could be rejected.

Evidence to send with a full application

Applicants need to send the following with their full application form:

- catalogue listings or quotes for all items of expenditure
- an explanation of how the project will be funded and confirmation of match funding;
- financial accounts for the applicant's business;
- any permissions, consents and licences required for the project;
- supporting case studies, market research or feasibility studies;
- evidence of project team's experience and capacity to deliver;
- any relevant photographs, architect's drawing or plans; and
- proof of tenancy (if applicable).

Read more about these below.

Quotations for items of expenditure

Applicants need to send quotes, references to webpages or catalogue listings that prove they'll get the best value when buying goods and services that they intend to claim for.

This table explains how many quotes, catalogue or webpage references are needed, depending on the value of each item. (These thresholds are based on what the applicant will actually pay – so if they are VAT registered and able to reclaim VAT, it will be the net price of the item; if they have proved that they are not VAT registered and will be claiming irrecoverable VAT as part of the project, it will be the gross cost i.e. net + VAT).

Value of item or service	How to show value for money
£1,500 or less	2 quotes or references to 2 catalogue listings (including online suppliers)
£1,501 to £10,000	3 quotes or references to 3 catalogue listings (including online suppliers)
£10,001 - £50,000	3 quotes or 2 quotes and a reference to a catalogue listing

Value of item or service	How to show value for money
	(including online suppliers)
£50,001 or more	3 quotes

Quotes Requirements

All catalogue listings, webpages or quotes will be scrutinised to make sure that they are genuine and independent of each other. The submission of fraudulent information is a criminal offence and could result in prosecution.

All submitted prices, whether catalogue listings, webpages or quotes must come from:

- different suppliers that trade as standalone businesses and are not linked through shared ownership; and
- a business that's independent from the applicant or their business.

They must be:

- for items that are comparable to each other in terms of quality, size, quantity, units and specification;
- from the last 6 months and still valid; and

References to catalogue listings or web pages should be print-outs or photocopies. They should include:

- the date when they were printed or copied;
- the item description and the price;
- the name of the company or catalogue; and
- the page number or webpage address

Quotes must include:

- a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs;
- the supplier's address, telephone number;
- the supplier's company registration number (if they are a limited company).

It is also preferable for quotes from VAT registered suppliers to include the VAT number. If this isn't possible then applicants will be asked to provide the VAT number separately.

Quotes must be

- put together by suppliers within an identified timeframe and follow a detailed and itemised specification provided by the applicant
- made out to the applicant business - online quotes should also be addressed to the business.

The LEADER Programme requires applicants to get the best value for money for any equipment, so applicants will need to give a detailed justification if they haven't used the cheapest quotes. Quotes may be checked against market rates.

The following reasons will not be accepted as sufficient justification for why the applicant has not used the cheapest quote:

- the location of the supplier;
- the fact they have bought from a supplier before; or
- any offers the supplier makes about future service or maintenance of equipment.

If applicants provide fewer than the number of quotes specified in the table above, **they will need to demonstrate that there are no other alternative suppliers available, either domestically or globally** and that the quote selected represents value for money and is fit for the purpose of the project.

Financial accounts

Applicants must send copies of accounts for the business or organisation applying for the grant. These must include all of the following:

- title and introduction pages;
- profit and loss statements;
- balance sheets; and
- any account notes pages.

For applications for grants of less than £35,000, copies of financial accounts are needed for the last 2 years. For applications for grants over £35,000, copies are needed for the last 3 years.

New businesses that don't have accounts covering the 2 or 3 years required must send one of the following:

- draft accounts;
- latest tax returns;
- management accounts; or
- an opening statement from an accountant or business adviser that includes expected income and operating expenses.

Self-employed businesses that don't have accounts covering the 2 or 3 years required must send one of the following:

- draft accounts;
- latest tax returns;
- management accounts;

Permissions, consents and licences

If a project needs specific permissions, consents and licenses for the proposals to go ahead, the applicant must send confirmation that they are in place with their application. This includes:

- ^p planning permission – applicants should talk to their local authority to find out if this is needed; and
- environmental consents such as an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency;
- any other permission required for the project.

^^Note - If the applicant's local authority confirms that full planning permission for a building is not needed, written proof of this should be included with the application.

Proof of tenancy

If the activity involves investments in immovable assets and the applicant is a tenant, the landlord's written permission to the improvements must be obtained where this is a condition of the tenancy. In addition the applicant must provide written evidence of the tenancy agreement, including the duration of the agreement remaining if it is a fixed term arrangement.

Applicants with oral tenancies should ideally provide written evidence from their landlord confirming that they have security of tenure for at least 5 years. If this is difficult then evidence of rent payments and/or estate correspondence and/or other documentation such as subsidy claims to show that they have occupied the land/premises since before 01/09/1995.

It is the applicant's responsibility not to make any substantial changes to the assets or how they are used, and continue to use them for the purpose described in the application, for at least 5 years after receiving the final payment. In the event that the tenancy agreement ends within the 5 year period and is not renewed on substantially the same terms as the previous agreement, the applicant must contact the LAG as it may be necessary to repay some or all of the grant monies received. This will be explained in more detail, if relevant, when a grant funding agreement is sent out.

For evidence of the tenancy agreement, applicants must send a copy (not original documentation) of the tenancy agreement sections that show:

- the holding address;
- tenant;
- landlord;
- signatures; and
- for fixed term agreements, the tenancy term.

The **West of England Rural Development Programme** LAG may request to see a copy of the full tenancy agreement.

How full applications are assessed

The **West of England Rural Development Programme LAG** may need to contact the applicant to discuss the application or to ask for more information and may spend more time assessing larger or more complex projects. In all cases the LAG will contact the applicant to provide an estimated timescale for their decision.

Full applications will be assessed and scored against a range of selection criteria including those set out below.

Strategic fit: how the project fits with the priorities for LEADER funding

The assessment will determine how well and to what extent the project will:

- meet the eligibility criteria;
- deliver against one or more of the LEADER group's priorities set out at the start of this handbook; and
- benefit the rural economy.

Need for the project: the problem the project is seeking to address

The **West of England Rural Development Programme LAG** will assess the extent to which the project may displace economic activity undertaken by other businesses. It will also check facts, assertions and evidence relating to this that the applicant provides in support of the application.

The application will need to show:

- there is a need for the project and this has been clearly identified;
- the project outcomes which best address the needs of those the project is seeking to be of benefit to; and
- the impact the project has on other businesses.

Financial performance: the viability of the underlying business and the proposed project

The application will need to show:

- how the delivery of the project may impact the existing business operations (if the application is from an existing business), including the ability to fund the total costs of the project until the grant is reclaimed; and
- how the business will benefit from the project.

Value for money and the need for public funding: to what extent does the project proposal offer good value for money?

The application will need to show:

- that competitive quotes have been sought and costs represent value for money;

- the amount of grant required to deliver the outcomes and outputs, for example cost per job;
- that other options have been considered;
- what difference grant aid will make when compared to what would happen without grant aid; and
- that supporting the project won't harm other similar businesses.

Project Sustainability and Impacts: Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability and impact of the project

The application will need to show:

- how the project will continue to benefit people after funding comes to an end. Projects should be sustainable, and not dependent on future public funding; and
- how the project will affect the environment and/or community groups within the area
- that the project does not disadvantage anybody in terms of ethnicity, disability, age and gender.

Delivery approach and how the project can be successfully delivered on cost and on time

The application will need to show:

- that the proposed project manager has the skills and resources to deliver the project successfully;
- that the necessary permissions are in place, for example planning permission; and
- how the project can show how successful it has been.

Risk: have risks to delivering the project been identified

The application will need to show:

- that the risks that have been identified are relevant to the size, scale and scope of the project and to the business / organisation in carrying out the project; and
- how these risks will be mitigated.

The final decision

The West of England Rural Development Programme decision-making panel meet three times per year. They will decide if a full application is successful and if a grant offer can be made.

For an application to be considered at a panel meeting, the completed full application will need to be received by the West of England Rural Development Programme LAG at least two months before the panel meeting date.

Dates that the panel meet will be made available on the West of England Rural Development Programme [website](#).

The **West of England Rural Development Programme** will let applicants know whether or not they have been successful.

Unsuccessful applications

Applicants will receive a letter explaining the reasons why their application was unsuccessful.

Applicants can ask the **West of England Rural Development Programme** to review their decision if they think that:

- the decision was based on an error of fact;
- the decision was wrong in law; or
- the **West of England Rural Development Programme** made a procedural error.

Applicants must make this request within 60 days of receiving the letter.

Applicants should write to:

West of England Rural Development Programme

c/o West of England Rural Network

The Mill, Tunbridge Road, Chew Magna, Bristol, BS40 8SP

Successful applications

If the full application is successful and a project is approved for funding, the **West of England Rural Development Programme** will send the applicant a grant funding agreement. It will explain when work can start on the project and the terms and conditions.

If the applicant can meet all the timings and the terms and conditions of the grant funding agreement, they must return a signed copy of the grant funding agreement within 30 working days of the date of issue. If they don't, the funding offer will expire.

The **West of England Rural Development Programme** will arrange a meeting or telephone call with each successful project to talk through the grant funding agreement in detail, in particular about how to claim the grant.

Start date

There will be no payments for any work carried out before the start date.

Applicants must not start work, make any deposits, order or buy anything for a project until they have received a grant funding agreement from the **West of England Rural Development Programme** with an official start date. If they don't wait for the official start date, the **West of England Rural Development Programme** will withdraw the grant offer.

Meeting the terms of the grant funding agreement

Applicants must meet the terms set out in their grant funding agreement. If they don't, the **West of England Rural Development Programme** may:

- withdraw the grant;
- apply a penalty by deducting payment from a grant; or
- work with the RPA to recover some - or all - of any grant monies already paid.

How to claim a grant

The **West of England Rural Development Programme** will send a claim form to the successful applicant, including instructions about what to do next.

Applicants must fill in the claim form and return it with:

- invoices that match the costs and suppliers stated in the grant funding agreement;
- bank statements or other evidence to confirm that these invoices have been paid in full;
- photographs of the project, activity or equipment;
- a list of all the items (an asset register) they received a grant for; and
- a progress report explaining what they have done so far and any delays.

Any items which an applicant is going to claim a grant for must be installed and operational before a grant claim is submitted for those items.

If submitting multiple claims the payment schedule will be set to ensure that the final payment of grant is at least 15% of the total grant award. This is so that the LAG can make sure the project is completed before paying the final grant.

If a check finds that the value of the costs included in an applicant's claim exceeds the amount that is actually eligible for inclusion in the claim by more than 10%, then unless the applicant can demonstrate that they are not at fault, a 2 stage reduction is applied to calculate the amount that is paid for that claim.

Stage 1	the claim is reduced to the total value found to be eligible
Stage 2	the final amount from stage 1 is further reduced by a figure equal to the difference between the total claimed and the amount found to be eligible.

In practice this results in a reduction to the claim payment of twice the amount that was found to be ineligible. The total amount that can be deducted in this way is capped at the value of the grant awarded.

Site visits and inspections

A variety of bodies are entitled to inspect projects and project documentation at any time with a minimum of advance notice. Notice will normally be at least 48 hours in advance although in some circumstances it may be less. As well as **West of England Rural Development Programme** officers, these bodies include RPA, the National Audit Office, European Commission and European Court of Auditors.

In an inspection, they'll check that projects are meeting or have met all terms, conditions and timings from the grant funding agreement.

Applicants must co-operate fully at any inspection. This is a condition of the funding agreement.

Publicising the grant

The European Union requires that grants are publicised. The requirements will be set out in the grant agreement letter.

Successful applicants will be required to:

- mention the grant in any press releases, online communications and websites; and
- display a plaque or billboard, depending on the amount of funding received and the type of investment, including EU logos. Projects receiving funding in excess of €50,000 of grant will be required to display a plaque and those receiving in excess of €500,000 will be required to erect a billboard.

Non-compliance with publicity requirements is a breach of the funding agreement and may result in the grant claim being reduced, withdrawn or reclaimed. **Applicants must cover the cost of publicising the grant from their own funds. This cannot be included in claims for grant reimbursement.**

Changes during the grant period

The applicant is expected to use the grant money to buy items as specified in the application and grant funding agreement. During the grant period, exceptional circumstances may arise where applicants need to change elements of a project. They must inform the **West of England Rural Development Programme** in writing immediately and where appropriate seek a contract variation, which should be agreed before any changes are made.

Applicants must inform the **West of England Rural Development Programme** about any changes to a project, for example:

- changes to use of buildings, equipment or any other assets bought with the grant;
- disposing of or selling any of the assets;
- closing, selling or transferring the business that's associated with the grant.

This applies during the project and for five years after the payment of the final claim. Agreement to an amendment is not automatic and if the applicant goes ahead with a change that the **West of England Rural Development Programme** does not agree to, there

may be an obligation to repay the grant or the **West of England Rural Development Programme** may withhold part or the entire remaining grant.

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Guide to Completing the Outline Application Form

The outline application form is used to provide a summary of the applicant's proposed project.

Applicants should clearly explain:

- the location of the proposed project
- what the project will do
- how it will be delivered
- how much it will cost
- who will benefit from it
- how it will create jobs and increase business turnover

Provide enough information in the outline application form to clearly explain the project. This will help the programme staff and assessors to understand and review the application, and it will be more likely to succeed.

How the information is used

The information provided in the form is used to check that the applicant, project and costs are eligible. It's also used to assess the application against the criteria set out in the applicant handbook and against local priorities of the **West of England Rural Development Programme**.

Applicants should:

- read all of this applicant handbook very carefully
- explain things clearly – assume that the reader is not familiar with the proposed project
- explain any acronyms
- ensure the proposed project meets the conditions in the applicant's handbook and the local priorities of the **West of England Rural Development Programme**
- fill in the form correctly and answer all the questions

Be clear about what the project can achieve. A full application may be rejected if it's found that a project cannot achieve the targets described in the outline application.

Supporting information

No supporting documents are required at this stage.

However, where appropriate, applications should refer to:

- economic data and reports
- government or industry guidance

- independent verification

If an outline application is endorsed, these details will be needed for the full application.

It is not acceptable to simply state, “The project will be delivered in accordance with the LEADER Programme requirements,” as a response to any part of this application form. Applicants should clearly describe how they will meet these requirements.

Before making an outline application

Applicants should read:

- **West of England Rural Development Programme** Local Development Strategy and applicant handbook
- information about the submission deadline

Register with Rural Payments

Applicants do not need to be registered with Rural Payments to submit an outline application. However, if they are invited to submit a full application they will be required to register before submitting their full application at: <http://www.ruralpayments.service.gov.uk/> (if they haven't already done so).

Important checks to make before submitting an application – or your application will not be accepted

- Complete every box on the form.
- Submit your application in the right format.
- Send your application form to the correct email address.

How to fill out the outline application form

This application form is an excel spreadsheet. There are 2 sections to this form, on 2 different tabs. Please complete all the questions on both tabs in full. Please use sentence case, not block capitals.

Tab 1 – Applicant and project details

Section 1 – Applicant and business/organisation details

A1 & A2 Please provide the title, first name, surname and gender of the main contact in the applicant business. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) will use this for all future correspondence. This must not be the agent.

A3 For the main contact in the applicant business, please provide their job title or details of their role/position in the organisation.

A4 Give the full name of the business/ organisation who will be receiving the grant. Where this is a registered company, this will be the full registered name of the business and will be the name in the annual accounts for the business. This must be the business name that is or will be registered with Rural Payments and linked to the reference number in A6 (if applicable). We will use this for all future correspondence.

A5 Please provide the full postal address of the applicant business. This should be the main postal address for the applicant business. If the business has multiple addresses, it should be the address that all postal correspondence, such as the grant funding agreement, should be sent. This must be the address that is linked to the reference number in A6 (or will be registered with Rural Payments for the business (if the full application is successful).

Please provide the postcode of the applicant business in the following format: XX00 0XX

Telephone number: For the main contact in the applicant business, please provide the landline telephone number.

Mobile number: For the main contact in the applicant business, please provide the mobile telephone number. It is helpful for us to have both landline and mobile telephone numbers.

Email address: For the main contact in the applicant business, please provide the email address. This will be the email address we will use to contact the applicant to discuss a project. This should be an email account that is regularly used and monitored.

A6 – Single Business Identifier number

Please enter the Single Business Identifier (SBI) number here if you already have it.

Some applicants already have an SBI number. Other applicants will get their SBI number when they register with the online Rural Payments service: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-rural-payments> which they must do if they are successful in being asked to complete a full application.

A7 Choose the appropriate option from the list which describes the legal status of the applicant business named in A4.

A8 Business/organisation size classification

This depends on the number of full time equivalent (FTE) employees and the financial performance of the applicant's business.

Choose the appropriate option.

Check the size of a business

Some grants are only available to certain sizes of business. Use the table to find out how a business size is defined for these grants. The size of the business depends on the number

of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and its financial performance. All businesses must meet the FTE employee limits as well as either the turnover or balance sheet totals. Use the table to check the size of a business.

Company category	Number of FTE employees		Turnover		Balance sheet total
Micro	Under 10	AND	€2m (about £1.4 million) or less	OR	€2m (about £1.4 million) or less
Small	Under 50		€10m (about £7.0 million) or less		€10m (about £7.0 million) or less
Medium-sized	Under 250		€50 million (about £35 million) or less		€43 million (about £30 million) or less

What is an FTE employee?

Anyone who works a minimum of 30 hours per week counts as 1FTE employee. A person working 30 hours a week for 3 months of the year would be 0.25FTE employee. FTEs include business partners and directors.

If any person, including a business partner or director, works more than 30 hours per week they still count as 1FTE employee.

A9 Applicants should enter the number of employees of their business, as a full time equivalent.

A10 a) Applicants should choose the most appropriate option from the dropdown list to describe their business activities and b) provide a brief description of the activities of the business/organisation

A11 If the answer is 'yes', please provide full details of employee numbers, turnover and net assets.

Definition of linked businesses

A business will be treated as one business if it is linked to one or more enterprises. The applicant therefore needs to consider the FTE employees and financial information of any other businesses to which they are formally connected. Enterprises are linked where any of the following is true:

- one enterprise holds a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another
- one enterprise is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another

- a contract between the enterprises, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the enterprises, enables one to exercise a dominant influence over the other
- one enterprise is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in another.

For full details see this SME definition:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf

Applicants need to provide this information for all linked enterprises:

- number of employees;
- turnover; and
- balance sheet information.

Please note that the number of employees, turnover or balance sheet total of linked businesses may make an application ineligible.

A12 Producers of fresh fruit and vegetables may be part of the RPA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme and defined as a Producer Organisation – see: <https://www.gov.uk/funding-for-fruit-and-vegetable-sellers#producer-organisations-on-the-fresh-fruit-and-vegetables-aid-scheme>. If the applicant's business is part of this scheme, please provide the name of the Producer Organisation and details of any funding that has been received through this scheme.

If applicants have already had (or can get) funding for their proposed project through the RPA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Aid scheme, they can't also apply for a LEADER grant.

A13 If the applicant answers 'yes' to this question, they need to provide details of any previous public funding that they or their business have received since 2007. Applicants must tell us if they have received any European funding, including but not limited to:

- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund Structural Funds (EAGGF)
- Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)
- England Rural Development Programme (ERDP)
- Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF)
- Forestry Commission
- LEADER

Applicants should also tell us if they have received any public sector funding from organisations or funds including but not limited to:

- a local authority

- Big Lottery Fund
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Regional Growth Fund
- Arts Council
- Sports Council
- a Regional Development Agency (RDA)
- Business Link
- Objective 1

Section 2 – Agent Details

A14- A17 While it is not a requirement to do so, applicants may wish to work with an agent, consultant, or business manager on their application. If an agent/consultant/business manager is completing the form on behalf of an applicant, their full details must be provided.

Section 3 – Project details

A18 Please provide the name of the project that will be included in correspondence and on publicity information. This should be concise and clear.

Most applications will be for projects with a fixed address. Some projects might span more than one LAG area and if this is the case it should be indicated here.

A19 Provide a brief and concise description / summary of the project beginning with the words, 'This project will...' Use no more than 100 words.

A20 Provide details of how you intend to deliver the project and the key individuals and roles of those people delivering the project

A21 Provide details of the current state of the project. Has the work started, have quotes been obtained?

A22 Please provide details of the number of new jobs that will be created as a result of this project, the working hours (as FTE – See page 5) and the type of job (e.g. managerial, administration and type of jobs that will be created.

A23 Provide details of how the LEADER investment would improve the productivity of the business. Explain how turnover will be increased or costs reduced for example.

A24 Provide details of how your project will affect the wider community and business community. For example; how many other businesses will benefit from increased productivity as a result of the LEADER investment? Please explain why.

Projects cannot have a negative impact on other existing businesses offering the same services. If there are other similar businesses operating in the area you must explain how your project complements these existing businesses.

A25 Location/address for the project.

a) Please answer if the project will be located at a specific location, with a postcode, by selecting 'yes' or 'no' from the dropdown box options. If the answer is 'no' please explain the reason why. All capital/construction projects will be located at a specific location.

b) If you have answered 'yes', please answer whether the project will be at the same location as specified in question A5 by selecting 'yes' or 'no' from the dropdown box options. If the answer is 'No', provide the full postal address and postcode of where the project will be located.

A26 The figures in the table will be automatically calculated and entered when the financial table in tab 2 – 'Project Costs and Financials' is completed. Please do not try to type answers into these boxes. Please check the figures are correct when all the details in tab 2 – 'Project Costs and Financials' are complete.

A27 If the applicant's business is registered for VAT purposes, this should be 0. This section shows the amount of VAT that applicants wish to include in their grant application, due to their business not being able to recover VAT. The figure here is automatically calculated and entered when applicants complete the financial table in tab 2 – 'Project Costs and Financials'. Please do not try to type an answer into this box. Please check the figure is correct when all the details in tab 2 – 'Project Costs and Financials' are complete.

A28 Please state:

- The proposed start date – the date that applicants intend to start work on their project and start incurring eligible costs. Applicants must please be aware that they cannot start any works (or commit to any costs) until their full application has been approved and they have received a grant funding agreement with the project start date.
- The proposed project completion date – applicants should state the date when they will have completed the project works, incurred the costs and paid all project invoices.

A29 Please detail all the permissions (such as planning), consents and licences that will be required for the proposed project. Documents such as an Environmental Impact Assessment may need to be produced before work can start. Applicants need to understand the timescales for these and tell us whether the permissions and consents have been applied for, when they are expected, or if they have already been obtained.

A30 Outputs are the direct and measurable products of a project as a consequence of project activities e.g. new jobs created

The outputs should be:

- appropriate to the size of the project and the project description
- logical, that is, there should be a clear logic chain linking outputs to inputs

- achievable – applicants should be able to deliver what they say they can deliver here

The outputs should link with the project’s activity and objectives. Applicants should explain their methodology for forecasting the outputs here. Applicants may also be able to provide brief details of the baseline starting position for the outputs to be achieved.

Section 4 – Fit with Local Priorities

A31 Projects must meet

- the objectives of the LEADER Programme (read the Applicant Handbook and [Local Development Strategy](#))

For this question, explain how the project proposal meets the objectives of the [West of England Rural Development Programme](#).

A32 Provide details of how your project will increase the local economy. For example how will local residents benefit, how many business will benefit from your project.

A33 Briefly set out how your project will address environmental sustainability.

All projects should seek to ensure that their activity does not have adverse effects on the environment and applicants need to demonstrate that they have thought about how the project is likely to impact, positively and negatively, on the area in which it will be sited.

Positive environmental impacts could include:

- improvements in energy efficiency
- reduction of carbon emissions
- using renewable energy
- enhancing natural habitats
- reducing waste generation
- using recycled materials

Negative environmental impacts could include:

- visual impact
- significant increases in traffic
- pollution (including noise and dust)
- impacts on wildlife habitats – these might be short-term impacts (for example, whilst the project is being constructed), or longer-term impacts from the ongoing presence and use of a facility

A34 Briefly explain how the project will take account of equality, diversity and the social impact it will have in the local area. What steps have applicants taken to understand the

potential impact, both positive and negative, of the project on different equality groups and communities including race, gender, age and disability?

Tab 2 – Project costs and financials

Enter data/information in the white cells only. DO NOT enter anything in the grey cells - they will automatically calculate figures.

B1 Please complete the financial table with details of the project costs.

In the first column please identify the item or type of cost.

Then state the grant / intervention rate that you wish to apply for. Use the rates that are given in the Applicant's Handbook that are applicable to your project. Please note that these rates are subject to change by the programme staff.

The next section is broken down between financial years. Enter in the relevant column the net cost of the item (excluding VAT), according to when this cost will be incurred.

Once these fields have been completed, the others will be filled out automatically.

If applicable, please record the irrecoverable VAT applicable to the project costs. If applicants are not VAT registered and are unable to reclaim VAT, and then enter the VAT figure into the irrecoverable VAT section. If the business is VAT-registered, then this section should show £0.00.

If there are any costs that are integral to the project, but the applicants does not intend to include these in their grant application, enter the details of the item and costs in the table, but enter a 0% grant intervention rate.

Once applicants have completed this table, don't forget to check that the totals have correctly been transferred into the table at question A26.

In the "Proposed Project Funding" table please enter details of the match funding you will be using in each year of the project into the row 62 titled Total Match Funding Available. The figures in the row titled Total Match Funding Required (row 63) are automatically calculated from the data provided in the project costs data.

B2 Please state how much grant funding is needed for the project to precede. Describe here what would happen to the project if you did not receive funding for your project. For example, would it result in the project not going ahead at all? Would the project still go ahead, but at a reduced scale or with a reduced area of benefit? Would the outputs be delayed or reduced, or not achieved? Provide reasoning for your answer.

B3. Applicants will normally be expected to provide a proportion of the project costs themselves. If some other organisation(s) (including banks) is / are providing the balance of funds, applicants need to state here who this organisation is. They should tell us whether the private match funding is confirmed and, if not, when it will be confirmed. If it is not confirmed, please explain the implications for the project if the match funding is refused, and any alternative options available.

B4 Please explain if the budget includes VAT that cannot be recovered from HMRC and explain why the VAT is non-recoverable.

Submitting an outline application

Once fully completed, outline applications should be submitted by email from the applicant email address entered in section A5.

OR

If applicants are using a consultant or agent to help with an application or a business manager is completing the application, they may submit the outline application from their email address, but the applicant email address entered in A5 must be copied into the email. This is to demonstrate that the applicant consents to the submission of the outline application.

If the applicant email address is not copied into the email we cannot accept the application.

Deadlines

If a deadline has been given, outline applications must be received electronically by the deadline date and time specified in the email accompanying the outline application. Any application that is received after the deadline date and time will be rejected immediately. The date and time that the outline application is received will be checked using the details that are shown on the email received into the LAG email account.

What format to send the form in

Outline application must be submitted electronically as a Microsoft Excel attachment to an email. We will not be able to open application forms saved in formats that are not compatible with the version of Microsoft Excel used for the application forms. If we can't open the application form, the application will be rejected.

We cannot accept any other format of electronic application submission, including PDF documents or scanned documents. We cannot accept any other format, for example but not exclusively, hard copy printed applications or hand-written applications.

Using Open Office software

If using Open Office Software to complete and save the application form, please note that it will be necessary to ensure that the document is saved using the Microsoft Excel (.xls) format to ensure that it is compatible with the systems the LAG uses.

To do this, select 'Save As' when saving the application form. The 'Save As' box will open, allowing the location for the document to be saved to be selected.

Then select the format for the document in the 'Save as type' box. Select the format type – Microsoft Excel 97/2000/XP/2003 (.xls), if this has not been automatically selected, then click 'Save'.

A dialog box may open asking the applicant to 'Confirm File Format'. If this happens, confirm that the intention is to save the document using the Microsoft Excel file format.

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