Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is LEADER Cooperation?

Cooperation is a feature of a number of different schemes under the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020. LEADER Cooperation is a specific element of the Programme designed to encourage LEADER areas to work together on a joint project which is of benefit to each participating area.

What is a Cooperation project?

Cooperation is a partnership between 2 or more LAGs. There is no defined upper limit on the number of partners a project may have but the project must be manageable.

Who can be a partner?

Cooperation is a partnership between LAGs. Cooperation projects between LEADER LAGs and non-LEADER groups may also be eligible where the proposed project is led and coordinated by the LEADER LAG, and the non-LEADER group is implementing a local strategy. Partners must have a direct relevance to the project theme and may have an advisory or a practical role in project management and delivery. It is vital that partners add value to the overall project and its eventual outcomes.

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

Yes, this is referred to as *Inter-territorial* Cooperation. You can also cooperate with LAGs from other Member States. This is referred to as *Transnational* Cooperation. Cooperation between LAGs from different regions of the UK is defined as Inter-territorial as it takes place between regions of one Member State. Cooperation between a LAG from Northern Ireland and a LAG from Ireland is known as Transnational Cooperation.

What are the benefits of a Cooperation project?

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

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

How do you apply for a Cooperation project?

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

The application process to be used will be determined by each Member State. Significant work has been undertaken by Northern Ireland (and the wider UK) and Ireland to agree common guidance and templates for the development of Cooperation projects. This information features in the Common Guidance section of this toolkit.

For information on specific Member State requirements, linked to the Northern Ireland and Ireland Programme submissions, please refer to the relevant section of this toolkit.

How much funding is available?

The funding available for Cooperation is determined by each Member State, as detailed within the Operating Rules of their Programme, and will vary from country to country.

Northern Ireland has allocated a budget of £4 million to Transnational Cooperation with a specific focus on North/South Cooperation.   Inter-territorial Cooperation (and cooperation outside of Ireland) is encouraged. Such projects will be financed from the LAGs overall Priority Six allocation and not from the £4 million ring-fenced budget.

Ireland has allocated a budget of €10 million for Transnational and Inter-territorial Cooperation projects. This budget is additional to the €220 million already allocated to the 28 sub-regional areas in Ireland.

What is the currency of a Cooperation project?

The budget for each partner LAG must be stated in their national currency. This means that LAGs in Ireland must calculate their budgets in Euro (€) and Northern Ireland LAGs must calculate their budget in Pounds Sterling (£).

What kind of project could you undertake?

Any project which fits within the Priorities/Measures/Schemes of your own strategy and meets the eligibility criteria of the EU Regulations and National operating rules. Please refer to the relevant section of the LEADER Cooperation toolkit for information on specific requirements in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

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

The Network Support Unit (NSU) have a number of tools and services available to help LAGs who wish to develop a Cooperation project. Information relating to NSU Support, including the designated contact points, is contained in this toolkit. The Managing Authority may also offer technical support to LAGs to help them through the process.

ENRD, the European Network for Rural Development, include a lot of useful resources on LEADER and Cooperation on their website (www. enrd.ec.europa.eu) as well as organising and promoting a range of seminars and networking events which could help support LAGs in preparing for, and undertaking a Cooperation project.

How do you go about finding possible project partners?

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

Where this is not possible, a Partner Search Request facility is available from each NSU. The NSU will list your project idea on their website and include it in mailings or newsletters. They will also proactively identify and seek suitable potential partner areas/LAGs based on the information provided within the Partner Search Request.

Is networking part of Cooperation?

A key element of the animation activity of the LAG is networking. This provides the opportunity to LAGs to identify and develop links with other LAGs and organisations. Networking is considered as the starting point for Cooperation activity, referred to as Phase One within the Common Guidance section of this toolkit.

Costs incurred by LAGs involved in networking activity could include for example, travel and accommodation. These costs are payable from the LAG's Animation budget.

Is there specific grant assistance to help develop a project?

Preparatory Technical Support funding is available to support LAGs to develop project ideas and partnerships to the point where they can submit a full project application. The maximum grant amount per preparatory application is £5,000 (Northern Ireland) / €6,000 (Ireland) per LAG for each project and is funded at 100%. The costs associated with preparatory technical support will be paid from the agreed Cooperation allocations detailed above.

Is Preparatory Technical Support mandatory?

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

What is the level of funding for a full Cooperation project?

The maximum amount per project in Northern Ireland is £400,000 and the maximum amount per project in Ireland is €200,000. Eligible costs will be reimbursed at agreed LEADER thresholds. Please refer to Northern Ireland and Ireland guidance.

What is the anticipated timescale for a Cooperation project?

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

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

Have you got a question that needs answered? Please submit to your local NSU ☺