

NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2007 - 2013

Axis 3

APPLICATION FORM - GUIDANCE NOTES

Guidance Notes are provided for each question to assist you to complete the application form. You should read these carefully before answering any questions. For non on-line applications, questions should be answered in block capitals using black ink.

Application Form

The application form is designed to provide as much information as possible to assist with the processing and analysis of a project. In some cases, additional information may be required and, if this is necessary, you will be contacted again as quickly as possible.

Q1 Programme Measure

Select the Axis 3 measure you wish to apply to

Note - If you are applying under Measure 3.1 and you are not the farm owner but a member of the farm family, written permission must be obtained from the farm owner allowing you to carry out the diversification activity. This permission must also include a statement from the farm owner confirming you are exercising an agricultural activity on the farm at the time of the support application.

Q2 Applicant Details

Self-explanatory

Note - Applicants must be aged 18 years or over

Q3 Project Details

(a) Please enter name you wish your project to be called

(b) A brief description of the project will suffice here

(c) Details of Axis 3 Measures and applicable rates of aid can be obtained from your local Lead Council i.e. Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Cookstown, Craigavon, Lisburn or Omagh.

(d) Self explanatory

Q4 Organisation Description

(a) Tick as appropriate

(b) - (e) Self explanatory

Q5 Co-applicant Details

Self-explanatory

Q6 Business Details

a) All applicants to Axis 3 must have a DARD business number. Do not worry if you do not already have this number, you will be contacted in due course.

b) Indicate whether your business/enterprise is new or existing.

c) Indicate the number of employees you have.

d) The EU define a Partnership Enterprise as one which has 25% or more of its capital or voting rights directly or indirectly controlled, jointly or individually, by one or more public bodies.

e) The onus is on the applicant to prove that the business meets the definition of a micro enterprise (within the SME category) within the definitions set out in EU Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC dated 6 May 2003. The recommendation can be accessed using the following link :

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>

- f) If an existing business, please detail your annual turnover, i.e. the total value of your sales or services.

Q7 Previous Funding

- (a) EU State Aid Rules apply to all economic projects and most Axis 3 grants will be awarded under the 'de minimis' rule. This rule indicates that a project promoter may only receive a maximum grant of Eur 200,000 (or sterling equivalent) over a 3-year rolling period. Therefore, you must provide details of any other EU grants applied for previously.

- (b) Self explanatory

Q8 Project Aims and Objectives

- (a) You should provide clear aims and objectives for your project.

Objectives should be SMART i.e.

Specific – Objectives should specify what you want to achieve.

Measurable – You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not.

Achievable - Are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?

Realistic – Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?

Time – In what timeframe do you want to achieve the set objectives?

Also list the items you require funding for.

- (b) You should clearly identify the need for the project, for example is there a market for the proposal? Be as specific as possible as this information will be used in the economic appraisal of your project proposal.
- (c) You must provide details of the skills and experience which you or your organisation has that will assist you to carry out the proposed project. In particular, you should comment on general management, marketing and financial experience and any relevant training undertaken or qualifications held. You should provide as much information as possible.
- (d) DARD is required to spend 5% of its funding on children and young people (CYP) under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme. The EU defines CYP as those under 25 years of age. If all, or part, of your project is directly benefitting children and young people we need to know so that your project can contribute to this target.

Examples include:

- setting up rural childcare facilities
- developing / improving recreational facilities & amenities for CYP
- business start ups for young people (18-24 year olds)

This list is not exhaustive.

Q9 Environmental Sustainability

In order to determine the environmental sustainability of projects funded by the EAFRD, details are required here on the positive and negative environmental impacts your project has.

Development Path Analysis (DPA) is one of the tools recommended by the European Commission.

Implementing Bodies have a responsibility to promote and monitor environmental sustainability at measure and project levels. Therefore, Implementing Bodies will apply DPA to each project that is received under their measure, consider DPA results during project selection, and monitor DPA results at measure level.

The Development Paths

DPA is based on an assumption that certain patterns of development, or “development paths,” are more environmentally sustainable than others and that regions have choices about which path to pursue. The tool recognises six development paths.

- Path A: Actions that promote activities that simply meet environmental regulations.
- Path B: Actions that clean up the mess from past activities or actions that promote physical regeneration.
- Path C: Actions that put in place environmental infrastructure to reduce the negative environmental impact of development activities.
- Path D: Actions that help organisations to meet increasing environmental standards.
- Path E: Actions that improve the resource efficiency (“eco-efficiency”) of existing activities.
- Path F: Actions that support, as well as encourage, new types of activity or behaviour using fewer environmental resources, or producing less pollution, than existing activities in the area.

The objective of the tool is to help shift activity away from Path A and toward activity under Path F. Path A is activity that simply meets minimum environmental regulations and, therefore, makes a minimal contribution to environmental sustainability. Path F makes a significant contribution; it is activity that pursues environmental protection at the same time as it pursues economic and social development. The paths in between are paths that make the impact of existing activity easier in some way.

Each project is allocated into one of the development paths therefore applicants should describe in detail any positive or negative environmental impacts the project will have. Any negative impacts identified should have a description of how these will be offset/reduced.

Q10 Total Project Cost & Breakdown of Funding Required

- (a) State the total cost of your proposed project.
- (b) Examples of Capital items include purchase of equipment & plant, construction and refurbishment of buildings.
- (c) Examples of resource items include marketing & publicity costs, bespoke training costs, planning application fees.

Q11 Project Management/Timescale

Provide realistic estimated dates for work to commence on the project and when work will be completed.

Q12 Risks

Indicate any area of risk, which may result in the project not proceeding or achieving its objectives as planned. Explain how such risks will be managed and minimised, for example, is the project subject to planning permission being granted, or how will possible changes in the economic climate affect the project?

Q13 Statutory Approvals

Tell us if you have contacted the relevant authorities to find out which statutory approvals are required for the development of the proposed project and if the necessary approval has been sought or received. If permission or approvals have been applied for, please provide the date when you expect to receive a decision. Any Statutory Approvals granted for your project will need to be made available for inspection at a later date.

N.B. Applications for assistance to create self-catering accommodation must not be submitted until you have in place full planning permission for the proposal. Additionally, you may not submit more than one application per planning permission approval.

Q14 Additional Information

Please provide any additional information you consider relevant to your application.

Declaration

Please read the declaration and WARNING information carefully. Tick the declaration box. Sign and date the application (*For on-line applications, a signature will be obtained at a later date*).

Part or all of the information you provide on the application form will be held on computer. This information will be used for the administration of applications and producing monitoring returns. Local Action Groups may share information with each other and government departments/agencies to enable them to prevent fraudulent applications or for detecting crime and to co-ordinate processing of complementary applications.

DARD FRAUD HOTLINE NUMBER: FREEPHONE 0808 100 2716

Additional Information for Applicants

1. Successful Applicants and Publication of Data

If your application is successful and your project is awarded funding, please note that European legislation requires us to publicise details of all financial support awarded/paid out to beneficiaries on an annual basis. This will include the name of the beneficiary, their postal town, their post code and the total amount of financial support received by the beneficiary from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

2. Equality Considerations

As referred to in the application form, promotion of equality of opportunity is an underlying principle of European Funding Programmes. Applicants are required to give due consideration to promotion of equality and good relations as part of their project. This will be explored further at the project assessment stage.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and Equality Monitoring

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) DARD has a statutory obligation to promote equality of opportunity between: persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.

The Act also requires DARD to take into account the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

To meet its statutory obligations, DARD has to continuously monitor and assess the equality uptake and outcomes of its policies and programmes, to determine if there are any adverse effects or consequences. And if there are, to look at ways to lessen these.

This equality monitoring is done through the completion of an equality monitoring form (questionnaire) by project beneficiaries once the funding has been awarded. DARD is legally required to conduct this monitoring, but it is voluntary for beneficiaries to complete the form, which will be anonymous and confidential. The completed forms are returned directly to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in a freepost envelope which will be provided. This information will be stored confidentially by NISRA. These completed forms are not seen by DARD.

The information collected will only be used for Equality Monitoring purposes and in compliance with The Data Protection Act 1998. The details on this form will not be used in the decision to award funding to any person/group who applies to the NIRDP, nor will this form be linked in any way to details of individual participants.

All beneficiaries are encouraged to complete the form as it will greatly help DARD comply with its statutory duty and in its assessment of the equality uptake and outcomes of the NIRDP across different groups of people.

3. Approval of Project Applications

The application will be assessed against Programme objectives and the project selection criteria set out by the LAG. Projects that meet the criteria and comply with all other EU Policies will be considered for financial assistance on a competitive basis, and if approved, a Letter of Offer setting out the terms and conditions of the assistance will be issued.

4. Claims and Payments

Details will be set out in the individual Letter of Offer.

5. Breach of Conditions

Applicants are reminded to pay particular attention to the conditions set out in the Letter of Offer, as any breach of these conditions may lead to the withdrawal of EU grant.

6. On-the-Spot Checks

Member States and/or Commission Officials may carry out checks on selected projects. The purpose of these spot checks is to establish that projects:

- are suitable for EU Structural Fund aid;
- match the description made in the grant application;
- are implemented with appropriate technical and financial control;
- have received grant in accordance with the recorded expenditure.

The aspects of infrastructure projects that may be checked include:

- a) adherence to the statutory requirements relating to the investment;
- b) the physical works of the project itself;
- c) the local or regional economic context of the project, especially in relation to employment prospects; and the socio-economic effects of the completed investment;
- d) the methods of financing the project;
- e) the checks carried out by the LAG and by the LAG groups' auditors on the expenditure incurred and the work undertaken;
- f) the tendering and contract arrangements, and arrangements for certification and payment;
- g) the basis of the claim for grant;
- h) the financial relationship between Central Government and the LAG and the interaction with any other Government grants to the LAG;

NB: Computer printouts are not accepted as proof of payment for the purposes of Commission audit checks. All original vouchers, documents and so on concerning expenditure on the project, should be retained until the end of the year 2021.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is a requirement that all projects be monitored and evaluated on a regular and formal basis, to ensure effective use of funding. Monitoring will be undertaken by the use of jointly agreed reporting procedures, sample checks and working committees at the appropriate level to ensure that projects are running as agreed. The results of the monitoring procedures will be fed into an evaluation of projects which will examine their impact on achieving the objectives of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme.