

# Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group (CBGLAG)

## Terms of Reference

### 1. Name and Background

**1.1** The name of the Local Action Group is the 'Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group' hereinafter referred to as 'The CBGLAG'

**1.2** The CBGLAG is a local level strategic group of public, private, local socio-economic partners committed to working together to deliver the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group's Local Development Strategy in accordance with the RDP LEADER programme 2014 – 2020.

### 2. Purpose

**2.1** The CBGLAG is concerned with matters relating to the growth, success and development of Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent's rural economy. The tasks of the LAG are defined by Article 34 of the Commission Regulation 1303-2013.

The functions of the CBGLAG are:

- (a) Building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement operations including fostering their project management capabilities.
- (b) Drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and objective criteria for the selection of operations, which avoid conflicts of interest, ensure that at least 50 % of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities, and allow selection by written procedure.
- (c) Ensuring coherence with the local development strategy when selecting operations, by prioritising those operations according to their contribution to meeting that strategy's objectives and targets.
- (d) Preparing and publishing calls for proposals or an on-going project submission procedure, including defining selection criteria.
- (e) Receiving and assessing applications for support.
- (f) Selecting operations and fixing the amount of support and, where relevant, presenting the proposals to the body responsible for final verification of eligibility before approval.
- (g) Monitoring the implementation of the community lead local development strategy and the operations supported and carrying out specific evaluation activities linked to that strategy.

**2.2** The CBGLAGs appointed Administrative Body is Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Administrative Body's function is to support and advise the CBGLAG on compliance, eligibility and suitability of projects and other aspects of the CBGLAG

operations. The Administrative Body is able to veto a decision by the CBLAG if the CBLAGs decision is deemed to be ineligible, non-compliant or in breach of EU or other Regulations and legislation.

**2.3** The Administrative Body will report on progress of the RDP and the operations of the CBLAG to Caerphilly County Borough Council via Scrutiny or other reporting mechanism.

### **3. Structure and Membership**

**3.1** It is a regulatory requirement for the CBGLAG to be composed of representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests, in which, at the decision-making stage, neither public authorities nor any single interest group can represent more than 49% of the voting rights. Officers and other organisations/partners can be invited for individual meetings in contribution to shared issues and for the purposes of providing advice but will have **no voting rights**. Representatives from the Administrative Body will attend all LAG meetings.

**3.2** The CBGLAG shall have a membership of no less than 18 members drawn from 3 sectors: Public, Private and Third. The CBGLAG must have enough representatives present so that it reflects the breadth of the public organisations, the companies and the Third sector organisations in the CBGLAG area.

**3.3.** Individual members should represent only one organisation for the purposes of the CBGLAG.

**3.4** Applications and opportunities to join the CBGLAG shall be made available through representatives of the Administrative Body, the CBGLAG website, social media and through other suitable forums. Members of the CBLAG will either work, live, have an interest in the CBGLAG area or have valuable experience which can support the CBGLAG in delivering the Local Development Strategy. Members of the CBLAG will be expected to attend all meetings, failure to attend CBLAG meetings may result in the cancellation (by written notice) of membership of the CBLAG.

**3.5** The Chair and Vice-Chair of the CBLAG shall be elected on an annual basis.

**3.6** CCBC Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Countryside shall have a standing membership representing the public sector Administrative Body. Additionally, a Member from BGCBC will also have a standing membership on the CBGLAG.

### **4. Procedures**

**4.1** In order for any vote to be passed by the CBGLAG, a quorum of at least 8 (or 33.3% whichever is greater) members must be present and ensuring that no single interest group of either public, private or local socio-economic sectors make up more than 49% of the quorum. If a quorum is not reached then a process of written procedure can be enacted – this written procedure will ensure that the no more than 49% single interest rule is maintained. For clarity ‘Single Interest Groups’ shall be defined as including the three main sectors – public, private and local socio-economic but also other ‘Interest Groups’ for example: farming, local authority, an individual company or an individual organisation which may have a number of staff members on the CBGLAG.

**4.2** Details of each application will be circulated to members via written procedure and a timescale of one week be given for response including declaration of interest.

All members are required to declare any conflicts of interest in matters arising at the beginning of each meeting. CBGLAG Members' areas of interest and location will be recorded on initial application forms to become members of the CBGLAG and will be used as reference in identifying conflicts of interest.

**4.3** The CBGLAG will assess any appeals regarding the outcome of a project selection process (for further details see Appendix 1 and 2) at the following CBGLAG meeting. An appeals criteria shall be identified by the CBGLAG and each appeal be assessed using this criteria. Each project application that has failed to receive a favourable vote at its first presentation to the CBGLAG shall have the right to appeal that decision. The decision of the CBGLAG at appeal will be final.

**4.4** Meetings shall occur at least quarterly for the duration of the programme. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair of the CBGLAG as and when necessary. A date for the next meeting will be set at the end of each meeting and an agenda circulated 7 days before the date of the following meeting.

**4.5** An open communication policy will be adopted by the members and if required the administrative body can act as facilitator for these communications.

## APPENDIX 1 – PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL

The LAG intends to employ a Project Appraisal format to encourage a clear and transparent process conducive to designing and implementing projects to ultimately address issues and improve the quality of life across the LDS area.

The Local Action Group's Local Development Strategy sets out the desired outcomes and vision for the combined Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent area. The appraisal is a tool to help the LAG choose the best projects and project deliverers to achieve these outcomes.

The format will enable the LAG to make informed decisions when selecting projects which:

- Are deliverable, effective and provide the best value in delivering results
- Contribute effectively to the achievement of the desired outcomes in the Local Development Strategy
- Actively involve key partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries in the rural population covered by the LDS
- Take appropriate account of the needs of people, primarily in the approach of LEADER
- Are sustainable (benefits will continue even when the funding/support ends) and therefore have identified appropriate sources of mainstream or other funding to supplement the LEADER funding and enrich the project's delivery.
- Employ effective and sensible ways of managing risk, especially with highly innovative proposals
- Properly monitored and managed
- Will be monitored and evaluated so the LAG learns what works well and what does not.

In order to consider procurement option, the LAG and its Administrative Bodies recognises the need to answer a set of key fundamental core assessment questions relating to the Programme Objectives, Assessment Criteria and the Application Process:

1. Is the project relevant to the LDS themes?
2. What will be delivered?
3. Is the project feasible?
4. Does the project make sense?

The LAG intends that assessment process should strike the right balance between programme focus and need for details

### Core assessment criteria:

In addition, the following key core assessment criteria will be considered during the assessment process.

#### 1. Content-related Criteria Project outcomes and benefits

- Whether the project has been adequately developed enough by the applicant to deliver outcomes based on the aims and themes of the LDS. For example, hitting one of the 5 priority themes. **The LAG envisages that this will**

**initially be determined at the Expression of Interest (EOI) and associated on-site presentation stage (see process diagram p. 11)**

- The value of the project proposal for the LDS area will be assessed in terms of added value to local investment, cooperation, innovation and the socio-economic effect of the project on the programme area.
- The level of benefit from the activities and outcomes of the project that the LDS stakeholders beyond the immediate project partners will benefit from the activities and subsequent outcomes of the project;
- The range of impacts (taking into account aims and themes of the LDS) the type and potential scale of impacts arising from the project( direct; e.g. job creation, cooperation, technology development, or indirect such as quality of rural life improvements resulting from the project)
- Potential of the project to foster innovation;
- Key indicators either quantitative or qualitative
- The level at which the project proposal will contribute to the wider objectives. The LAG envisage that this will include other strategies and policies at national, regional, local and EU level plus other programmes and projects.
- The activities of the project proposal and their relevance to the LEADER cross-cutting themes

**Potential Project beneficiary involvement**

- Applicants will be asked to outline and confirm the benefits to the beneficiaries as a result of their involvement with the project and the benefits to the delivery of the project delivery and achievements as a result of beneficiary involvement in the application bid process.
- The LAG will be actively seeking evidence of high levels of interaction by beneficiaries in the project development and a substantial buy-in, demonstrating real commitment. Key indicators for assessment would be; involvement in setting the project's objectives, detailed Letter(s) of Support confirming such details from a wide range of partners and beneficiaries. The LAG recognises that these should include appropriate relevant information to the proposal.
- The match contributions made to the project in cash. Applicants will be asked to outline how match will be sought
- The appropriateness, relevancy and level of key beneficiaries involved in the project will be assessed. If the LAG feels that there are key beneficiaries not

involved in the process an explanation will be requested if it is not already indicated in the EOI/Final Application Form.

- The extent to which this interaction may lead to new links and partnerships between beneficiaries and project deliverers.

## **2. Implementation-related Criteria-Mechanisms of Project delivery**

### **Partnership/Management of Project**

- The LAG recognises that a key element in assessing an appropriate and effective Project Deliverer is the applicants proven ability to deliver projects. As Therefore, the LAG propose to include a section in the Expression of Interest element inviting the applicant body to outline their '**Previous Track Record**'. The LAG expects this to include such details as:
  - *Summary of recent knowledge*
  - *Specific expertise within the delivering body?*
- Applicants will be requested to ensure that appropriate management is in place to ensure best possible success. The LAG will ensure that there will be opportunity for applicants to confirm this by outlining relevant systems and staffing.
- In tandem with this, LAG will expect to see how potential Project deliverers will ensure the effectiveness of methods and associated activity plus the project's range and scope.

### **Methodology (work programme)**

- The LAG will ensure that all applicants have adequate opportunity to outline an appropriate and detailed work programme (FULL APPLICATION); this will be in the form of a template or Gantt Chart outlining activities including; milestones and details of any activities to be undertaken by project partners.
- As a result, the LAG will be able to assess and appraise clearly whether the project can be delivered within the time-frame and with the resources requested.
- The LAG envisage that this 'Description of proposed work' section (as it shall be known) should include:
  - *Background to the proposed work, including a description of any previous initiative built on.*
  - *Key objectives – tying in with relevant themes and priorities including cross-cutting themes etc.*
  - *Anticipated outputs*

- *Summary of contributions from partner's cash, in-kind etc.*
- *A firm justification of resources*

### **Budget**

- Is the amount requested in reasonable relation with proposed outcomes? The LAG will require applicants to address key questions on financing the project proposal including whether the project is affordable; Potential funding splits between LEADER funds and project deliverers etc. and whether there is scope for additional financing sources for the proposed project.

### **Communication**

- Will the project be effectively communicated? The LAG will need to see a consistency of communication activities following themes, beneficiary needs, proposed activities and outcomes. As well as illustrating their own Strategy, applicants will also be expected to be fully engaged with the proposed LDS Communications Plan including dissemination of activities.

### **Project Sustainability**

- Applicants will be assessed on how they envisage the uptake and use by users after the proposed project's end, or LAG involvement, will be ensured. The LAG recognises its role in signposting other funding sources, including other European funding streams as part of its commitment to mainstreaming.
- The LAG will expect to see commitment to long-term updating of data through the project and continual appraisal.
- The LAG will expect to see that the applicants have taken into consideration the beneficiary's demand for the project and whether it is likely to increase, decrease or remain constant (depending on aims and focus of the project);

### **Project Risk Management**

The LAG recognises that achieving the value for money that justifies a proposed project also depends on the ability of the deliverer to identify analyse and allocate project risks adequately. This is likely to be the case with more innovative projects so in order to instil confidence in not only potential project partners, but also the LAG, applicants will therefore be required to evidence that they have taken this into account by answering the fundamental questions of:

- *What are the key sources of risk in the proposed project?*
- *What is the optimal risk allocation and risk management strategy?*

Thus, at the project identification stage, the LAG and its advisers need to undertake a broad assessment of the risks that arise from the project requirements. Applicants

will also be made aware that risk management is an on going process which continues throughout the life of a project. As part of the Guidance Notes in the application pack , applicants will be asked to consider these five stages:

- **Risk identification:** *the process of identifying all the risks relevant to the project*
- **Risk assessment:** *determining the likelihood of identified risks materialising and the magnitude of their consequences if they do materialise;*
- **Risk allocation:** *allocating responsibility for dealing with the consequences of each risk to one of the parties to the contract, or agreeing to deal with the risk through a specified mechanism which may involve sharing the risk;*
- **Risk mitigation:** *attempting to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring and the degree of its consequences for the risk-taker*
  - **Risk monitoring and review:** *monitoring and reviewing identified risk*

## **Project Proposal Application process**

It is the aim of the LAG to ensure a clear and transparent process in order to successfully procure projects. Therefore, we aim to make the Application process as user-friendly as possible by applying the following methodology to the application paperwork both for the Expression of Interest and Final Application forms;

- Coherent terminology (Objectives, aims, beneficiaries) backed up with a 'Glossary of Terms' if necessary.
- User-friendly language – for applicants and LAG members to ensure a clear appraisal and fair assessment for both. Ensuring a clear difference between questions (what is required in each section, not to repeat answers, clearer for LAG and applicants)
- Overview tools (tables, summaries)

## **Project Proposal 'checklist' for applicants**

The LAG believes it important to include this element in the Application process as not so much a checklist but more of an aid memoir or even 'self-assessment' mini-process. This also contributes to making the appraisal criteria accessible to applicants in the interests of transparency.

In order to ensure a productive and positive application, assessment and appraisal process, the LAG will ensure that applicants will be aware of the type of issues the assessment and appraisal process will be focusing on.

Applicants will be encouraged to take these into account and this will be in addition to straightforward EOI/Application Form questions. It is envisaged that this will encourage applicants to think carefully not only about their Final Application but also and arguably most importantly, on ensuring a strong EOI/Presentation proposal.

Applicant's self-assessment questions will be as follows:

1. *Is the proposal clear in its focus and beneficiary community?*



2. *Is the proposal clearly driven by beneficiary need?*
3. *Has the applicant checked that the proposed activities are eligible?*
4. *Is it clear that partners, stakeholders and other users as appropriate, have been involved in working up the project proposal?*
5. *Is the proposal focussed on impact? Will the work result in clear outputs/outcomes?*
6. *Does the proposal clearly demonstrate the proposal's potential impact and is in line with the principles, aims and targets of the LDS?*
7. *Does the proposal acknowledge any similar activities being undertaken in the same thematic/geographic LAG area? If the same or similar are available elsewhere, how does the application add value? N.B. The LAG are aware that this mainly applies to non-restricted 'open call' projects.*
8. *Is there a robust project management structure and processes in place?*
9. *Is there a clear and realistic timescale?*

### **Procurement Call for Projects and Process**

The LAG proposes an 'Open Call' with deadline and two-step approach incorporating both Expression of Interest Stage and a Final Application Stage for its procurement of projects.

The LAG believes that this will have advantages in that

- *Condition can be changed (themes, manual etc.)*
- *It will allow more publicity per theme and have a definite deadline.*
- *More focused LAG meetings for assessment etc. therefore ensuring a level of consistency in appraisal*

The format has been devised to coincide with Quarterly meetings of the Local Action Group to assess and appraise final applications in the process. These will also tie in with four predetermined themes, which although at first appear restrictive, will incorporate enough flexibility to accommodate a wide range of projects. (to tie in with 4 x LAG cycles and theme)

The LAG does however recognise that this method would have implications of:

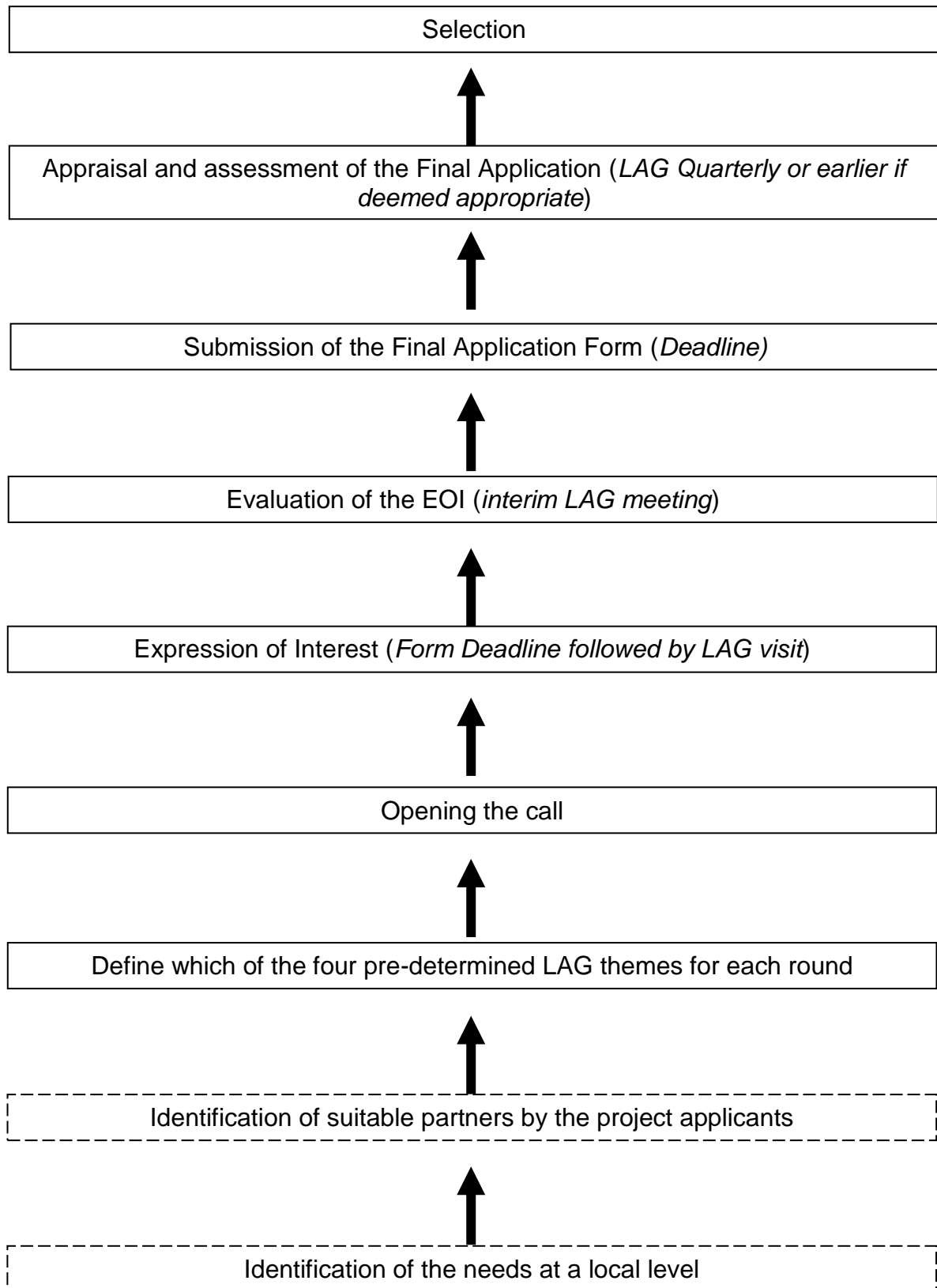
- *Workload peaks during the Quarterly assessment period*
- *Monitoring peaks generated through the deadlines*
- *Less user friendly to applicants as they are tied to fixed deadlines (arguably).*

The LAG also recognises that by focusing application cycles around themes we are introducing a slight element of a restricted/strategic approach, however as stated there is scope for flexibility within these themes.

Following the theme of innovation, the LAG is introducing an original element to the Expression of Interest stage in the form of an invitation to present proposals to the LAG in person. Rather than this being in the sterile confines of a meeting room, LAG members will meet prospective applicants in the environs of their project or organisation. The LAG believes this will give a clearer overview of the project, dispel any fears of a closed process and potentially allow members to see the potential at first hand. By having this element at the Expression of Interest stage it will keep the process on a positive footing as projects which are seen to need to be worked –up can be encouraged to try again at a later stage, or indeed redirected to other more appropriate sources of support, without going to the effort at the final stage only to be turned down.

The flow diagram below outlines each stage of the ‘two-step’ procurement of projects via open call:

LAG LEADER Project Proposal Call-Out Methodology



### **Preparation by potential Project Deliverers:**

The process is preceded by two elements which the LAG would hope would be in place before embarking on the application process:

- **Identification of the needs at local level** – this is an important part of the assessment and appraisal process and could well have been identified as part of a LAG initiated procured project.
- **Identification of suitable partners by the project applicants** – again, this is an important part of both the Content related and Implementation assessment criteria.

### **Preparation by LAG:**

- **Define which of the four pre-determined LAG themes for each round** – these will enable the LAG to be focused in assessment but retain a certain level of flexibility
- **Opening the call** – using the comprehensive channels as outlined to ensure adequate accessibility to the process.

Prospective applicants will be issued with a full pack with a proviso to only complete EOI but be made aware of the expectations of the Final App as a guide. The LAG envisage that the pack will contain additional documents including Background to LEADER and key themes/aims, Terms and Conditions, Glossary of LEADER terms, 'Guide' to completing the (EOI/Final) process, outline of timetable ( from enquiry to selection process), the strongly advised opportunity to discuss with a LAG RDP Officer, 'Checklist' for additional information and assessment criteria.

### **First Step:**

- **Expression of Interest:** Submission of EOI form for the proposal followed by arranged 'site' visit by LAG members. This introduces a positive and motivational face to face element to the proceedings and maintains a clear, fair, open and transparent process.
- **Evaluation of the EOI:** Interim meeting of the LAG to appraise and assess the proposal. The LAG envisage this scoring matrix will cover such areas as links to LDS and other RDP priority themes, showing awareness of other operations and eligibility. The LAG will then make recommendations for either Full Application or possible work-up for submission in a later round. The offer will also be made for assistance from RDP Development Officers appropriate to the outcome.

## Second Step:

- **Submission of the Final application form:** Following issue of the Application Pack, detailed Project Proposal(s) submitted by deadline in preparation for relevant Quarterly LAG meeting or earlier if deemed appropriate.
- **Appraisal and Assessment of the Final Application:** On a Quarterly basis and following the set criteria, the LAG scores the proposal(s) in preparation for procurement. As the process is quarterly the LAG would expect a number of applications so a multiple scoring matrix and framework will be used with pre-determined 'weighting' to sections such as Project Management, Previous experience, Outputs, Value for Money, Work Plan, Cross-cutting themes etc.
- **Selection:** Successful projects and their delivery bodies are selected.

## **APPENDIX 2 - How will operations/project be aligned with the 5 LEADER themes and the focus areas of the Wales Rural Development Plan**

The Rural Development Programme in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent is guided by the Community Led Local Development Strategy (the LDS). The LDS is based on consultation with and an analysis of the needs of our local stakeholders and has been compiled by the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group (LAG) in accordance with the principles of LEADER. The LDS outlines the approach and priorities of the LAG to facilitate and create vibrant, resilient and prosperous rural communities that is underpinned by our values of;

- **Integrity** – Sharing knowledge and views to build trust and integrity from our stakeholders and partners
- **Innovation** – Encourage development of new concepts and ways of doing things whilst embracing our rural communities and stakeholders
- **Accountability** – Take responsibility for our own skills and knowledge to bolster the delivery and reach of LEADER
- **Fairness** – Working together in a supportive way, ensuring that the programme is equally accessible to all stakeholders, partners and participants
- **Effectiveness** – We will understand our own development needs in order to make a positive contribution to both the RDP and LEADERs aims and objectives

To ensure that the LAG meets its agreed output targets and priorities identified within the Local Development Strategy in addition to the six priority areas of the Wales Rural Development Plan, the five themes of LEADER and the cross cutting themes (CCT) identified by the Welsh Government, the LAG proposes the use of a thematic project appraisal process that provides opportunities for rural stakeholders to access support that supports the aims of the LDS, LEADER and the wider WRDP and CCTs.

To ensure that the LAG meets its commitments identified within its LDS document, an open call or project procurement process will be undertaken on a quarterly rotation under the following themes;

- *Innovation and Co-operation*
- *Skills, Business and Growth*
- *People and Places*
- *Resources, Heritage and Culture*

The LAG, through its use of its four themes will seek expressions of interest, applications or call for projects and operational support that progress the aims and objectives of the LDS and the wider RDP.

The four themes have been selected to provide opportunities for projects to be suitable under a number of different application rounds, reducing the possibility of ideas, initiatives or activities being excluded and waiting for the appropriate

application period. The LAG believe that this approach is inclusive and accessible, offering a wide scope for possible projects, but specific and targeted to provide a framework and a direction that will explicitly encourage applications under a specific theme that contributes to the overall LDS.

The LAG recognises the need to ensure that the delivery of its activities needs to positively progress the development of LEADER, the WRDP and the CCTs in addition to the Higher Level Objectives (HLO) identified through local consultation and documented in sections

***3.1 description of the strategy and hierarchy of objectives;***

***7.1 Description of community involvement in the development of the strategy; and***

***7.2 SWOT analysis to show development needs and potential of the proposed area.***

The following diagram highlights the strategic fit of the proposed thematic rounds to the HLO, LEADER, WRDP and CCTs and presents the format of how the LAG will use the four themes to ensure effective project and operational delivery that addresses a broad base of priorities. In addition to the priorities listed previously the LAG supports and endorses the spirit of LEADER and have included LAG CCT of *Knowledge, Information and Experience Exchange*, where activity supported through the LAG needs to demonstrate its compliance with the integrated communication strategy and contribute to the knowledge basis of LEADER across Wales and Europe.

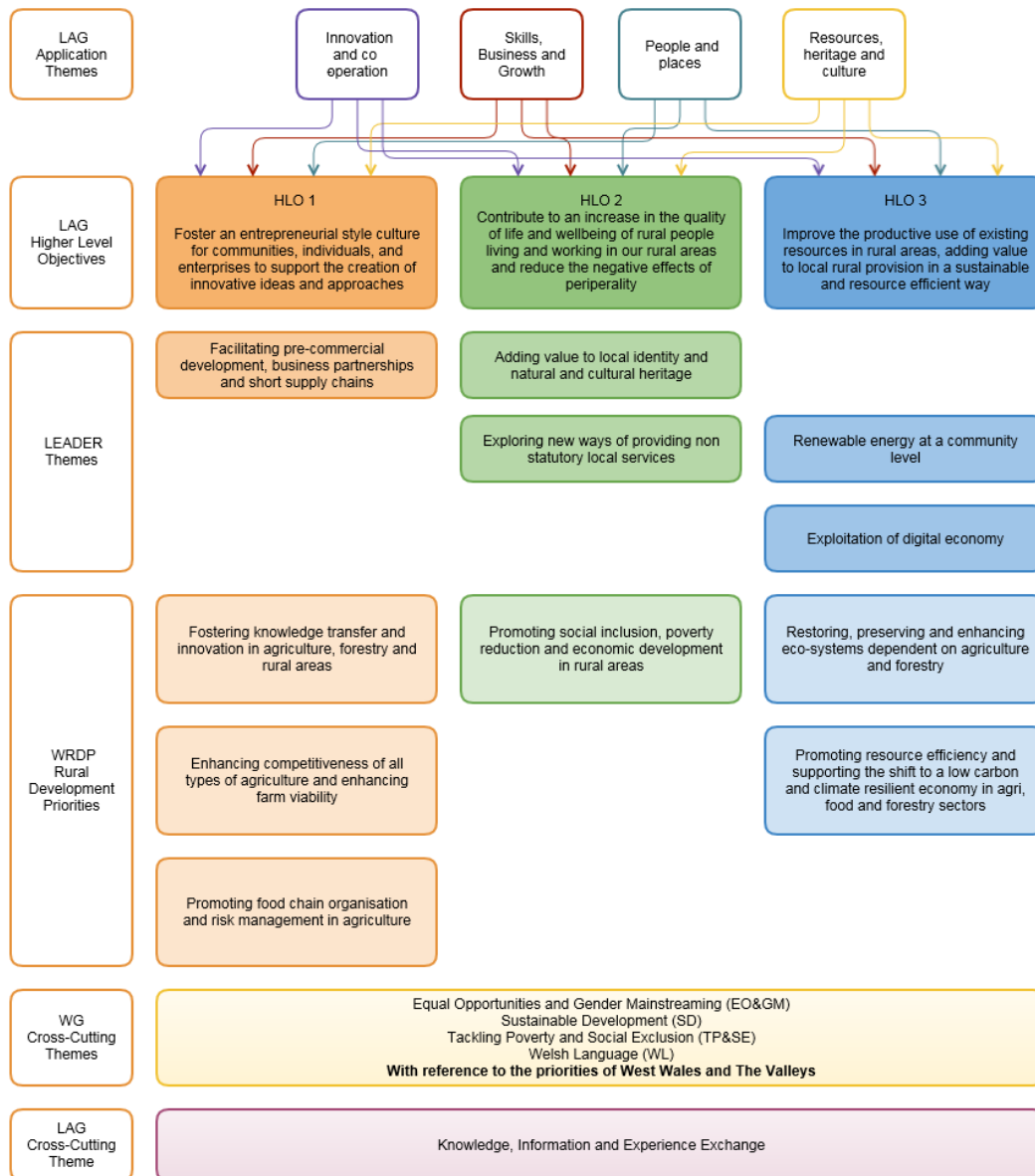


Diagram 1: Strategic fit of objectives and priorities

Applications and expressions of interest will be appraised by the appraisal and selection process outlined and proposed by the LAG in this document. Applications, expressions of interest and open call received through a thematic round will be allocated towards one or more of the LAG HLO and contribute to the delivery of at least one of the five LEADER themes, one of the WRDP priorities, one of the Welsh Governments CCTs in addition to the LAG CCT. The LAG are aware that there is scope for projects and operations that deliver across more than one of the LAG HLOs and subsequently provide greater scope to deliver across a wider spectrum of our joint priorities.

The LAG proposes the implementation of a regular 'Output and Activity Review' (either 6 monthly or annually depending on the need), whereby the agreed programme outputs achieved or being delivered are mapped to those agreed providing a visual cue to where progress has been achieved.



Thematic rounds will assist the LAG in identifying where its directed support is delivering against its agreed outputs, themes and priorities and where activity is still needed. If open call and applications are resulting in projects and operations that address a narrow or consistent range of themes and priorities and leaving others untackled, the LAG will use the thematic rounds to undertake a more targeted range of promotion and engagement with potential stakeholders with inherent interests in a particular area. The LAG believe that effective and regular monitoring of project activity in this manner will provide a robust base from which to open call, procure or develop and build projects that can address particular areas of concern through a collaborative approach with relevant stakeholders and interested parties. The combination of LAG 'themes' and 'Review' will create the evidence base by which future support will be targeted and adapted.

### **How will the 'selection, appraisal and approval' process be made available to the public?**

The process will adhere to and be underpinned by our values of Integrity, Innovation, Accountability, Fairness and effectiveness and the LAG will seek to build on these foundations to engage with rural stakeholders and potential participants by encouraging a high level of dialogue, engagement and awareness of the LAG, its aims, objectives and activities.

The LAG recognises that this is particularly relevant to the process of making publicly available the selection, approval and appraisal aspects of the project development process. With regards to project procurement, open call and our thematic approach opportunities and processes will be communicated in a clear and consistent way.

LEADER is a programme that is built on people and responds to specific needs and priorities and the LAG will use the principles of LEADER as the bedrock of its strategy to promote its work and the opportunities it offers through its members, partners and Rural Development Officers (RDOs). The creation of thematic rounds facilitate an effective communication process that can be instigated by the LAG and delivered to interested sectors, participants and the wider public in accordance to the LAGs integrated communication strategy, highlighted at Section 7.1 of the LDS; Principally, the creation of LAG application and support materials that will be made available and distributed, and promoted via the LAG website, social media channels, e-zine and press releases and in hard copies upon request.

The LAG will encourage its members, through their selection process, to become 'Rural Ambassadors' for the areas covered by the LAG, and through their involvement with the LAG will promote its aims and objectives and the mechanism and process by which applications for support can be made.

Additionally, the LAG will encourage and promote the use of Rural Development Officers through their role in the animation and delivery of the LEADER project and

task them to actively promote and seek out potential interested parties that may wish to develop ideas that will deliver against the LAGs objectives.

A triple process of i) Rural Ambassadors ii) Thematic Application rounds, and iii) Rural Development Officers will provide a robust, accountable and open process to engage, facilitate and encourage a high level of interaction between the Rural Development Programme in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent and the objectives of the LAG and the WRDP.

The LAG proposes that through the work of Rural Development Officers, the LAG will work with prospective applicants for support and to identify other sectors of the rural community where additional value can be added. The LAG recognise that formal applications and expressions of interest are not always accessible for all sectors of our rural stakeholders, and in such cases where accessibility is limited we will actively seek to support, assist and engage with marginalised or under represented groups that can often add significant value to creating a more vibrant, secure, safe and prosperous Rural Community. Through this process the LAG will aim to work to collaboratively deliver and progress activity that address a number of High Level strategies developed and identified by the Local Authority, Welsh Government and the European Commission – including measures to engage with marginalised and minority groups, tackling social exclusion and poverty and creating opportunities for skills development and greater entrepreneurship.

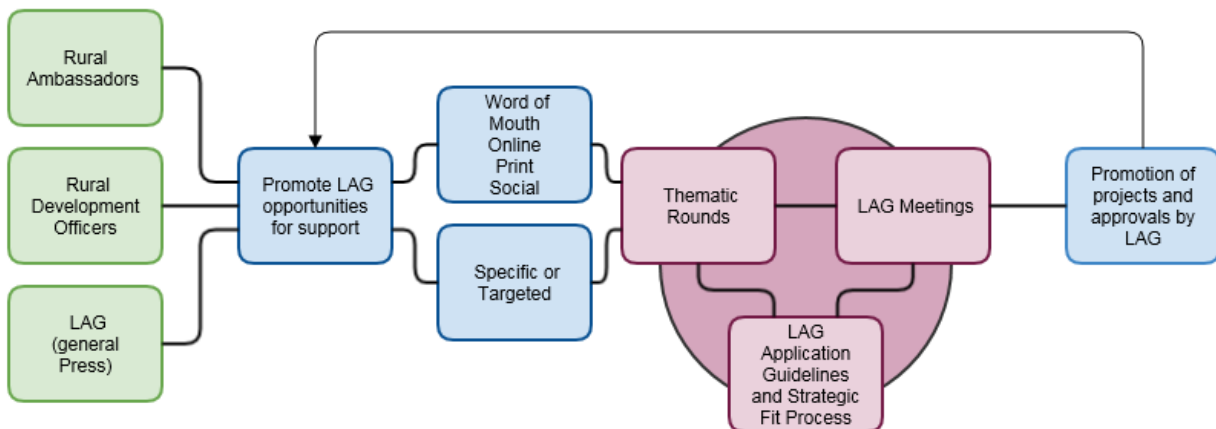


Diagram 2: Communication process

In addition to the communication channels available to the LAG, the LAG recognise the breadth of experience and expertise that is available locally that can add significant reach into various sectors of the civil and business communities, and that collaboration, sharing and dissemination of information can be of benefit to multiple stakeholders. The LAG will build and maintain links with relevant bodies and organisations that can effectively share the opportunities that the RDP can offer and will play a significant role to the LDS and the WRDP through the process of mainstreaming. The LAG will regularly review the projects submitted and will map where supported projects and operations or activity is delivering the LDS, LEADER and WG objectives. If, during this review process, it is revealed that there are gaps in coverage emerging, the LAG will take measures to address this by undertaking

targeted marketing to communities, enterprises, organisations that can work to address this. Through this activity, the work of the Rural Development Officers and the Rural Ambassadors, the LAG can develop and instigate innovative responses to opportunities and issues that add value to the Wales Rural Development Plan and cover the objectives and themes of LEADER and the LDS.