



NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RURAL ACTION PARTNERSHIP LEADER APPROACH

Solutions
for Business

Funded by
government

GUIDANCE NOTES for EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

There are three main measures covered by the LEADER funding:

- Diversification of existing land based businesses (chiefly farming and forestry) into non-agricultural activities, new sustainable green enterprises and woodland businesses
- Support for the Creation and Development of Micro-Enterprises
- Encouragement of Tourism and Tourist Related activities

Another measure also covered is:

- The Conservation and Upgrading of Rural Heritage

Applications will also be considered for funding Training and Information issues related to these measures.

Background

Delivering the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) through the LEADER method provides the opportunity for an integrated approach to rural development and delivery across the rural areas of North Northamptonshire. This area is comprised of the District of East Northamptonshire and the Boroughs of Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby (excluding the urban areas of the three main towns). The grants available will be administered by the North Northamptonshire Rural Action Partnership (NNRAP), made up of representatives from partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The NNRAP LEADER vision is that:

“by delivering truly sustainable development in North Northamptonshire we will secure the benefits of growth for the land based sector and rural communities, set within a framework of green infrastructure”.

To meet this vision, the NNRAP LEADER approach has four main objectives:

- To develop the potential for tourism and outdoor leisure activities in the area, building on the work of Destination Northamptonshire (Explore) and concentrating on a number of themes identified in the East Midlands Tourism Strategy, notably:
 - Natural Environment
 - Outdoor Activity
 - Historic Houses
- To encourage the promotion of Local Food and Drink initiatives by encouraging activities such as:
 - The promotion of co-operation between groups of local producers and retailers
 - The encouragement of farmers to sell their produce through farm shops/local markets and retailers.
 - Encouraging the development of initiatives which increase the market for local foods and produce.
- To support initiatives that encourage the diversification of existing Forestry and Agricultural businesses into non-agricultural activities, new sustainable green enterprises and woodland businesses
 - Helping to increase the use of redundant or under-utilised farm buildings for economic purposes (new businesses, business re-location or community/co-operative activities).
 - Helping schemes which increase the development of the woodland economy.
 - Assistance with measures to encourage the use of non-food crops.
 - Encouraging initiatives related to improving the environment and sustaining traditional rural crafts.
 - Helping to increase the number of individuals/enterprises participating in entrepreneurial activity in the emerging sectors of the rural economy.
 - Being aware of the heritage resource and encouraging measures to enhance this resource.
- To support local people to develop a culture of enterprise and innovation through the creation and development of micro-enterprises, particularly those that build upon the environmental and heritage opportunities of the area and enhance the rural economy, by encouraging:
 - The provision of training opportunities which increase the base and quality of skills

- Initiatives to increase the range and accessibility of specialist support
- Support for activities encouraging social and community enterprise
- The provision of training in key areas of need
- Activities which promote participation and commitment to the LEADER project

LEADER operates within a fixed budget therefore applications have **no guarantee of success**

- The expression of interest will identify if your project is eligible to proceed to full application stage where additional detailed information will be requested. If applications exceed the funds available then priority will be given to projects that can demonstrate the most benefit to the rural economy of the LEADER area.

Who can apply for grant funding?

- Farmers and small holders wishing to diversify
- Business people & entrepreneurs (either unemployed people, new businesses, or existing businesses employing less than 10 people) in all business sectors, but particularly the following: tourism, accommodation, visitor attractions and food & drink.
- Charities, Voluntary Organisations & other Formally Constituted Groups.
- Environmental & Heritage.
- Training Providers/mentors who will assist the other measures.

What type of project may qualify for grant support?

Diversification into Non-Agricultural Activities

Examples include:

- Developing traditional industries such as, hedge laying, wood carving, furniture making and woodland crafts in general.
- Developing the production and supply of alternative fuel supplies, such as bio-fuel, wood fuel supplies and bringing under managed woodland back into use.
- Developing and promoting food and drink products, farm shops and nurseries
- Developing tourist accommodation and farm-based visitor attractions
- Providing gallery/exhibition/craft space, business premises and meeting rooms for community benefit
- Developing woodland and countryside access business such as cycle hire centres and eating out establishments

- Providing promotional opportunities to increase the awareness of activities within the rural community
- Promotion of locally farmed products to businesses in the area to encourage local procurement benefits.
- Delivering clear economic benefits, new job creation/new businesses, enhance the tourism offer.
- Training activities to assist farmers to diversify.

Support for the Creation and Development of Micro-Enterprises

Examples include:

- Promotion for rural businesses
- Co-operative and individual support to develop local food and drink producers
- Improvement of premises which can be developed for micro-enterprise facilities and craft workshops within former redundant buildings, especially farm buildings and buildings of rural significance.
- Creation and use of renewable energy in an area not previously known for its energy production.
- Helping to develop businesses to enhance their tourism offer such as craft producers, tea shops, cafes etc
- Delivering clear economic benefits job creation/new businesses, enhancing the tourism offer.
- Enabling existing businesses to develop employment potential through expansion.
- Training activities to assist new and existing small businesses.

Encouragement of Tourism Activities

Examples include:

- New and existing tourism business making physical improvements to the internal and external aspects of their business; priority will be given to applicants who show that they can clearly identify environmental concern and show means of reducing the carbon footprint, and clearly wish to improve their quality rating of their business by becoming quality inspected through accommodation accreditation scheme (Quality in Tourism or AA) or attractions schemes such as the Visitor Attraction Code of Practice or Visitor Attraction Quality Awareness Scheme (VAQAS)
- Research & Feasibility Studies
- Development of Food & Drink networks and activities.
- Improvement and development of walks, trails and cycleways, priority will be given to those which enhance the strategic network and link tourism destinations.
- Improvement to tourist attractions increasing and enhancing the tourism offer.
- Delivering clear economic benefits: job creation, additional overnight visitors, and additional day visitors.

- Training activities to assist new and existing tourism business and attractions.

Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage

Examples include:

- Conversion of rural and/or redundant historic buildings into business or tourist facilities.
- Blue plaque scheme
- Publicise and link trail networks and public rights of way to similar networks in border areas.
- Regeneration of the built heritage to provide high quality resources as flagship schemes for the area and attract businesses linked to recreation and leisure.
- Development of the green infrastructure and circular trails linking sites of special interest and interpretive materials to enhance the accessibility of the built and natural environment.
- Local and regional events to celebrate the culture and history of the area.
- Natural environmental and conservation projects which deliver high quality land management, restoration and conservation of natural habitats, to support biodiversity.
- Upskilling and training to ensure quality enterprise and service for business sectors.

Training and Information

Examples include:

- Training to assist other the other measures e.g.:
- Training in ICT
- Training, coaching & mentoring in business skills
- Training in traditional skills
- Training related to diversification away from farming
- Tourism & Customer Care
- Promotion and Marketing

Please note the training must link into the other measures.

How much grant support is available?

Each application will be assessed on a case by case basis and the NNRAP Local Action Group will decide how much grant funding an individual project may be offered.

The **minimum** grant awarded will be £5,000.

Diversification into Non-Agricultural Activities & Support for the Creation and Development of Micro-Enterprises: The maximum grant rate will **normally** be 50% i.e. a project with total costs of £20,000 can apply for a maximum of £10,000 grant funding. At least 50% of the total costs must come from the applicant's own sources i.e. private funds, bank loans or other

investments. However there **may** be exceptions for high quality, significant applications.

Encouragement of Tourism Activities, Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage and Training and Information

The maximum grant **can** be 100% which will be reduced dependent on the extent of commercial return. Any match funding must come from the applicants own sources i.e. private funds, bank loans or other investments or public funding if a 100% funded project. Cases that qualify for 100% but nevertheless have an element of match funding will be given priority. Grants of the full 100% will be a rarity.

What costs can grant support cover?

Examples include:

- Machinery, equipment and other capital costs
- Market research/feasibility study costs.
- Marketing costs.
- Training.
- Start-up Costs.
- Professional fees/technical support e.g. architect, surveyor or engineer (the applicant must cover the costs of design and planning permission before approaching LEADER)
- Direct project overheads.

Grant funding will not support:

- Costs incurred before the contract is approved (such as architects fees and costs associated with obtaining planning permission).
- Costs connected with leasing contracts, interest refinancing, overheads/insurance costs.
- Costs involved in the purchase of production rights (quotas).
- Livestock or for annual plants and their associated costs.
- Mainstream agricultural buildings or machinery.
- **Work already started in advance of grant funding being formally approved.**

The RDPE/LEADER Approach is subject to European Union rule on State Aid. In certain circumstances there is a limit on public funds a single business can receive within a three year period (recently increased from €200,000 to €500,000).

Projects can be funded for a maximum of three years.

NB: All grant funding under the LEADER Programme can only be released “in arrears” and then only for work that has been agreed “in advance”: ie: at the end of the *approved* project or, by agreement, when a specific stage of the project has been reached. You will need to

consider how you will “bridge” the gap until LEADER funding can be released.

Completing the Expression of Interest Form

Please provide as accurate account of your idea as possible as the information given will be used to score your proposal and assess if you are to proceed to a full application. If any detail you provide requires clarification the Programme Manager will contact you for further information, however, this may delay the processing of your form.

A decision should be made on the expression of interest within 15 working days; from the date your hard signed copy is received by the NNRAP LEADER Team.

Please send an electronic copy of the expression of interest to: thomas.meyer@northantsacre.org.uk followed by a signed hard copy in the post to:

Thomas Meyer
LEADER Programme Manager
Northamptonshire ACRE
The Hunsbury Hill Centre
Harksome Hill
Northampton
NN4 9QX

The boxes on the form have been set to allow for enough information required, if you feel you want to include extra information please contact the Programme Manager.

1. Project Details

Project Name

Enter your project name e.g. Rose Cottage Bed & Breakfast

Your Name

This should be the person who will be the main point of contact for the application and should be the signatory

Business Name and Address

In this section you need to include the details of the business/organisation that is seeking a LEADER grant. If you are planning a collaborative application, please enter the details of the leading/contact business/organisation. If your project involves a collaborative or joint project with other organisations or companies you will be asked at the full application stage to set out who the various ‘partners’ are and how they intend to act together to ensure that the Project is delivered successfully.

Email Address

Most correspondence will be conducted electronically by email to allow the quick exchange of documents. Please enter a current email address which is checked on a regular basis. If you don’t have email please request for written responses from the LEADER Team, and they will respond by post.

Identification Numbers

If you are a farm business please enter any RPA identification numbers that the business holds (SBI Number, Vendor Number, Site Number) or put not applicable (N/A).

Legal Status

Tick the most relevant box.

Project Location

If the address of the project is different than the address given above please complete or enter 'as above'. The project must be located in one of the wards identified in the prospectus

Other Public Funding

Provide details of other public sector funding you have received within the last 3 years. This may affect the amount of grant that can be awarded as the funding is subject to European Union rules on State Aid. It does not include any funding under the Single Payment and Agrienvironmental Schemes (ELA).

Dependent on the exchange rate the de minimis regulation now allows a Company to receive up to €500,000 over a three year period. Please refer to <http://www.cobody.gov.uk/cobody/cobodyhome.nsf> for the latest currency conversion (this is the official website we will use for currency conversions).

Description of the project

Describe your project idea as clearly as possible stating what the project will do (i.e. what the money will pay for), why the project is needed, and what it will provide to benefit the area (e.g. how many new business/jobs will be created/safeguarded, how you intend to complete the project and what will be the result of the investment from the grant).

Detailed information is not required until a project has been asked to complete a full application form. However this description will be used to score the project and to get a good idea of the proposal and how it fits within the programme as a whole.

2. Timescales

Enter the estimated start and end date of the project

3. Project Costs

Estimated total project costs

Complete the dates when you estimate your spend taking place in the top of the table. Enter the estimated total costs of the project including a brief description of the type of spend in the left hand column e.g. leaflet costs, building works. The total project costs should be broken down into spend of six monthly periods. Round costs up to the nearest £1.00 and exclude refundable VAT.

How will the costs be met?

Specify where the funding is coming from and in the status column if this is guaranteed (i.e. if you have it within your own bank account or if you are in the process of applying for a bank loan when the decision will be made). Clearly state how much grant fund you are requesting.

Remember for Diversification of Farming & Micro-Enterprise allocation you should not normally request for more than 50% of the overall costs and exclude refundable VAT. If in doubt, contact the Programme Manager.

4. Requirement for Funding

Why is LEADER Funding Needed?

You should set out what difference a grant will make to the project. For example:

- *'The applicants do not have the financial resources to fund the project from their own resources, and the bank lending is conditional on receiving a LEADER grant'*
- *'The LEADER grant will allow the project to be 50% larger than it would otherwise be, allowing for future market growth'*
- *'The LEADER funding will allow the upgrade of some tourist accommodation to include renewable energy sources and source energy'*

What would happen to your project if a reduced level of funding or no funding was approved?

Detail what would happen if the NNRAP LAG offered you less, or no LEADER funding. This is to demonstrate that consideration has been given to other ways of moving the project forward if a lower level of grant was offered. You may want to link this in with the section above (i.e. without grant funding the project would be smaller, not achieve as many jobs created, etc).

5. Planning

If your project involves any planning or other consent, clearly state the Authority involved (e.g. Local Authority), what is applied for and the date a decision is expected.

*Please note at EOI stage Planning Permission does not have to be in place, however if you are invited to submit a full application then it is a requirement that Planning Permissions **must** be in place.*

6. Risk Assessment

What are the potential risks to your project?

All projects carry an element of risk and very few go completely to plan. Please outline the main factors that could pose a risk to the successful completion of your project, this does not need to be exhaustive, just the most important risks.

For example:

- Failure or delay in securing financial backing for the project.
- Problems with statutory consents.
- Changes in the market for the product.
- It should be explained how the project aims to reduce or deal with the risks that have been identified.

7. LEADER Information

Where did you hear about LEADER Funding?

The LEADER Team would like to know where you heard about LEADER to help with future marketing activities. Please tick the appropriate box.

8. Declaration

Sign and print your name. As it is not possible to sign an electronic version it should be submitted without signature. In addition please print a hard copy of

the form, sign and submit to the address below. Enter the signatory's position and the date on which the declaration was made.

Completed forms should be emailed to:

thomas.meyer@northantsacre.org.uk and a signed hard copy should be posted to: Thomas Meyer, LEADER Programme Manager, Northamptonshire ACRE, The Hunsbury Hill Centre, Northampton, NN4 9QX



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

