

Better LEADER practices for Local Development Strategies across the EU

This Infosheet is part of a series of relevant practice examples that Managing Authorities and Local Action Groups have used while implementing the LEADER approach in the 2007-2013 period. The series aims to extend the reach of rural development policy by highlighting what works well in the design and delivery phase of Local Development Strategies (LDS).

Multi- stage Project Application and Continuous Monitoring Scheme

N.02



Country, Region: United Kingdom, Scotland

Organisation: Local Action Group- Argyll and the Islands LEADER

AT A GLANCE



Objectives

The Argyll and the Islands LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) applies a multi-stage project evaluation and continuous monitoring scheme in order to improve project application design and to ensure successful project implementation.



Key elements of the approach

The most important aspect of the multi-stage project evaluation and continuous monitoring scheme is that it is based on on-going dialogue between the LAG staff and the project applicants. The LAG staff actively participates from the project planning phase through to its implementation.



Lessons learnt

The scheme has improved the quality and impact of LAG projects in the Argyll and the Islands area in Scotland. It has also strengthened the connection between the LDS and the selected projects.



Objectives and background

Poorly designed project applications lead to loss of scarce resources allocated to LAGs. Rather than simply receiving and approving project applications, the Argyll and the Islands LEADER LAG applies a multi-stage project evaluation and continuous monitoring scheme. The LAG

actively participates in the project planning and implementation process, from the initial articulation of the project idea up until the project's final report. This input ensures the high level of the approved project applications as well as sound and successful project implementation.



Key elements of the approach

The scheme consists of the following stages (where the project meets the LDS selection criteria):

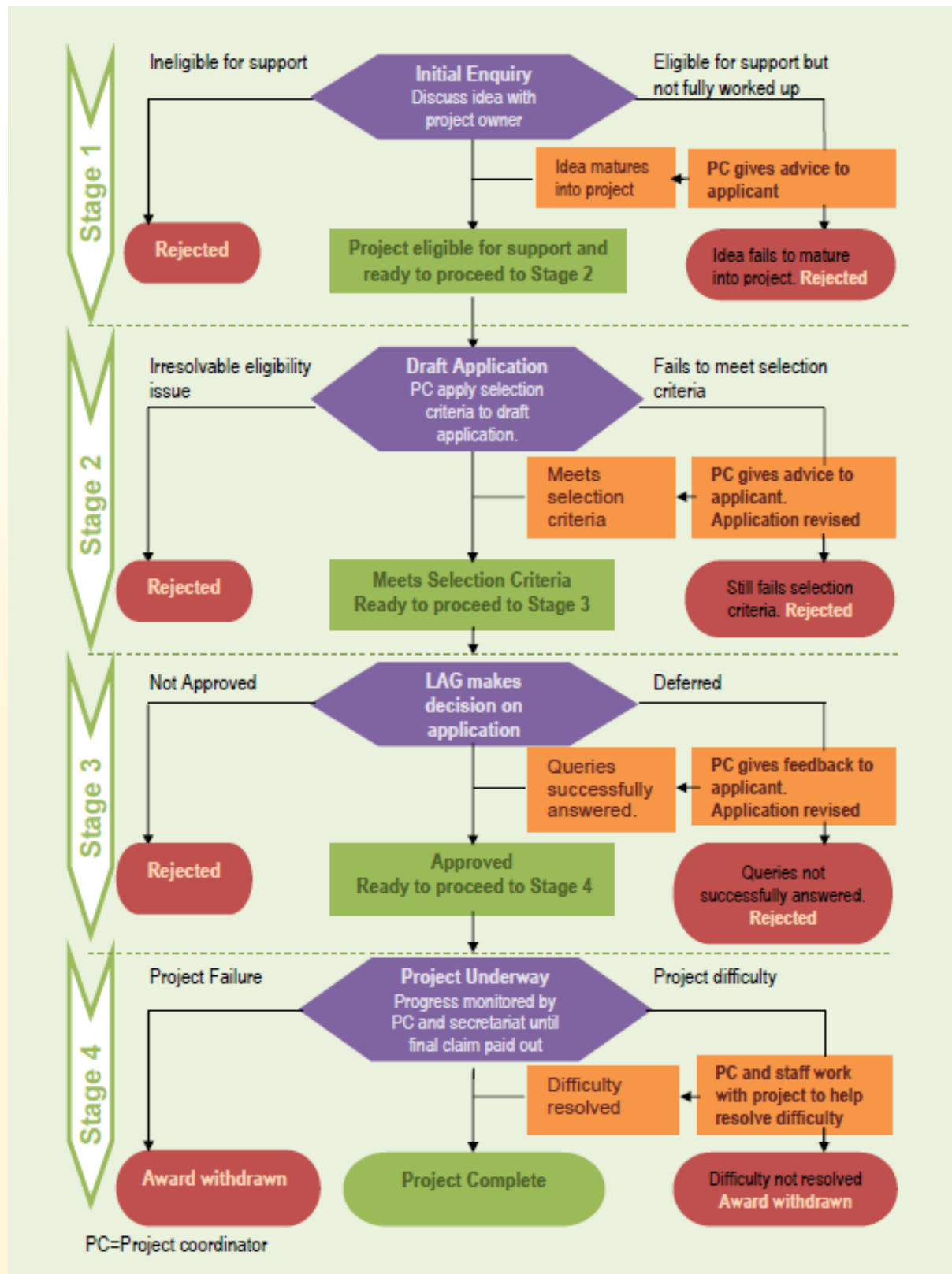
1. At the start of the process, the LAG staff assesses the applicant's project idea (compliance with selection criteria: eligibility, relevance, etc.).
2. The LAG staff assists the applicant in preparing the project application.
3. Then the LAG Board of Directors independently appraises the application and decides whether or not to approve it.
4. The LAG staff and Board carry out continuous monitoring of the project implementation until the final report.

In every stage of the process, the project idea is at risk of dropping out if it fails to mature into a project application, if it

doesn't meet the selection criteria, if it fails to answer the LAG Board queries or if it faces irresolvable difficulties during implementation. This continuous re-assessment and monitoring procedure ensures that only the most relevant and influential projects will be selected to implement the LDS. It also reflects good and efficient management of the scarce public funds appointed to the LAG.



The flow chart shows the full application process applied by the Argyll and Islands LEADER LAG:



Communication aspects

The scheme is based on continuous dialogue between the LAG staff and the project applicant. In cases where a project is dropped during one of the stages, a sound argument must be given to the applicant as to why this has happened.

Rejection can also be a valuable learning experience for the applicant, for example in a case where an entrepreneurs' investment plan is shown to be unprofitable.



Lessons learnt

Benefits

The scheme improves the quality and impact of the approved LAG projects as well as building the planning and implementation capacity of the project applicants through the multi-stage assessment, feedback provided and monitoring process. The scheme is also a clear 'road map' to be followed by LAG staff and directors in order to respect LDS priorities and project selection criteria. The multi-stage project application procedure encourages interaction and the building of mutual trust and understanding between the LAG and the applicants and strengthens the link between the LDS objectives and the approved projects.

Barriers

To work properly, the multi-stage application and continuous monitoring scheme requires that LAGs' staff resources are aligned with the number of projects. However this pro-active approach to getting it right from the offset

saves staff resources during the implementation, reporting and claiming phases when less unexpected project difficulties should arise.

Lessons learnt

The multi-stage application and continuous monitoring scheme has improved the quality and impact of the LAG projects in the Argyll and the Islands area in Scotland. It has also strengthened the connection between the LDS and the selected projects – i.e. the LDS role as a guiding document is now stronger. This connection will be even more important in the 2014-2020 multi-fund local development environment.

The information included in this Infosheet is primarily coming from case studies carried out within the ENRD Focus Group 4 on Better Local Development Strategies. It has been compiled by the Contact Point on the basis of the information collected in the EU Member States and regions and takes into account views expressed by the Focus Group. This notwithstanding, the content does not necessarily reflect the official position of the EU institutions and national authorities.