

Study Objectives

To assess the impact of the Leader approach, with a particular focus on its economic impact, in order to provide Defra and partners with robust reliable evidence on which to base future policy options, providing:

1. A systematic approach to understanding the impact of the Leader approach, particularly its economic impact, to produce comparable results to those derived from mainstream economic programmes. This will be used to inform the Mid-Term Evaluation of the RDPE and its final evaluation; and
2. Advice and guidance to Defra on good practice in implementing the Leader approach with regard to post 2013 policy options.

The Focus of the Study

The work will fill an evidence gap identified by Defra. It is intended to draw out lessons from current and previous applications of the Leader approach over its various phases. Specifically, the work seeks to identify interventions/suites of interventions that have worked well to date and identify their economic impact. Whilst the assessment aims to gain a holistic picture of the impact of the Leader approach, particular attention will be paid to its quantifiable net economic impact at the local, regional and national programme levels.

This work is seeking to identify and where possible quantify the range of economic benefits that have arisen from the Leader approach and activity. It is recognised that there are also non-economic benefits of the Leader approach and that many Local Action Groups and respective Local Development Strategies have wider social and environmental objectives. Whilst these benefits are already well documented, the economic impact and the added value of the Leader approach are less well explored. In so doing, the project will apply the UK standard economic assessment approach IEF+/Treasury Green Book principles and so give the results a rigour and robustness from which they have not benefited previously.

Approach to the Study

Defra have appointed **ekosgen** to undertake the study. The impact assessment work will run several lines of inquiry, which include looking at other parts of the UK and EU at the broader successes of the Leader approach. At the heart of the approach however, will be to ask individuals that have benefited from the Leader approach (micro-enterprises, individuals and community organisations) about the *difference the interventions have made to them and what would have happened if they had not received the support*. This requires surveying these 'end beneficiaries'. ekosgen are developing survey tools (online and telephone questionnaires) to gather this feedback. The approach will also seek your views as LAG officers/leads, alongside the good practice identified from the other Devolved Administrations and elsewhere in Europe. An overall method diagram is attached. The RDA in each region is supporting the study.

Timescales and Outputs

The first phase is to obtain the contact details for those who have benefited directly from Leader and to survey these 'end beneficiaries'. (May-June).

How Local Action Groups can support the Study

In reporting developing a more rounded picture of the benefits of the Leader approach, your views as LAG officers/leads are extremely important. There are a number of ways you can support the study:

- By helping provide the contact details of individual project managers and those benefiting from project activity (name, business/organisation (if relevant) telephone and e-mail details). ekosgen is working *'for Defra as Defra'* in this study, and will comply with data protection requirements;
- By identifying the location of project files for prior Leader activity if these are still retained by the LAG;
- Through participating in the survey of LAG officers/leads either by telephone or online (details to follow); and
- Through contributing feedback for the study through regular updates and meetings in your region.

This is an important study that can help provide rich and valuable information on the full impact of Leader to guide future policy decisions. For further information please contact Richard.Whitcomb@ekosgen.co.uk or emma.buckman@ekosgen.co.uk