

LEADER Toolkit

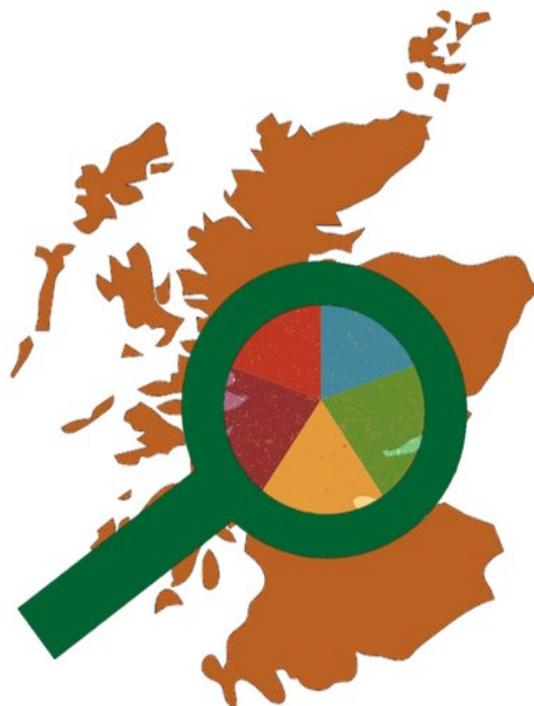
Monitoring and Evaluation

Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Monitoring progress	Page 2
The importance of indicators	Page 3
Ensuring high quality indicators	Page 3
Capturing on Local Actions in Rural Communities system	Page 4
Evaluating LDS implementation	Page 4
Approaches	Page 4
Self-evaluation	Page 5
Methods and tools	Page 5
Glossary	Page 9
Annex A - Indicators	Page 13

Introduction

The purpose of this section of the toolkit is to help Local Action Groups (LAGs)—and FLAGs—implement the monitoring & evaluation elements of their Local Development Strategies (LDS).



Monitoring Progress

Your LDS must describe what it proposes to do in relation to monitoring and evaluation, the provisions made to enable this to be done and the LAG's capacity to deliver.

Some serious planning is therefore needed during the development stage. As LAGs are obliged to provide the necessary information for RDP-level monitoring and evaluation, it therefore follows that their LDS plans should respect the RDP Evaluation Plan framework as well as the LDS specificities.

Your plan should provide: a framework for assessing your LAG's performance in implementing LEADER and its specificities; including:

- the specification of the relevant data to capture relevant procedural, physical, financial and relational elements
- the systems and mechanisms to manage financial and output data to ensure that the data specified and reported relates to the RDP and LDS specific indicators and targets
- proposals for disseminating and utilising evaluation results e.g. through amending the LDS and its delivery
- the way in which your monitoring and evaluation activity and processes will be designed and delivered to complement RDP level evaluation of LEADER

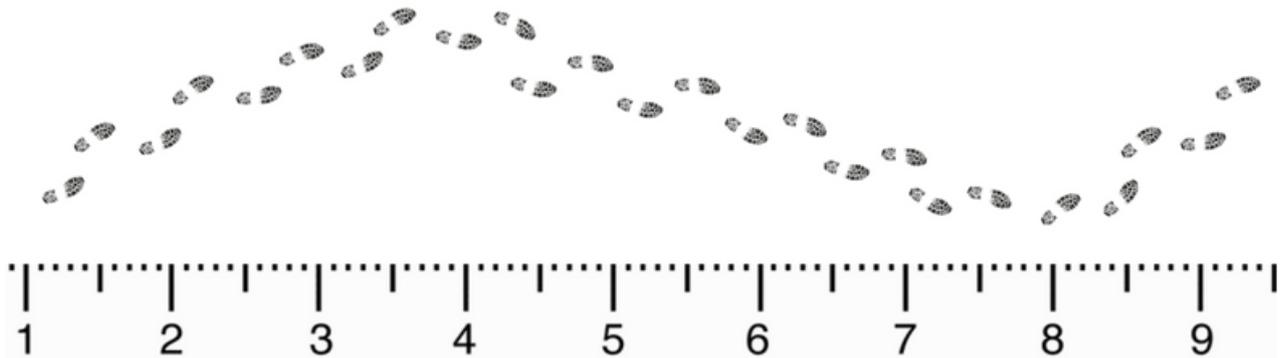


The importance of indicators

Once the objectives of the LDS are defined, the LAG/FLAG needs to establish how it will assess progress against those objectives.

For example if, one of the objectives is to enhance path provision in the area, then it should be possible to measure against this increase in metres.

Therefore, before starting strategy implementation, the LAG must know how it will measure the change triggered by its activity and where to find the necessary information. LAGs need to decide at the start what they are going to measure and for this they need indicators.



An indicator is an objective tool that **defines, measures and values** progress in the implementation of a LDS. **An indicator is not a means of determining project eligibility, nor is it to be used to determine whether or not project claims should be paid to the applicant.**

The degree to which LDS objectives are achieved can be measured at different levels:

- at the level of the **broader change** in the LDS area, through the implementation of the strategy (impact)
- at the level of addressing a specific **problem or issue** (result)
- at the level of a **single operation/project** (output)

Ensuring high quality indicators

It is important to make clear in the LDS which indicators will be used to measure progress in achieving each objective.

Good indicators, similarly to good objectives, should be **SMART**:

Specific	Well-defined, operational and focused
Measurable	Able to determine progress/completion; the same methodology delivers the same findings
Achievable	Realistic, practical and achievable within operational constraints
Relevant	Capture or measure the outcome they are intended to measure
Timebound	Attached to a timeframe

Another method of checking the quality of the indicators selected by the LAG, is to see if they are **RACER**:

Relevant	Closely linked to the needs to be addressed, not overambitious and measuring the right thing
Accepted	by the community, stakeholders and staff
Credible	for non-experts, unambiguous and easy to interpret
Easy	to measure and monitor (data collection should be possible at low cost)
Robust	against manipulation and external shock.

Capturing on Local Actions in Rural Communities system (LARCS)

On LARCS Monitoring and Evaluation was developed to split indicators under Target Results and Non Participant Target Results. This enabled each indicator to be either a Participant or Non Participant indicator which is intended to make things easier for when the Local Action Groups record their actual M&E results in the Participant or Non Participant tabs held within LARCS.

Please see **Annex A** for a suite of LDS and Common indicators which has been developed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group to provide clear definition of indicators.

This is a list where LAGs can draw on the ones that reflect their LDS and also provide them with a resource they can use for their own Monitoring and Evaluation activities.



Evaluating LDS Implementation



Approaches

In this programming period priority is being given to demonstrating the added value of the LEADER approach:

- **Quantitative effects** are changes which can be measured in straight forward numeric terms using quantifiable indicators. These are often derived from reporting or monitoring data, project or business records or through survey or sample.
- **Qualitative effects** reflect a change of state, be that the condition, behaviour, satisfaction or performance. As a result they require a judgment to be made on the extent of change. This involves the use of more sophisticated or specific tools often involving scaled responses measuring change against a baseline position or condition.

In LEADER evaluations the **above should be combined** to ensure the different aspects of the effects of the approach and its objectives are captured.

In evaluating LEADER, with its inherently participative methods and its strong socio-economic dimension, a **participative evaluation** approach is strongly recommended. This applies whether an external or self-evaluation approach is used.

Stronger LAG/FLAG involvement in evaluation activities is key to a successful evaluation. This is important because strengthening LAG/FLAG ownership of the process and outcomes can be beneficial in supporting institutional learning.

This in turn contributes to developing evidence-based policies and social accountability, enhancing understanding of the territory, the LDS and its effects. Active participation in the evaluation process also strengthens the evaluation's relevance to LDS partners with greater understanding and ownership of the outcomes of the evaluation.

Self-evaluation



Self-evaluation is integral to your work (linking to your monitoring/reporting systems, tapping into internal knowledge). Greater ownership of the evaluation may also increase likelihood of change to LDS design and/or implementation.

It should be understood that in the context of evaluation, self-evaluation is not necessarily the 'easy' option. The same principles and requirements apply regardless of the type of evaluation, for example in terms of the objectivity and rigor required, need for evidence, data requirements, level of participation and the planning.

The important thing to note here is however you undertake evaluation you will need to have the appropriate expertise.

Other key considerations for your LDS will be the costs and amount of time required and available in the LAG/FLAG.

Methods and tools

The following provides a brief overview of the 14 suggested methods and tools for evaluation with links to practical examples and further information.

Desk research

This is the starting point for many evaluations and is used to analyse the basic contextual and performance data.

This would normally include analysis of relevant contextual trends, the policy background and so on. This involves the use of monitoring and reporting data and standard data sources e.g. on employment or business performance. Comparative analysis of performance against for example benchmarks or control examples is also possible.

Desk research is often used to inform the design of the consultative elements of an evaluation.



Interviews

These are normally conducted by telephone or face-to-face with key people, for example LAG members, community representatives, statutory organisations, third sector organisations, Mas. The questionnaires used can be adjusted in depth as required and to fit the consultee. They can cover both qualitative and quantitative elements. These are normally the most in-depth elements of the consultative approach.

Surveys

Surveys can be conducted in a variety of ways. They normally involve a questionnaire which can be distributed by post, by email, online, by phone or face-to-face, be self-completed or involve a surveyor. These can either be statistically representative or not. Sample sizes for robust statistical reliability are unlikely to be achieved in a single LAG evaluation due to the relatively small number of beneficiaries. They can be used for both qualitative and quantitative purposes. They are generally less reliable than analysis of monitoring and reporting data or census approaches.

Costs vary by the size of sample and the length and complexity of questionnaire, whether self-completion or not, postal or online. Qualitative approaches are more expensive. Online tools such as Survey Monkey enable direct analysis of the findings but require careful design, for example using the correct questions.

Census (Questionnaire)

A census generally involves the use of a questionnaire with the entire population affected (e.g. all projects). The reliability of census results is high. Costs will vary by the size of the population and the length and complexity of questionnaire.

Focus groups

Focus groups are generally used to address a specific topic or question or a specific section of the population. They generally involve a small number of individuals (five to ten) balanced in age, gender, location.

A focus group explores an issue in-depth supported through impartial facilitation. For example, participants may explore a specific evaluation theme or topic area or to check or validate initial findings. Costs will vary depending on location, duration, facilitators, outputs. (Outputs may be presented as a specific report, an annex or incorporated in the main evaluation report.)

Case studies

Case studies vary enormously in the approaches adopted, their depth and scale. They can be both external examples for comparison or examples from the subject of the evaluation to highlight specific issues or achievements. They may involve both desk research and consultative or primary research elements. They may be both qualitative and quantitative. Findings may be presented as a specific report, an annex or incorporated in the main report. Their costs are affected by a wide range of factor such as nature, scale, location.

Self-Assessment

This involves the assessment of the two governance features: decentralized management and financing and the local partnership which it says can justifiably be said to constitute the major building blocks of a sound LEADER evaluation; the other six LEADER features are thought to be principally consequences of governance processes. LAGs should integrate self-assessment and self-reflection at the center of their approach and this can be built into an on-going formative evaluation process. This should be organised as a continuous cycle of events periodically involving different actors at different times.

Please see Self Evaluation workbook from Finnish LAG further detail, This self-evaluation guide is designed for use by Local Action Groups as a workbook and background material when they draw up self-evaluation plans and evaluate their activities. The guide includes basic information on and theoretical background to the evaluation of projects and the evaluation logic. In the workbook section, attention is paid to the matters to be considered in the self-evaluation process. A collection of useful self-assessment tools is also included in this guide –

http://www.program-podezelja.si/images/phocadownload/razvojne_osi/4_OS/gradiva/anglescina/self_evaluation_workbook_for_LAGs.pdf

Most Significant Changes (MSC) Monitoring

This assessment method is based on a narrative approach and operates without indicators. It can be integrated in participative and on-going self-evaluation or monitoring processes.

Carried out through focus groups, it prepares narratives or stories about important or significant changes giving a rich picture of the impact of development work and providing the basis for dialogue on key objectives and values of development programmes.

MSC complements other methods but it comes into its own where outcomes are unexpected and meanings are disputed, see link below for more information –

<https://www.odi.org/resources/docs/6383.pdf>

The Potential and Bottleneck Analysis (PBA)

This method is based on the assumption that local and regional development efforts can be improved if qualitative and quantitative aspects are considered as interlinked and contributing to a comprehensive picture of the whole. The assessment focuses on the respective potentials and bottlenecks affecting local development in terms of eight key aspects.

These aspects are assessed with approximately 90 specific questions during a workshop involving at least 30 participants using rating scales. After answering the 90 questions, the results can be visualized as cobweb profiles or bar graphs. Changes are expressed in terms of differentials from the baseline situation. See page 67 of the attached document –

http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/leader-gateway/quality-life-rural-areas.pdf

Plugging the leaks

The New Economics Foundation developed a simple-to-use approach to local economic development evaluation which uses the analogy of a leaky bucket to explain economic flows in a local economy. When money is spent in a local economy some flows out as people buy goods and services elsewhere. The more money that stays and re-circulates, the greater the retention of benefits will be in the local economy and the greater will be the likelihood that the re-circulating money will create more jobs.

Economists tend to express this type of economic effect using the term 'multipliers' but, rather than constructing an elaborate economic model, a pared-down version using the same underlying principles can help throw light on changes in the local economy arising from project interventions. In order to evaluate impacts and outcomes, it should be used in a 'before and after' situation.

The great thing about this approach is that it can be used by the community itself to build up a picture of the flows in, and around, a local economy. It is a tool for both self-assessment and evaluation and external assessment. See page 69 of the attached document – http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/leader-gateway/quality-life-rural-areas.pdf

Social Network Analysis

This approach helps to assess the density, quality and robustness of communication structures between partners in formal or informal networks and represents these results visually in a network diagram.

The approach provides insights on bonding capital in a stakeholder network, on structural characteristics such as centrality or peripherality of specific actors, or on emerging sub-networks which are only loosely linked to other parts of the network, as well as on specific roles of actors within the network. See page 71 of the attached document – http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/leader-gateway/quality-life-rural-areas.pdf

Social accounting

Social accounting is the process of collecting information about the activities an organisation carries out which affect its stakeholders. These activities may be intended 'outputs' or just the day-to-day internal operations. Organisations do not exist in a vacuum and the impact they have on their environment can be measured according to three dimensions: social, environmental and financial (hence the term "triple bottom-line accounting").

Financial reporting has been in use for hundreds of years and can be used to show what has happened and as a planning tool. Social accounting enables this process to be carried out for social and environmental outputs. See page 72 of this document for more information – http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/leader-gateway/quality-life-rural-areas.pdf

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The use of this approach in the assessment of the social and process related aspects of interventions is becoming more widespread and is increasingly being applied in LEADER. SROI recognises that there are many things we value that cannot be easily captured in traditional economic terms.

As conventional cost-benefit analysis types of approach do not consider anything beyond simple costs and price alternative tools to measure social and environmental impacts were needed and developed. SROI is an analytical tool for measuring and accounting for a much broader concept of value, taking into account social, economic and environmental factors.

Explanation of the technique can be found at: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/app_templates/enrd_assets/pdf/nrn-toolkit/nsu7/sroi_presentation_8_may_2014.pdf

Logical Framework Analysis (LFA)

A log frame (also known as a Project Framework) is a tool for planning and managing development projects. It looks like a table (or framework) and aims to present information about the key components of a project in a clear, concise, logical and systematic way.

The log frame model was developed in the United States and has since been adopted and adapted for use by many others, including the Department for International Development (DFID).

More detail on this technique can be found at: <http://www.gdrc.org/ngo/logical-fa.pdf>

Glossary of terms

Evaluation	<p>Evaluation is a process of judgment of interventions according to their results, impacts and the needs they aim to satisfy. Evaluation looks at the effectiveness, the efficiency and at the relevance of an intervention. Rural development evaluation must provide information on the implementation and impact of the co-financed programmes.</p> <p>The aims are to increase the accountability and transparency with regard to the legal and budget authorities and the public and to improve the implementation of the programmes by contributing to informed planning and decisions concerning needs, delivery mechanisms and resource allocation.</p>
Evaluation activity	<p>Evaluation activity enables evaluators to conduct evaluation tasks and to assess programme result and impact. Covers all the activities that Managing Authorities and other stakeholders have to carry out during the evaluation process</p>
Evaluation governance	<p>The set of appropriate institutional arrangements for managing evaluation aimed at ensuring effective processes and for making full use of the information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems. The institutional arrangements must address three requirements: developing a policy and a set of guidelines for evaluation; ensuring impartiality and independence; linking evaluation findings to future activities.</p>
Evaluation results	<p>Outcomes of the assessment of efficiency, effectiveness, impact and achievements of an intervention in comparison with policy objectives.</p>
Evaluation topic	<p>Specific subject that a particular evaluation is focused on. For example, rural development priorities and focus areas, or cross-cutting issues.</p>
Focus area	<p>The sub-field of policy at which the intervention is targeted.</p>
Indicator	<p>A tool to measure the achievement of an objective, a resource mobilised, an output accomplished, an effect obtained, or a context variable (economic, social or environmental). The information provided by an indicator is a quantitative data used to measure facts or opinions (for example percentage of enterprises which have been assisted by public intervention or percentage of trainees who claim to be satisfied or highly satisfied).</p>

An indicator must, among other things, produce simple information which is communicable and easily understood by both the provider and the user of the information. It must help managers of public interventions to communicate, negotiate and decide. It should reflect as precisely as possible whatever it is meant to measure. The indicator and its measurement unit must be sensitive, that is to say, the quantity measured must vary significantly when a change occurs in the variable to be measured.

Impact

Effects of an intervention lasting in medium or long-term. Some impacts appear indirectly, (for example turnover generated for the suppliers of assisted firms). Others can be observed at the macroeconomic or macro-social level (for example improvement of the image of the assisted area) These are overall impacts. Impacts may be positive or negative, expected or unexpected.

Impact indicator

These refer to the benefits of the programme beyond the immediate effects on its direct beneficiaries both at the level of the intervention but also more generally in the programme area. They are linked to the wider objectives of the programme. They are normally expressed in “net” terms, which means subtracting effects that cannot be attributed to the intervention (for example double counting, deadweight), and taking into account indirect effects (displacement and multipliers). Examples include: increase in employment in rural areas, increased productivity of agricultural sector, increased production of renewable energy.

Monitoring

An exhaustive and regular examination of the resources, outputs and results of Public Funding. Monitoring is based on a system of coherent information including reports, reviews, balance sheets, indicators and so on. Monitoring system information is obtained primarily from operators and is used essentially for steering public interventions. When monitoring includes a judgement, this judgement refers to the achievement of operational objectives. Monitoring is also intended to produce feedback and direct learning. It is generally the responsibility of the actors charged with implementation of an intervention.

Output

Action which is financed and accomplished with the money allocated to an intervention. A project promoter undertakes to produce an output in immediate exchange for the support granted. Outputs may take the form of facilities or works (for example building of a road, farm investment, tourist accommodation). They may also take the form of immaterial services (for example training, consultancy, information).

Output indicator

These measure activities directly realised within programmes. These activities are the first step towards realising the operational objectives of the intervention and are measured in physical or monetary units. Examples include number of training sessions organised, number of farms receiving investment support, total volume of investment.

Result

Advantage or disadvantage which direct beneficiaries obtain at the end of their participation in a public intervention or as soon as a public facility has been completed. Results can be observed when an applicant completes an action and accounts for the way in which allocated funds were spent and managed. At this point s/he may show, for example, that accessibility has been improved due to the construction of a road, or that the firms which have received advice claim to be satisfied. The applicant may regularly monitor results. They have to adapt the implementation of the intervention according to the results obtained.

Result indicators

These measure the direct and immediate effects of the intervention. They provide information on changes in, for example, the behaviour, capacity or performance of direct beneficiaries and are measured in physical or monetary terms. Examples include gross number of jobs created, successful training outcomes.

Annex A

Indicator	Recorded in LARCs projects as	Output or Result	Definition	EAFRD funded - captured at project level	Captured at LDS level	EMFF funded projects	Comments
No. of people participating in LEADER projects	Target Result List (Participant)	Output	Unique individuals involved in the implementation of a LEADER project e.g. volunteers, paid workers, beneficiaries	Yes	No	Yes	If people participate in a project more than once they are only captured once
No. of jobs safeguarded (FTE)	Target Result List (Participant)	Result	Existing posts within an organisations or businesses which would not have been maintained without the EAFRD/EMFF supported intervention (Seasonal & part-time jobs to be converted to Full Time equivalent)	Yes	No	Yes	Jobs created are under T23/R24
No. of projects creating or safeguarding jobs	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that create or safeguard jobs (as per Indicator 2 & T23/R24)	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of knowledge transfer actions delivered by projects	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Number of individual learning or training events delivered	Yes	No	Yes	
No. of learning days delivered	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Total number of hours across the project spent on participating in learning activities	Yes	No	Yes	
No. of community facilities improved	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	Number of existing community facilities (e.g. libraries, sports, halls, spaces) that have been improved as	No	Yes	Yes	

			a result of EAFRD/EMFF funding (in terms of construction, accessibility, opening hours, resources, equipment, range of users)				
No. of community facilities created and new services provided	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	Number of new community facilities (e.g. libraries, sports, halls, spaces) that have been created and/or new services provided as a result of EAFRD/EMFF funding	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects supporting communities to manage/own assets/services	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects such as feasibility studies, development plans, business plans or development officers that give communities the capacity to own or manage assets that they lease/own	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of environmental awareness raising projects supported	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects aimed at increasing general awareness of environment issues - e.g. biodiversity, climate change, land use	No	Yes	Yes	
Length of paths created	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	Number of km of paths (cycle, foot, multi-use) created	Yes	No	No	
Annual change in the number of visits to facilities/attractions	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	Applicants will need to establish a baseline at the point of application and be able to set out how the project will work to increase visitor numbers over a prescribed period of time. The indicator should measure the success (or otherwise) of	Yes	No	Yes	

			the intervention				
No. of promotional/marketing projects	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects with a focus on promotion and/or marketing – e.g. a particular organisation, place, product, initiative or event	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of initial studies or pilot projects supported	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that are focused on actions such as feasibility studies, pilots, pieces of research	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects implemented through partnership working	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that involve more than one organisation that are actively involved in delivering the aims of the project	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of events supported	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Number of events supported	Yes	No	Yes	
No. of new enterprises	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	Number of small/micro enterprises (including social enterprises) that are started up as a direct result of EMFF/EAFRD intervention	No	Yes	Yes	Micro and small enterprises are defined in EU recommendation 2003/361
No. of enterprises developing new markets	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Enterprises that have developed a new market for its products/services	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects supporting food & drink supply chain development	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects supporting food and drink supply chain development (e.g. co-operation, collaboration, events, learning, promotion, networking)	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of enterprises participating in food & drink supply chain	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Enterprises directly involved in food & drink supply chain initiatives projects	Yes	No	Yes	

initiatives			(enterprises include social enterprises)				
No. of community-based food & drink projects	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Food & drink initiatives led by communities (e.g. community gardens, grow your own, food education, food poverty)	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects benefiting young people	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that are led by or aimed at people under 25	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects benefiting disadvantaged groups	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that are led by or aimed at individuals, or groups who face difficulties or discrimination in some aspects of their everyday lives and are at risk of social exclusion, e.g. disabled people, ex-offenders, recovering drug addicts, ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, refugees, LGBT people	No	Yes	No	
No. of projects that support capacity building and/or leadership in communities	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects giving individuals and/or organisations the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise to work with the people around them to strengthen community resilience	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of first time volunteers	Target Result List (Participant)	Result	Number of unique individuals participating in a LEADER funded project for the first time	Yes	No	Yes	
No. of projects that foster	Non Participant		Projects that focus on	No	Yes	Yes	

innovation	Activity Target Result List		fostering innovation				
No. of LAG/FLAG visits and exchanges undertaken	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	The number of times that LAG or FLAG either as a collective or as individual members on behalf of the LAG or FLAG have visited or hosted other organisations e.g. to learn, share best practice or impart knowledge	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of new products or services created	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Result	No. of new products or services funded through LDS	Yes	No	Yes	
No. of projects contributing to a low carbon economy	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that aim to reduce carbon emissions e.g. through carbon reduction techniques, energy efficiency, environmental improvement	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects supporting broadband roll out	Non Participant Activity Target Result List	Output	Projects that allow communities to undertake preparatory work in advance of possible capital investment in digital infrastructure	No	Yes	Yes	
No. of projects that address rural inequality	Non Participant Activity Target Result List		Projects that tackle poverty and/or create equal opportunities in rural/coastal communities	No	Yes	Yes	