

April 2023

EMFAF Operational Programme 2021-2027

Developing Fisheries Local Action Group



Riadas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

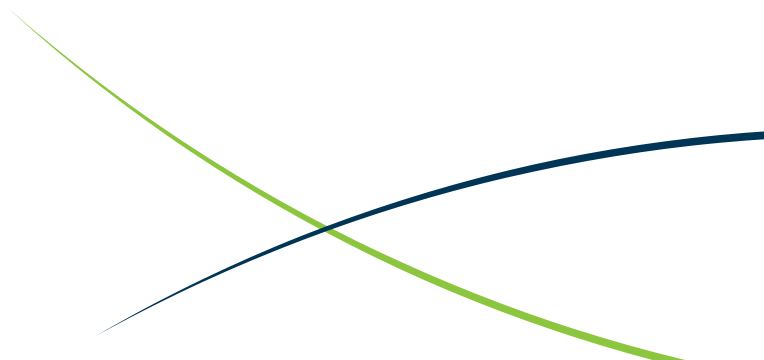


Cómhainithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach

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Glossary Of Terms

CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CLLD	Community Led Local Development
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation (EU Regulation 1303/2014) ²
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EMFAF	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
EOI	Expression of Interest
ESI	Funds European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
FLAG	Fisheries Local Action Group
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l' Economie Rurale i.e. Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy
MA	Managing Authority Promoter Promoter of a project (beneficiary of funding).
RDP	Rural Development Programme also known as Operational Programme



Introduction

Local development will be a key instrument within the new European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to support the sustainable development of coastal communities. Priority 3 under Article 3 of the EMFAF regulations seeks to enable a sustainable blue economy in coastal, island and inland areas, and foster the development of fishing and aquaculture communities.

Articles 31-34 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 set out the means by which Community Led Local Development (CLLD) must be undertaken for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. CLLD is a specific tool for use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. The methodology places the community living in the fisheries and aquaculture dependent area at its core. Groups of people representing defined geographical areas in the form of Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) are charged with identifying the challenges to development in their own communities and developing initiatives to address these challenges. Through the drafting of local development strategies, FLAGs seek to facilitate participation by all parties who wish to contribute to this process, thus ensuring that each local development strategy is as representative of the community view as possible.

The Fisheries Local Action Group Programme was first established in Ireland in 2013 under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and continued under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Under the initial Programme 6 FLAGs were established around the Irish coast, this increased to 7 under the EMFF Programme.

This guide seeks to enable interested groups in coastal areas to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) so that they may be considered for selection as the FLAG for their respective area in order to implement a Local Development Strategy (LDS). Successful applicants will receive preparatory support to develop the LDS, which if of an adequate standard, will be used to prioritise local development projects supported by funds from the EMFAF.

This will be a multistage process consisting of:

Stage 1:

Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from potential FLAGs that meet the mandatory criteria

Stage 2:

Selection of FLAGs based on selection criteria

Stage 3:

Development of Local Development Strategies

Stage 4:

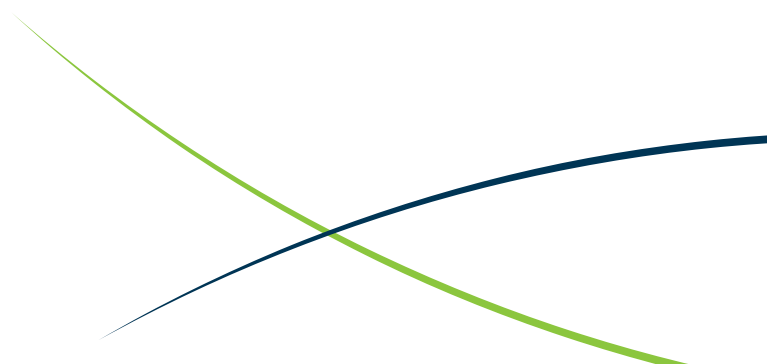
Evaluation of Local Development Strategies

Stage 5:

Approval of Local Development Strategies

Stage 6:

Implementation of approved Local Development Strategies



Community Led Local Development

There are two main funding streams for community led local development in Ireland, both of which co-funded by EU.

- Under European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), LEADER is programmed under Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programmes:
 - promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas and provides the basis for LEADER to address key challenges facing Irish society and deliver supports to address, for example, the increase in levels of poverty and social exclusion.
- The Fisheries Local Action Groups 2014-2020 were funded under Union Priority 4 of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Similar to the legal basis for LEADER, the FLAG programme shall ensure that communities in fishing or aquaculture areas better exploit and benefit from the opportunities offered by the sustainable blue economy, capitalising on and strengthening environmental, cultural, social and human resources.

Under the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) the FLAG was to be representative of not just the fisheries and aquaculture sector but also the wider coastal community and the LDS to be an integrated development strategy for the entire community as per Article 60.

The EMFAF in contrast acknowledges that the wider focus both in terms of the membership of the FLAG and the breadth of the LDS resulted in a loss of focus of how funding was targeted. This is evident in Recital 44 which advises appropriate representation of the blue economy (including the fisheries and aquaculture sector) consistent with the level of focus of the LDS in that area:

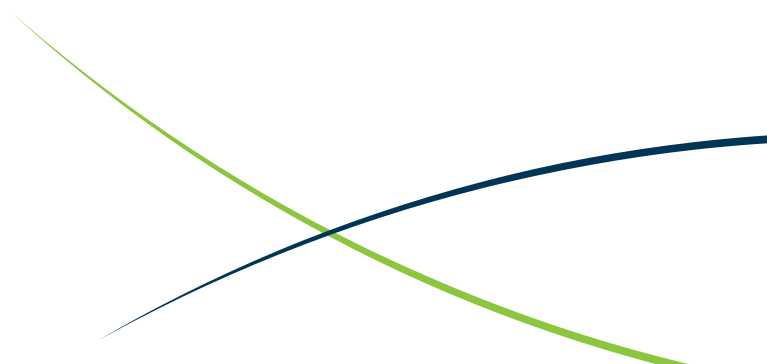
(44) The development of a sustainable blue economy strongly relies on partnerships between local stakeholders that contribute to the vitality of coastal and inland communities and economies. The EMFAF should provide tools to foster such partnerships. For that purpose, support through CLLD should be available under shared management. That approach should boost economic diversification in a local context through the development of coastal and inland fisheries, aquaculture and a sustainable blue economy. CLLD strategies should ensure that local communities in fishing and aquaculture areas better exploit and benefit from the opportunities offered by the sustainable blue economy, capitalising on and strengthening environmental, cultural, social and human resources. Every local partnership should therefore reflect the main focus of its strategy by ensuring a balanced involvement and representation of all relevant stakeholders from the local sustainable blue economy.

With respect to the LDS the option is given for a more targeted approach in Article 30:

Article 30

Community-led local development

1. *To achieve the specific objective referred to in Article 29 of this Regulation, support shall be implemented through the CLLD set out in Article 31 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.*
1. *For the purposes of this Article, the CLLD strategies referred to in Article 32 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 shall ensure that communities in fishing or aquaculture areas better exploit and benefit from the opportunities offered by the sustainable blue economy, capitalising on and strengthening environmental, cultural, social and human resources. Those CLLD strategies may range from those which focus on fisheries or aquaculture to broader strategies directed at the diversification of local communities.*



Fisheries Local Action Groups

FLAGs are made up of public and private partners from the defined geographical areas and must include representatives from different sectors of the local economy/community that broadly reflect the main focus of their strategy and the socioeconomic composition of the area through a balanced representation of the main stakeholders, including private sector, public sector and civil society and ensure a significant representation of the fisheries, aquaculture and processing sectors consistent with recital 44 of the EMFAF above.

The regulatory framework for Priority 3 of the EMFAF requires a FLAG to design and implement the community-led LDS, as per EMFAF Article 30, paragraph 2 above, through which Priority 3 interventions will be delivered. FLAGs will be facilitated in developing their Local Development Strategies through the provision of preparatory support under Article 34 (1) a of the CPR in the form of appropriately qualified professional assistance. The Managing Authority for Ireland's Seafood Operational programme under the EMFF has, as per Article 33 (2) of the Common Provisions Regulation, selected Bord Iascaigh Mhara as lead partner in administrative and financial matters within the FLAGs and designated it as an Intermediate Body for this purpose. The FLAG will implement the LDS through supporting local projects that contribute to its aims and objectives.

As per Article 33, paragraph 3 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the following tasks will be carried out exclusively by the Fisheries Local Action Groups:

- a) Building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement operations;
- b) Drawing up a non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedure and criteria, which avoids conflicts of interest and ensures that no single interest group controls selection decisions;
- c) Preparing and publishing calls for proposals;
- d) Selecting operations and fixing the amount of support and presenting the proposals to the BIM for final verification of eligibility before approval;
- e) Monitoring progress towards the achievement of objectives of the strategy;
- f) Evaluating the implementation of the strategy.

These mandatory tasks will be carried out by the FLAG as part of the partnership with BIM, the designated intermediate body for UP3. Specifically, as lead partner in administrative and financial matters within the FLAGs, BIM will support the FLAG boards in both the administration of the scheme and coordinating the promotion of the outcomes and impacts of the CLLD grants. BIMs specific responsibilities to the FLAG boards will include:

- Facilitating the development of the local development strategy for each FLAG for the EMFAF programme through the provision of preparatory support
- Developing and providing robust guidance and procedures for the FLAGs board for the project application process
- Providing administrative support to the FLAG boards in arranging project assessment meetings
- Verification of project eligibility and formalising project selection decisions for final approval by BIM
- Drawing up meeting notes and processing meeting expenses
- Promotion of the FLAG programme to prospective grantees
- Promotion of successful outcomes and projects and working with the BIM Communications Team to promote these through BIM's communication channels
- Facilitate the animation of the FLAG programme in the FLAG regions
- Ensuring good governance and that a clear audit trail exists
- Co-Operation with the OP-level evaluations

It should be noted that while a budget for the period 2021-2027 will be allocated to a successful FLAG to support its LDS, no funds will be handled by the FLAG. It is anticipated that administration and animation costs will be borne by BIM through the provision of staff in support of each of the FLAG's. As designated Intermediate Body all other funds will be administered and disbursed centrally by BIM.

FLAGs will be selected for the 2021-2027 period by a Selection Committee to be put in place for that purpose by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Flag Areas

The seven FLAG Areas selected under the EMFF FLAG Programme were:

FLAG Northeast

Omeath to Howth

FLAG Southeast

Bray to the east bank of river Blackwater at Youghal

FLAG South

West bank of the river Blackwater at Youghal to county boundary west of Lauragh

FLAG Southwest

County boundary west of Lauragh to Foynes

FLAG West

Kilimer to Leenane

FLAG Northwest

Killary to Tullaghan

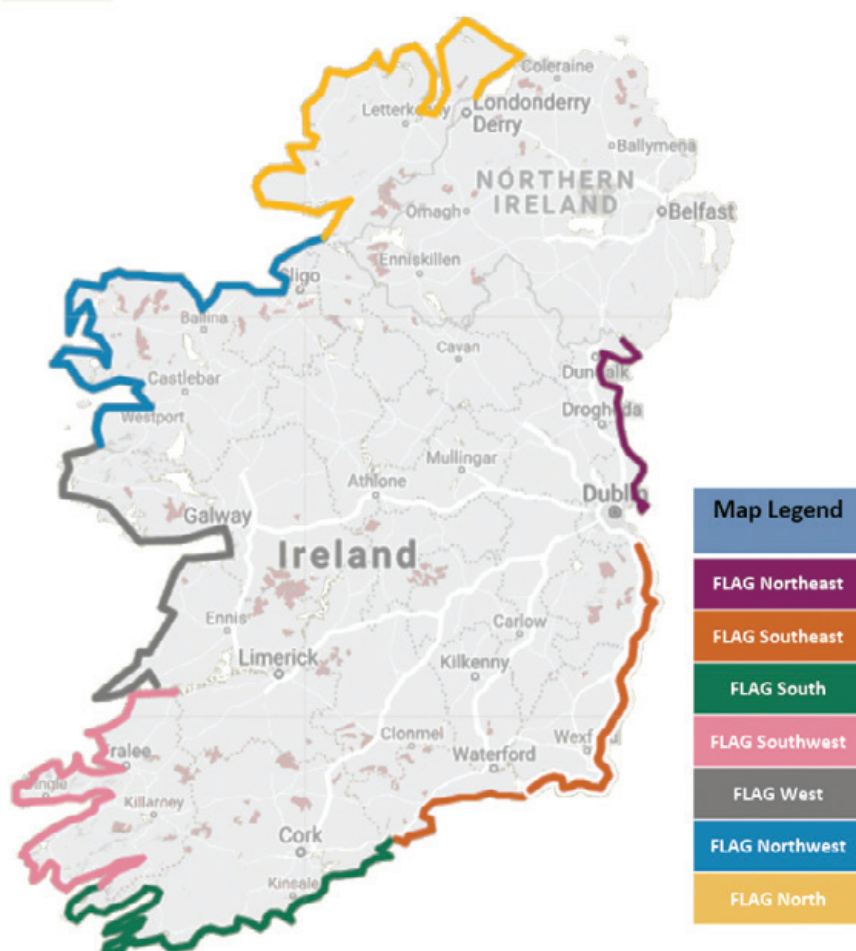
FLAG North

Ballyshannon to Muff

Notwithstanding the historical location of FLAGs, areas proposed by Expressions of Interest for the EMFAF FLAG Programme must meet the following criteria:

- The area proposed must have at least one boundary comprising the coastline.
- The area must have a significant level of employment in fisheries or aquaculture.
- The population of coastal District Electoral Divisions for proposed area, excluding those that are part of towns or cities with a population of 50,000 or more, must be over 70,000
- The area must have a minimum of 150 vessels in all fleet segments on the Fleet Register and preferably not more than 400
- The area proposed must have no more than one National Fishery Harbour Centre.

The territory for each FLAG area is required to be unique, so where more than one proposal is received concerning any particular area, BIM will liaise with the groups concerned to ensure the integrity of each FLAG area proposed.



FLAG Selection Process

Selection criteria will be used to select prospective FLAG groups for preparatory support to develop local development strategies. Only strategies developed by these groups will subsequently be considered for funding to implement their strategies.

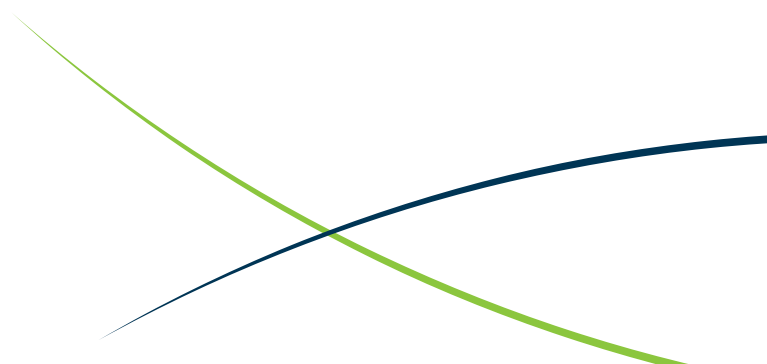
Selection Criteria

- Character of the area: coastal, estuary, protected areas, maximum and minimum population sizes, population density, population decline, remote areas etc.
- Size and importance of the fishing and aquaculture sector in the area (e.g. employment, numbers and size of boats, nature and type of fishing, landings/ production size, value...)
- Representation of actors relevant to the implementation of the LDS such as community, state, business community and education
- Extent of representation of the fisheries, aquaculture and seafood sectors in the group
- Experience and track record of the group in the fisheries, aquaculture and wider seafood sector and understanding of the issues that have affected the communities in the defined area
- Experience and track record of group, individually or collectively, in promoting and animating CLLD initiatives
- Groups proposals to refresh and enhance the composition, representation and operation of the proposed EMFAF FLAG Board
- Experience and track record of group in the assessment and selection of fisheries, aquaculture and blue economy development projects
- Demonstrated capacity of the group to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the local development strategy for their defined area
- Group's proposals for local engagement in strategy development.
- Group's proposals as to how focused support for any coherent sub-areas that may be identified in the strategy will be facilitated and in particular the local structures that might be required

Development of Local Development Strategies

Successful FLAGs will be facilitated by BIM to develop their Local Development Strategies through the provision of preparatory support under Article 34 (1) a of the CPR in the form of appropriately qualified professional assistance which will include:

- 1) A process of review of relevant LDSs prepared under UP4 of the EMFF and the lessons learnt from their implementation
- 2) Consideration of any previous FLAG LDS for the area and
- 3) Engagement and consultation with the relevant local actors including the seafood industry, community, state sectors and those in the wider blue economy.

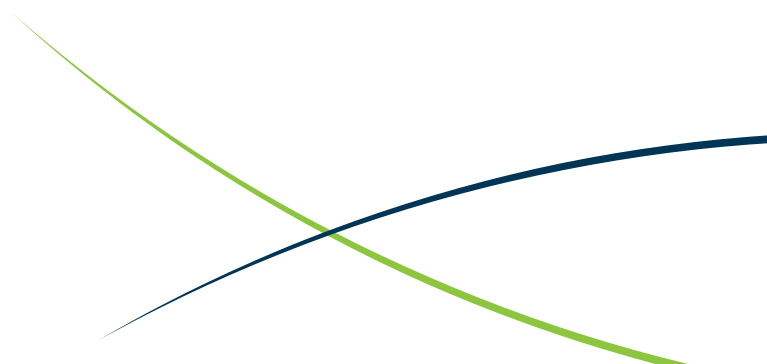


Evaluation & Approval of Local Development Strategies

In order to ensure that the draft LDSs are of adequate standard an evaluation of all strategies will be carried out using, inter alia, the following criteria before groups are allocated funding to implement the strategy. These will be finalised prior to successful FLAG groups commencing the LDS development process.

- Consistency with Articles 32 (1) and Article 33 (3) of the CPR
- Linkages and complementarity with Food Wise 2025, EU Atlantic Area Strategy and other relevant policies, programmes and strategies
- Justification for and appropriateness of area selected
- Adequacy of stakeholder engagement and representation
- Adequacy of representation of seafood sector
- Involvement of wider community
- Quality of the analysis of the area covered by the LDS based on reliable data and indicators
- Priorities and needs reflected in the SWOT analysis
- Demonstrated clarity of interventions proposed through use of intervention logic
- Clarity of objectives and reasons for their selection
- Coherence of business plan
- Adequacy of monitoring and evaluation proposed
- Adequacy of animation and capacity building plans
- Adequacy and cost effectiveness of resourcing to deliver strategy
- Clarity of focus on jobs and growth
- Focus on developing the untapped potential of the coastal regions
- Proposals for co-operation with other FLAGs and CLLD groups
- Adequacy of FLAG working procedures with respect to corporate governance best practice

Only local development strategies that meet a predetermined minimum standard as determined by the above criteria will be allocated funding for implementation.



EMFAF 2021-2027: Expression of Interest for Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)

Proposed Name of prospective FLAG:

Key Contact Details:

Proposed Geographical Area for LDS

Size and importance of fishing, aquaculture and seafood sector in area proposed for LDS

Proposed representation of actors relevant to implementation of LDS

Experience and track record of group in the fisheries, aquaculture and seafood sector (append brief CVs if appropriate)

Experience and track record of group, individually or collectively, in promoting and animating CLLD initiatives (append brief CVs if appropriate)

Proposals to refresh and enhance the composition, representation and operation of the proposed EMFAF FLAG Board

Experience and track record of group in the assessment and selection of fisheries, aquaculture and blue economy development projects

Demonstrated capacity of the group to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the local development strategy for their defined area

Group's proposals for local engagement in strategy development

If applicable state Group's proposals as to how focused support for any coherent sub-areas that may be identified in the strategy will be facilitated and in particular the local structures that might be required

