



Heart of Wessex Local Action Group

Volunteer Appraiser Factsheet

The Heart of Wessex Local Action Group (LAG) is now seeking to recruit volunteer appraisers to support the preparation of robust project applications for the new LEADER programme (2015-2020). Volunteer appraisers will have the depth of skills and experience to carry out this vital role and will need to demonstrate knowledge or expertise in at least one of the following areas:

- Agriculture and/or farm diversification
- Rural tourism
- Forestry
- Rural services
- Culture and heritage
- Small and micro business support

The LAG wants to build capacity from within its rural communities, so it would be advantageous if volunteer appraisers were based in and have a good level of knowledge and reasonable understanding of the geography and communities that make up the Heart of Wessex LAG area. A sound knowledge of general issues facing rural communities and businesses would also be helpful.

How does the project application process work?

The project application process is two stage; Outline Application and Full Application. The Outline Application will be assessed by our LAG Forum members. If LAG Forum members choose to endorse an Outline Application project submission applicants will be invited to complete a Full Application. Full Applications will be based on a thorough business plan and financial and supporting evidence to underpin the application will also be required. Each Full Application must then be assessed by an independent appraiser. The appraisers report and recommendation will then be considered along with the Full Application by the LAG Executive Committee (decision making panel) who will have the final say on which projects receive support from the LAG.

What happens if a Conflict of Interest is identified?

In all circumstances it is expected that total impartiality is provided. Therefore, if an appraiser is selected to appraise a project where there is a personal or prejudicial connection, a declaration of interest should be made immediately to the Heart of Wessex LAG Programme Management Team and another appraiser will be selected.

How much time will an appraisal take?

The time commitment for each appraisal can vary. Application submission dates are every other month and the number of Full Applications received will vary. However, it could be expected that

appraisers would have at least one full application to assess every other month. Each appraisal will vary in time depending on how complex the activity, or the value of the grant requested. Generally each assessment should only take around 4-5 hours, including preparation, reading and marking.

An appraiser will obviously have the right to not accept an appraisal if this coincides with holidays, or other time commitments. Conversely if you have time to undertake more than one appraisal each round, this would be welcomed, but not expected.

What is required?

The appraisal is a desk based exercise. You will receive information electronically and you will be required to assess the full portfolio against a fixed set of criteria. All templates and forms have been prepared by Defra and the paperwork you need to complete each appraisal will be sent to you by the Programme Management Team. You will need to be able to interpret facts and figures, carry out supporting web based research and work to a pre-arranged deadline. You will need to have reasonable broadband speed and you also need to have appropriate levels of IT security e.g. a password protected computer.

What training is available?

It is essential that each volunteer appraiser attends a training session before being invited to complete an appraisal. This is likely to be a ½ - full day event, with food and refreshments provided. There will also be refresher sessions each year to ensure everyone is still up to date with criteria and to discuss any issues or concerns. These are likely to be 1 – 2 hour sessions.

Interested? What you need to do next.

Please complete an “Appraisers Skills Audit” form and email it, along with your C.V in the first instance to Sarah Dyke, Programme Manager : sarah@heartofwessex.co.uk

For more information.

We hope this gives you an initial feel for the requirements of our volunteer appraisers. If you would like to talk further about becoming an appraiser, you can contact Sarah on 07826 907361.

You will also find plenty of information about the Heart of Wessex LAG on our website:

www.heartofwessex.co.uk .

Our Local Development Strategy will give you an overview of how we will deliver the funding and the types of projects we can support: <http://www.heartofwessex.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Heart-of-Wessex-Local-Development-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>

July 2015