

European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability

Guidance Notes for Applications

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Contents	Page No.
1. GLOSSARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION	4
3. BACKGROUND	4
4. FUNDING AVAILABLE	5
5. WHO CAN APPLY?	6
6. HOW TO APPLY	7
7. SELECTION CRITERIA	9
8. PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS	19
9. SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	20
10. UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	20
11. REVIEW OF DECISIONS PROCESS	21
12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY	21
13. SHARING OF INFORMATION, DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION	21
14. FRAUD	22
15. CONTACT DETAILS	22

1. GLOSSARY

Acronyms

CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.
DAERA	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
EIP	European Innovation Partnership.
NIRDP	Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme.

Definitions

Area Study	A study which collects, analyses and presents data from a specific area.
Business Plan	A document which sets out future plans and a strategy for achieving them.
The Department	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
Feasibility study	An assessment of the practicality of a proposed project or system including an investigation of the issues and a determination of the prospects for success.
Financial Support	The financial assistance which will be paid to the Operational Group through the Lead Applicant for the costs of the Project.
Information Management Tools	Computer software systems or services which can be used to analyse data from the project.
Innovation Broker	A person who supports the process of the formation of a group and assists the group in defining a project and developing and implementing a clear work plan.
Letter of Offer	A document which sets out the offer for financial support including the terms and conditions. Once accepted it becomes a legally binding contract.
Market Exploration	Studies designed to explore the marketing issues which will impact on a product or service which is being developed.
Operational Group	Operational Groups are action and result-orientated groups, where everyone needs to work together contributing their unique expertise.
The Project	The project set out in the Operational Group's Application.
Running Costs	Running costs associated with the act of cooperation, for example costs associated with a group administrator

Selection Criteria	Selection criteria set out the mechanism which will be used to select one application over another one.
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2. INTRODUCTION

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is seeking applications from groups for funding to address a challenge, issue or opportunity facing the Agri-Food Industry in Northern Ireland.

This document explains how CAFRE will award funding to groups through the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) scheme.

3. BACKGROUND

The EIP scheme is part of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) and was formally approved by the European Commission on 25 August 2015. The rules under which the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) scheme operates are principally derived from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). These provide both the authority for incurring expenditure and set the rules that govern how that expenditure must be incurred, controlled and accounted for. The specific statutory rules for the operation of the NIRDP are set out in the Rural Development Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (N^o 326).

CAFRE, as part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), is delivering a pilot EIP scheme and will be awarding financial support to fund interested people with complementary expertise to work together to develop innovative ideas and to form new Operational Groups. Once established, these Groups will be able to apply for funding so that their Operational Group can continue to support the projects which have been detailed in their action plan.

The purpose of this pilot will be to test the EIP model in Northern Ireland.

If EIP Operational Groups receive grant aid they will be required to share the results of their projects within Northern Ireland and Groups must also be agreeable to recording

the details of their project on the EIP-AGRI website to ensure knowledge is shared more widely across Europe.

4. FUNDING AVAILABLE

Financial support is available at two stages:

Stage 1 – *Establishment of an EIP Operational Group.*

Stage 2 - *Operation of EIP Operational Groups.*

At stage 1, - establishment of an Operational Group - financial assistance in the form of a lump sum (£4987.75) is available for eligible costs which are as follows:

- Innovation Broker
- Report Preparation
- Running costs
- Study visit*

* As a result of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic it is strongly recommended that groups do not physically meet or travel. Until the advice from the Public Health Agency changes, Operational Groups should *not* undertake study tours. Groups should use online and other electronic mechanisms for communication.

The lump sum will be paid to those Operational Groups who are awarded funding at Stage 1 provided a full stage 2 application is completed and all the conditions of the Letter of Offer are met. If the Operational Group decides not to progress to a full stage 2 application a lower lump sum of £2000 may be available, provided the Operational Group presents a report which details their investigations and explains why a Stage 2 application is not being progressed.

CAFRE will award Stage 1 funding for up to ten Operational Groups.

At stage 2 – operation of EIP Operational Groups – financial assistance up to a maximum of £120,000 is available for eligible costs which are as follows:

- Area studies
- Feasibility studies
- Business plans
- Market exploration
- Running costs of cooperation
- Training and mentoring required to implement the corporation project including study tours
- Information management tools
- Promotion activities relating to the promotion of the group and not the product, such as activities to attract membership or the dissemination of group activities.

CAFRE will award Stage 2 funding for up to three Operational Groups.

It should be noted that grant can only be claimed on eligible expenditure incurred. For this reason the Operational Group must explain how its activities will be financed until the grant is received.

In addition, members of Operational Groups can apply for grant for capital costs associated with the EIP. Grant aid will be at a rate of 50% with an overall maximum of £30,000 of grant available to each Operational Group. As part of the Stage 2 application the group will be asked to identify any capital funding required.

It should also be noted that the activities funded should not receive public funding from other sources either at a national or EU level.

5. WHO CAN APPLY?

At stage 1, *Establishment of an EIP Operational Group*, applications must be made by a collaboration of at least two people from different organisations based in Northern Ireland. One of those applying must be from a business with Category 1 DAERA Business Identification Number.

At stage 2, *Operation of an EIP Operational Group*, the application must include those who made the stage 1 application but additional members can be included at this stage. Members from outside Northern Ireland should only be considered if the expertise is not available from within Northern Ireland. Stage 2 applications must include a partnership agreement to show how the Operational Group will function.

An application for Capital funding can be made by *Operational Groups* who have been awarded a Stage 2 Letter of Offer. The application must be submitted by a group member that holds a Category 1 DAERA Business Identification Number.

6. HOW TO APPLY

CAFRE is responsible for managing the EIP application process.

There will be two stages to the application process. Stage 1 will be an open competition and successful applicants will receive funding for the *Establishment of an Operational Group*. Only those groups who have received a Letter of Offer for Stage 1 can apply for Stage 2 - *Operation of EIP Operational Groups*.

Stage 1 applications must be submitted using the online application form.

Stage 2 application forms will be emailed to the lead applicant of the successful groups who have received a Letter of Offer for Stage 1.

Stage 1 – Establishment of an Operational Group

The period for applications will open on Monday 30 March 2020 and will close at 4pm on Monday 27 April 2020. Late applications will not be considered. At Stage 1 only information included in the application will be considered and it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the information is complete and accurate. CAFRE will not be responsible for incomplete or inaccurate information.

The lead applicant must be linked to a business which has a Category 1 or Category 2 DAERA Business Identification Number. If lead applicants do not have a Category 1 or 2 Business Number, they should apply for one and note this in their Stage 1

application. More information on DAERA Business Numbers is available on request from eip.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Applicants who have been successful at Stage 1 will be issued with a Letter of Offer which will include a deadline for their Stage 2 application – *Operation of EIP Operational Groups*. A selection panel will assess the application using information provided in the application form in conjunction with information gathered at interview.

CAFRE will communicate with the lead applicant via email. Lead applicants should provide a current email address and notify CAFRE of any changes.

If an applicant needs any adjustment to enable them to participate in the selection interview they should inform the scheme administrator. They will make reasonable efforts to meet the request and will advise the applicant of the outcome.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

For Stage 1 applications – Establishment of an Operational Group – the following three step selection criteria will be applied as follows

Step One

1. The application must show that the topic or project that the Operational Group will investigate will make a positive contribution to *at least* one of the following themes; and
2. The application must show that the topic or project the Operational Group will investigate will not have a negative impact on *any of* the following themes:

Productivity	Ambition: an industry that pursues increased productivity in international terms, closing the productivity gap which has been opening up with other major suppliers. This will create the basis for a profitable sector which can grow market share.
Resilience	Ambition: an industry that displays improved resilience to external shocks (such as market and currency volatility, extreme weather events, etc.) which are ever more frequent and to which the industry has become very exposed.
Environmental Sustainability	Ambition: an industry that is environmentally sustainable in terms of its impact on, and guardianship of, air and water quality, soil health, carbon footprint and biodiversity.
Supply Chain	Ambition: an industry which operates within an integrated, efficient, sustainable, competitive and responsive supply chain, with clear transmission of market signals and an overriding focus on high quality food and the end consumer.

Step Two

For those applications that meet step one, the application will be assessed against the following two criteria:

Criteria	Pass	Fail
Clear identification of need and strategy for proposed solution including the practical application of the proposal and likely impact.	The application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sets out a clear need for the Operational Group in the Northern Ireland context.• Sets out clearly what will be investigated by the Operational Group.• Sets out a timetable of activities for the Operational Groups leading to the development of a proposal by 28 August 2020.	The application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not identify a clear need in the Northern Ireland context.• No or limited plan in relation to what will be investigated by the Operational Group.• The planned activities of the group do not culminate in the development of a proposal by 28 August 2020.
Complementary composition of the group to include a range of expertise such as farmers, technical advisers, scientists etc. relevant to the project objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group has at least one farmer with a DAERA category 1 business number.• The group has at least one other person who has expertise in the area being investigated by the Operational Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The group does not have at least one farmer with a DAERA category 1 business number.• The group does not have at least one other person who has expertise in the area being investigated by the Operational Group.

Step 3

If after Step 1 and Step 2, the number of applications exceeds ten, the following criteria will be applied to those applications which have passed step 1 *and* step 2:

Sets out a clear need for the Operational Group in the Northern Ireland context.

To do this a selection panel will score each application in relation to *Impact* and potential *Reach* using the scoring matrix below:

	Score	Descriptor	
Potential Impact	5	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to transform and produce industry-changing benefits on Northern Ireland farms	/ 5
	4	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to deliver a significant step forward and deliver significant and measurable benefit on Northern Ireland farms.	
	3	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to make a clear contribution towards delivering measurable benefit on Northern Ireland farms.	
	2	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to make some contribution towards delivering measurable benefit on Northern Ireland farms.	
	1	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to make some contribution towards delivering benefit on Northern Ireland farms but the benefits may be difficult to measure.	
Potential Reach	5	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to impact on most farm businesses in Northern Ireland.	/ 5
	4	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to impact on most farm businesses within a sector, for example dairy, pigs, production horticulture.	
	3	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to impact on most specialist farm businesses within a sector, for example, spring calving dairy herds, winter cereals.	
	2	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to impact only on farm businesses in a limited geographical area in Northern Ireland.	
	1	An issue or opportunity which has the potential to impact on a small number of specialist farm business	

Summary

	Score (1-5)	Weight	Total
Potential Impact		2	
Potential Reach		1	
Total Score Awarded (Maximum Score – 15)			$\frac{\quad}{15}$

Funding will be awarded to the ten applications with the highest scores.

For stage 2 applications - Operation of EIP Operational Groups – the following two step selection criteria will be applied as follows

Step One

Applicants must have received and accepted a Letter of Offer for Stage 1 - *Establishment of an Operational Group*

Step Two

A selection panel will score the applications using the information in the application form and at interview against the following six selection criteria and using the scoring matrix:

Criteria 1: Complementary composition of Group benefiting the specific project, making the best use of different types of knowledge (scientific, practical, entrepreneurial, organisational etc.)

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
Clarity of roles	0-2	No, or very limited, clarity on roles and responsibilities of members	___ / 10
	3-4	Limited clarity on roles and responsibilities of members	
	5-6	There is a leader within the group. Roles have been identified for group members	
	7-8	There is effective leadership within the group. Evidence that group members have clear roles and are committed to project delivery	
	9-10	There is excellent leadership within the group. Strong evidence that group members have clearly defined roles and are fully committed to project delivery	
Cohesion of group	0-2	No, or very limited, evidence of cohesion within the group	___ / 10
	3-4	Limited evidence of cohesion within the group	
	5-6	Reasonable evidence of cohesion within the group	
	7-8	Good / sound evidence of cohesion within the group	
	9-10	Excellent / strong evidence of cohesion within the group	

Criteria 2: Practical application of the project and expected impact: benefits to primary producer or sector

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
Practical application	0-2	No, or limited, evidence of how the project will be practically implemented	___ / 8
	3-4	Reasonable evidence of how the project will be practically implemented	
	5-6	Good evidence of how the project will be practically implemented	
	7-8	Excellent evidence of how the project will be practically implemented	
Impact: This section should consider the scope the impact will have upon the group, area and sector	0-1	No, or very limited, potential to create an impact within the relevant sector	___ / 6
	2-3	Limited potential to create an impact within the relevant sector	
	4-5	Good potential to create an impact within the relevant sector	
	6	Excellent potential to create an impact within the relevant sector	
Multiplier effect: This section should consider the scale of the impact and the number of people who will be impacted	0-1	The proposal may have no or limited impact on people and / or sectors	___ / 6
	2-3	The proposal may have a reasonable impact on people and / or sectors	
	4-5	The proposal may have a good impact on people and / or sectors	
	6	The proposal may have an excellent impact on many people and / or sectors	

Criteria 3: Affordability, value for money and added value of the project

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
Affordability	0-1	No, or very limited, evidence of potential to achieve project aims with the funding available	___ / 4
	2	Limited evidence of potential to achieve project aims with the funding available	
	3	Good evidence of potential to achieve project aims with the funding available	
	4	Excellent evidence of potential to achieve project aims with the funding available	
Monetary benefits (Value for money)	0-2	No, or very limited, potential to provide value for money and create monetary benefits	___ / 8
	3-4	Limited potential to provide value for money and create monetary benefits	
	5-6	Good potential to provide value for money and create monetary benefits	
	7-8	Excellent potential to provide value for money and create monetary benefits	
Non-monetary benefits (Added value)	0-2	No, or very limited, potential to create or enhance non-monetary benefits	___ / 8
	3-4	Limited potential to create or enhance non-monetary benefits	
	5-6	Good potential to create or enhance non-monetary benefits	
	7-8	Excellent potential to create or enhance non-monetary benefits	

Criteria 4: Environmental impact

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
This section should consider the wider impact on the environment; water, air, soil and ecosystems.	0-5	Potential to have a negative impact	___ / 20
	6-10	Neutral impact / limited potential to have a positive impact	
	11-15	Good potential to have a positive impact	
	15-20	Targeted positive impact / excellent potential to have a positive impact	

Criteria 5: Contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
Clarity and understanding of what the project wishes to achieve with respect to climate change and adaptation	0-2	No, or very limited, clarity or understanding	___ / 10
	3-4	Limited clarity and understanding	
	5-6	Good clarity and understanding	
	7-8	Strong clarity and understanding	
	9-10	Excellent clarity and understanding	
Impact of the project on climate change and adaptation	0-2	No, or very limited, potential to have a positive impact	___ / 10
	3-4	Limited potential to have a positive impact	
	5-6	Good potential to have a positive impact	
	7-8	Strong potential to have a positive impact	
	9-10	Excellent potential to have a positive impact	

Criteria 6: Proposals for dissemination of information

Scoring Criterion	Band	Descriptor	Score
Intensity: Consider the frequency of dissemination and size of the target audience	0-2	No, or weak, dissemination proposals / will reach a very narrow audience	___ / 8
	3-4	Limited dissemination proposals / will reach a small audience	
	5-6	Good dissemination proposals / will reach a medium audience	
	7-8	Excellent dissemination proposals / will reach a large audience	
Industry orientation / focus: Dissemination should reach a variety of people including rural community and industry	0-2	Limited dissemination focus within a sub-sector / rural community	___ / 8
	3-4	Dissemination focus across a reasonable range of sectors / rural community	
	5-6	Dissemination focus across a good range of sectors / rural community	
	7-8	Dissemination focus across all sectors / rural community	
Types of dissemination: Consider the variety of dissemination methods chosen, for example presentations, discussions with rural community, popular press, publications, online content and technical papers. Information must be readily accessible to the target audience	0-1	Few / inappropriate dissemination methods identified	___ / 4
	2	Reasonable variety of appropriate dissemination methods identified	
	3	Good variety of appropriate dissemination methods identified	
	4	Excellent variety of appropriate dissemination methods identified	

Summary

Selection Criterion	Score (1-20)	Weight (1-5)	Total
Complementary composition of Group benefiting the specific project, making the best use of different types of knowledge (scientific, practical, entrepreneurial, organisational etc.)		5	
Practical application of the project and expected impact: benefits to primary producer or sector		5	
Affordability, value for money and added value of the project		5	
Environmental impact		3	
Contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation		3	
Proposals for dissemination of information		5	

Total Score Awarded (Maximum Score – 520)	
Total Score Awarded as a % of 100 (Pass score 60%)	

8. PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be acknowledged within five working days following receipt by CAFRE.

At Stage 1, the Contract Manager will assess the applications against the assessment criteria (see section 6) for steps 1 and 2. If more than ten applications meet the criteria at steps 1 and 2, a selection panel will be convened and step 3 will be implemented.

Stage 1 funding will be offered to all applicants who meet the criteria at step one and two unless there are more than ten. If there are more than ten applications who meet these criteria, the ten applications with the highest scores awarded by the selection panel will be granted funding.

At Stage 2, CAFRE will convene a selection panel who will consider the information in the Stage 2 application forms along with information collected at interview to score the applications against the assessment criteria (see section 6). The interview will be with the lead partner and one other member of the Operational Group and will last up to 45 minutes. It will be conducted at CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, ANTRIM BT41 4PS unless otherwise notified*. The three applications receiving the highest scores will be awarded funding.

* As a result of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic the chair may decide not to hold face-to-face interviews in order to minimise the opportunity for the spread of the virus. If this is the case, the applications will be scored entirely on the information contained in the Stage 2 application form.

The following is an indicative timetable for the application process. This is subject to change.

Open period for Stage 1 applications	Monday 30 March 2020 to 4pm on Friday 27 April 2020
Award of Stage 1 funding	Week commencing 18 May 2020
Closing date for Stage 2 applications	4pm on 28 August 2020 (4pm)
Interviews for Stage 2 applications	Week commencing 14 September 2020
Award of Stage 2 funding	Week commencing 21 September 2020

9. SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

If as a result of an application process funding is awarded, a Letter of Offer will be issued by the CAFRE Contract Manager. The lead partner identified in the application form is required to sign the acceptance form and return it by the date stated in the Letter of Offer.

If an acceptance form has not been received by the date stated on the Letter of Offer then CAFRE may withdraw the offer of funding and allocate the funding to the next highest scoring project.

10. UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Where an application is unsuccessful the lead applicant will be notified. The letter will indicate if:

- a. The application failed to meet the selection criteria, or
- b. The application did not receive sufficiently high score in competition with other applicants.

An opportunity to receive feedback will be offered.

11. REVIEW OF DECISIONS PROCESS

The lead applicant can request a review of the decision. The request must be made in writing (or by email) and must be received within 10 working days of the issue of the letter of refusal. This should clearly state the reason for the review.

The Head of Agri-business Branch, or a nominated deputy, will review decisions to ensure they comply with the scheme operating rules.

The lead applicant will be notified within 10 working days of the review outcome.

The outcome of this review will be final.

12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

CAFRE is committed to providing equality of opportunity and promoting diversity. CAFRE will promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; and between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependents and persons without.

Members of the proposed Operational Group, identified in the application form will be invited to complete an anonymous equality monitoring questionnaire.

13. SHARING OF INFORMATION, DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

CAFRE as part of DAERA takes data protection, freedom of information and environmental information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information received is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (2016). This means that any personal information collected will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided

However, DAERA is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information provided for this purpose. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for the audit or administration of public funds, in order to prevent and detect crime.

In addition, DAERA may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the General Data Protection Regulations, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

To see the full DAERA Privacy Statement please go to

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-privacy-statement-document>

14. FRAUD

Any person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement for the purposes of obtaining assistance under this Scheme or assisting another to obtain grant aid may be prosecuted. Information provided or gathered in relation to the Scheme may be made available to other Departments/Agencies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.

Reporting fraud

DAERA FRAUD HOTLINE – Telephone 0808 1002716

15. CONTACT DETAILS

Correspondence regarding the scheme should be directed to:

Russell Forster

EIP Scheme Administrator

Telephone: 078 8006 7941

Email: EIP.Admin@daera-ni.gov.uk

Website: www.cafre.ac.uk