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Guidance Notes for application for funding under the Majjstral Local
 Development Strategy

Measure 4: Development of Green Infrastructure

In case of any conflicts between these guidance notes and the text of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, GAL MAJJISTRAL Local Development Strategy and other legislative text, the interpretation given by the relevant legislation will be given overall priority.

The Foundation reserves the right to request also additional information not included in the accompanying application form

The Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014 - 2020



LEADER
 European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
 Co-financing rate: 75% EU Funds; 25% National Funds

***The Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
 Europe Investing in Rural Areas***



Definitions:

Agriculture and Rural Paying Agency (ARPA): The Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency within the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Animal Rights is the Paying Agency.

Checks and controls: Provide a means of verification that the investment operation complies with, and is in conformity to, the relevant rules and regulations.

Decision Committee (DC): The DC of the LAG is the decision-making body in relation to all activities.

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Evaluation Committee (EC): A committee appointed by the LAG and can be constituted by a least 2 members. Both are responsible for administratively checking the applications.

Grant Agreement: An agreement signed between the MA and the selected applicant (beneficiary) containing provisions and conditions related to the particular support.

LEADER: *Liason Entre Actions de Development de l'Economie Rurale*'. The LEADER programme refers to the implementation of the actions included in the Local Development strategies by the LAG to address specific local issues in line with the Rural Development programme for 2014-2020.

Managing Authority (MA): A national or regional body designated by a Member State to manage a rural development programme.

Measure: A Scheme for implementing a policy. Each measure sets out specific rules to be complied with by the projects or actions that can be financed. There are two main types of measures: investment measures and area-related aid.

Project Selection Appeals Board: An independent Committee that assesses any submissions of appeals.

Project Selection Committee (PSC): The role of the Decision Committee includes the assessment and review of all recommendations made by the Evaluation committee. The PSC assesses and ranks applications.

Rural Development Programme (RDP): A document prepared by a Member State or region, and approved by the Commission, to plan and monitor the implementation of the rural development policy.

Project closure: Closure takes place after the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency has issued the final payment to the beneficiary, after it has carried out all the necessary checks and controls.

Project completion: A project can be deemed completed when the final request for payment has been submitted to the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency

Voluntary Organisations (VO): Eligible VOs shall be those that are fully enrolled with the VO Commissioner, compliant in their annual returns, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007 (Chapter 492 of the Laws of Malta) and that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

1. Introduction

These Guidance Notes are intended to assist Applicants understand the requirements for requesting and receiving funding support under **Measure 4 – Development of Green Infrastructure** of the Majjistral LDS.

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these Guidance Notes prior to filling in and preparing the Application Form. The Guidance Notes, Application Form and all annexes and other documentation are available at www.galmajjistral.com.

Applicants are reminded to check that they referred to the latest guidance notes as available on the website, and that they have filled in the latest available version of the application form that is available for download from the website. Only the latest version at the time of application will be accepted.

2. Rationale for Intervention

Green infrastructure delivers essential ecosystem services which underpin human well-being and quality of life. The European Commission defines green infrastructure as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which are designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings¹.

Green infrastructure is multi-functional, performing many functions within the same spatial area and providing several benefits to local communities. These include the protection of cultural heritage, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, provision of open and recreational space amenities for local communities, increased carbon sequestration, improved flood water management and air quality regulation. The analysis of the territory and consultation findings has shown that the MAGF territory has access to existing green infrastructure, with important natural and cultural heritage and requiring protection, whilst presenting several opportunities for further development of green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the MAGF communities.

¹ Building a green infrastructure for Europe. European Commission 2013

This measure has therefore been designed to support projects that, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, facilitate the development and implementation of green infrastructure within the MAGF territory through the management and protection of biodiversity in rural areas and enhancement of open spaces in village core areas, in the outskirts of the same villages, as well as to provide an interconnected network of green spaces between localities.

3. Scope and Objectives of the Measure

Specific Objectives:

The general aim of this measure is to invest in green infrastructure of the territory as a means to develop the touristic product of the area. The purpose is to support the development of green infrastructure within the LAG territory through the management and protection of biodiversity in urban and rural areas and embellishment of open spaces.

The specific objective of this measure, by the end of the applicable programming period, is to improve the environment performance and quality of life of LAG communities through the development/improvement of green infrastructure in about 9 projects leading to the enhancement and greening of open spaces within the territory which are freely accessible to the public.

The scope of action includes:

- (i) the installation of green infrastructure components and related ancillary works and educational/information actions as a type of non-productive investment with a clear benefit for biodiversity, society and climate change adaptation.
- (ii) the restoration and establishment of infrastructure needed for the management of habitats, such as urban landscape features, soil conservation and water management, the removal of alien species and the planting of new vegetation.

The following, is an indicative list of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- The use of native vegetation and trees in the landscaping of open areas for the creation of recreational spaces, whilst promoting informal education about the biodiversity on the MAGF's territory;
- The regeneration and/or embellishment of open spaces in village core areas and rural outskirts through the development of green infrastructure, accompanied by information on the benefits of green infrastructure within the built environment;
- The upgrading and embellishment, through the use of natural and eco-friendly materials, of open green spaces such as gardens, together with programmes for the promotion of benefits of biodiversity and the ecosystem services which it supports;

- The creation of green belts and green corridors within the territory, linking different localities, and providing a means of educating and interpreting the importance of green infrastructure for biodiversity, climate and air quality;

4. Eligible Actions

Support through this action shall be **limited to Capital Expenditure** undertaken by **Local Councils and Registered Voluntary Organisations that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory)**. The operations of such entities must be in compliance with national rules and regulations, and regularly operating within the Majjistral territory.

Projects must be **physically undertaken** in any of the rural localities that constitute the GAL Majjistral Foundation territory, listed in the following table. Only Local Councils that have become full-paid members for the (2014-2020) programming period are eligible for funding.

Rural Localities within the Majjistral Action Group Foundation Territory			
L-Imtarfa	Is-Siġġiewi	Il-Mellieħa	Ħal Ġhargħur
Ħ'Attard	L-Iklin	In-Naxxar	San Ġwann
Ħad-Dingli	Haż-Żebbuġ	Il-Mosta	Is-Swieqi
Ir-Rabat (Malta)	L-Imdina	San Pawl il-Baħar	L-Imġarr

5. Eligibility Criteria

To be supported under this measure, proposals for actions will be evaluated according to the following general eligibility criteria:

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;

- The applicant (project leader) is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the Majjstral territory;
- The project area does not exceed 0.5 hectares (5000sq^m);
- The project is not on agricultural land and/or on Natura 2000 sites or any other site of national importance;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component;
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of the measure;
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target;
- The project includes investment in environmental education, awareness, information and communication initiatives (between 5% and 10% of the total project costs);
- The proposed project is compatible with the surrounding environment and respects the wider environment;
- The proposed project is freely accessible to the public;
- If the Project requires any PA/DNO permits or other relevant permits, said permits or application for said permits is in hand.

The MAGF reserves the right to revise the eligibility criteria applicable to the Measure, subject to pre-notification.

Description of the requirements and targets

The applicant is required to demonstrate that the proposed investment shall result in the achievement of the Measure's objectives.

Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed project leads to the development of new or existing green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the communities of the MAGF territory.

6. Eligible Investments

In the case of the development of new and/or existing green infrastructure projects, costs incurred are only eligible if investment operations have been preceded, where applicable, by an assessment of the expected environmental impact in accordance with relevant legislation. This applies only where the investment is likely to have negative effects on the environment. The investment in new and/or existing green infrastructure must be in line with all relevant planning and development permits, including consultation on permits and/or guidelines issued by the authorities competent for the environment and resources.

In the case of intervention on trees, reference should be made to the subsidiary legislation 569.64 of the Environment and Resources Authority on "Trees and

Woodlands Protection Regulation – Legal notice 200 of 2011 as well as the Guidelines on Works Involving Trees².

The Environmental and Resources Authority should be contacted for clearance and/or approval via email on info@era.org.mt

Eligible investment supported under Measure 4 is as follows:

1. Construction or improvement of immovable property costs;
2. General costs such as architects, irrigation/water engineers, project management costs and consultation fees, feasibility studies, the acquisition of patent rights and licences – ceiling up to 10% of the total eligible cost;
3. The costs of establishing green infrastructure/landscape/soil management plans;
4. Fencing and other works needed to facilitate conservation management, including protection of water and soil;
5. Restoration costs of ecological habitats and landscapes and features;
6. The costs of propagation material (seeds, seedlings, saplings etc.) used for structural changes, planting, under-planting, edges and borders, belts etc., and the related plant protection, (e.g. poles, irrigation equipment, and any individual plant protection requirements as appropriate);
7. The costs of materials and/or services, labour used for the above mentioned investments for improving the environmental or public amenity value of green open areas;
8. The cost and installation of street furniture, lights, bins amongst others;
9. The cost of purchasing and planting of native species of trees and plants/shrubs. (Plants are capped at a rate of €100 per plant).

Only Projects covered by a valid Planning Authority permit and those which are in the process of a permit application are eligible under this Action.

Investments must be in line with the Eligibility Criteria outlined on Clause 5 of these Guidance Notes. The beneficiary can only claim EAFRD funds for eligible and approved expenditure that has been incurred after an application has been submitted to the MAGF and an acknowledgement is issued by the Foundation, in line with EU Regulation 1305 of 2013 Article 60 (2).

7. Non-Eligible Investments under Measure 4

The following is an indicative list of non-eligible investment under Measure 4:

- Purchase of land and buildings;
- Currency exchange losses;
- Purchase of means of transportation;
- Purchase of machinery and real estate;

² <https://era.org.mt/en/PublishingImages/Pages/Guidelines-on-Guidelines%20on%20Works%20involving%20Trees.pdf>

- Purchase and planting of non-native species of trees/plants/shrubs;
- Maintenance costs;
- Interest on debt, except in relation to grants given in the form of an interest rate subsidy or guarantee fee subsidy;
- Provisional installations that are not directly related to the investment (e.g. warehouses for keeping materials for the construction);
- Expenditures made before the launch of the call for application (the applicant should make reference to Article 60 of 1305/2013 of the EP. The applicant may at his own risk initiate the implementation of the project as from the date of submission of application);
- Income Tax or other operational costs of the entity applying for the project, including provisions for possible future losses or debts;
- Bank Interest;
- Inputs which are the subject of a contribution in kind;
- Building and/or restoration of rubble walls;
- Administration fees (salaries, insurance obligations and running costs);
- Second-hand equipment;
- Value Added Tax (except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation). Grant assistance may be provided in respect of non-recoverable VAT.
- “simple replacements”, as determined by the Foundation Decision Committee following guidance received by the Managing Authority;
- Statutory fines and penalties
- Works in kind.

8. Type of Beneficiaries

The eligible beneficiaries for funding under Measure 4 consist mainly of **Local Councils and Voluntary Organisations that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007³, and regularly operating within the Majjistrat territory). Local Councils applying for funds have to be full-paid members of the MAGF.**

Only applicants that are willing to invest in a green infrastructure project within the GAL Majjistrat Foundation territory are eligible for funding.

9. Aid Intensities

A beneficiary will be granted the following financial assistance should the proposed investment be selected:

- 80% of the total eligible expenditure.

The other 20% of the total eligible expenditure must be borne by the applicant.

³ These VOs must be enrolled with the VO Commissioner

The VAT element has to be borne by the applicant (except where it is non-recoverable under National VAT legislation). Grant assistance may be provided in respect of non-recoverable VAT.

Part 1 of the VAT Declaration Form (annex 1 of these guidance notes) as well as Annex 5 should be duly filled by the applicant.

10. Financing – Budget

The total allocated funds for this call is set at **€499,120** of which 80% will be financed through the EAFRD whilst the remaining 20% will be financed by the Beneficiary.

The maximum grant support for each project is **capped at €50,000**.

In the case of oversubscription of the call, the MAGF reserves the right to allocate additional funds to this measure following approval by the Managing Authority and ARPA.

11. The Application Process – General Provisions

Interested applicants need to submit the completed application form for Measure 4.

All applications must be completed in full, signed and dated by the Project Leader.

No parts of the application form are to be left blank – in cases where specific requested information in the application are not applicable to the applicant, the applicant must fill in the field with the note 'Not applicable'.

Although MAGF representatives are available for meetings with interested potential applicants, it is the ultimate duty of the applicants to read thoroughly the guidance notes and application form. It is also the ultimate responsibility of the applicants to ensure that all documentation requested is correctly presented. Applicants must also ensure that the applicants themselves fall within the criteria of eligibility and that project proposed and any related investments are eligible for funding and that the application form and the requested supporting documentation **are presented by hand within the deadline of the call**.

It is not the duty of MAGF to verify the above matters irrespective of any meetings that may be held between MAGF and the applicants.

Applicants should submit two copies (1 original and 1 copy) of the Application Form and soft copies (in both Word and pdf format) of the Application Form on an electronic device. All copies must include all supporting documentation attached to the original Application Form. A checklist of attachments is attached to the Application Form. The applicants must ensure that ALL the supporting documentation as per *Section 7* of the application form are submitted.

For the application to be considered complete, all attachments marked compulsory are to be submitted with the Application Form. The GAL Majjstral Foundation will undertake a validity check following receipt of the application. Any required

documentation not submitted with the application form shall be requested within not less than 5 working days from the date of a notification letter sent by GAL Majjistrat. Only complete applications will be considered by the Project Selection Committee.

The Call for proposal will open on **27th March 2019** and shall remain open until 31 December 2020, subject to the availability of funds. The MAGF will be adopting an **Open Block Calls Procedure**. This means that a batch of applications received within a respective time block will be assessed separately from applications received in subsequent batches. Applications received after any set time block **WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS PART OF THAT BLOCK**. Applicants are encouraged not to wait to the last day to submit their application.

The call shall close on the 31 December unless the allocated budget has been committed before or be withdrawn through a notification by the MAGF. The MAGF may re-issue the call in a similar or different format. The MAGF may also issue clarifications and amendments during the time period of the open call for applications without necessarily closing and re-opening the call. Such clarifications will be uploaded on our website: www.galmajjistrat.com. The time blocks are defined by the MAGF as per following table:

MEASURE 4 – BUDGET €460,000							
Launch	Block 16	<i>Subject to Funds Availability</i>	Block 17	<i>Subject to Funds Availability</i>	Block 18	<i>Subject to Funds Availability</i>	Block 19
27.03.19	30.09.20 at noon	→	30.10.20 at noon	→	30.11.20 at noon	→	31.12.20 at noon

All applications are to be delivered **BY HAND** to the GAL Majjistrat Foundation at the following address:

GAL Majjistrat Foundation
12, Triq it-Tullier
Attard. ATD 1631

In case of queries or clarifications required applicants may contact GAL Majjistrat on the following contact details:

Email: galmajjistrat@gmail.com
 Tel: +356 2099 2080

Disclaimer: *The issuance of the receipt letter does not imply that the applicant will be considered as a main beneficiary under this call. The application may be refused and returned to the applicant following the issuance of the receipt letter.*

12. Evaluation – Administrative Checks

The MAJJISTRAL ACTION GROUP FOUNDATION will carry out administrative checks on submitted applications. It is important that the submitted application form is filled-in correctly and completely. In case an application is submitted with missing documentation/information, a notification letter will be sent to the applicant allowing a period of 5 working days to submit the missing documentation and/or information from the date of such letter.

If the requested documentation is not submitted within this timeframe, the application will be automatically disqualified, and a rejection letter will be sent by the GAL Majjstral administration to inform the applicant.

GAL Majjstral will then carry out verification of the eligibility of the supporting documentation submitted, as well as the screening of the application in terms of the eligibility criteria. It is important to note that it is within the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the content of the application and the supporting documentation submitted is in full and in line with what is being requested.

With reference to any quotations to be submitted by the applicant, the Evaluation Committee reserves the right to ask for further clarifications or necessary adjustments even after the applicant submits the missing documentation/clarifications. The Evaluation Committee reserves the right to contact suppliers/service providers to validate the quotations provided.

No further additional information will be accepted after the closing date for applications unless it is requested by MAGF. In this regard, it is the applicant's sole responsibility to ensure that the application is complete in the best possible way before submission. Evaluation of the application will be carried out only on the information submitted an application stage or any other information as requested by MAGF. **Any false or misleading information will lead to the immediate rejection of the application.**

13. Selection Process

A Project Selection Committee (PSC) made up from the Decision Committee members will be responsible for ranking and selecting applications for support after close liaison with the EC members. The PSC may request the services of a technical expert to assist the whole evaluation process. The PSC reserves the right to request additional information and further clarifications on the project as part of the selection process.

14. Ranking of Projects and Selection Process

The PSC will proceed to award marks to each proposal based on the information submitted in the applications and provided through clarifications (where applicable). In order to qualify for selection, the proposal needs to obtain a total of at least 50% of the total marks of the general and measure-specific selection criteria. For

those eligible projects going through the assessment stage, the PSC will seek clearance from the State Aid Monitoring Board (SAMB).

A preliminary list of the proposals containing selected, on reserve and failed applicants together with their respective score shall be drawn up. Furthermore, the PSC reserves the right to request project re-dimensioning in special circumstances.

The preliminary result shall be published on MAGF's official website⁴. In addition, a notification letter shall be sent to applicants informing them of their right of appeal in cases where applications fail to qualify.

15. Unsuccessful Project Proposals

In the notification letter sent to the applicant, reasons why the project was not selected shall be provided. The applicant shall have the right to appeal in writing through a registered letter within 5 working days from receipt of the email/letter of notification of result sent by MAGF.

The appeal is to be addressed to the Chairperson of the Project Selection Appeals Board (PSAB). The PSAB is an independent Committee set up to review in an autonomous way any appeals lodged. The PSAB will be composed of a minimum of three (3) individuals with a Chairperson chairing the appeals process. The appellant is required to sustain the clarifications provided by including justified reasons backed by necessary supporting documentation/testimonials.

The applicants wishing to lodge an appeal must send a registered letter addressed to **"The Chairperson", Project Selection Appeals Board of MAGF, 12, Triq it-Tullier, Attard**, within 5 working days from receipt of the email/letter of notification (whichever the earliest) of result sent by MAGF.

The Appeals Board will not consider late appeals.

The letter should include a detailed of the reason/s the appeal is being made, supported by any relevant documentation/testimonials.

The Chairperson of PSAB shall review and assess the validity of all the appeals submitted within the stipulated timeframe. Valid appeals will be presented to the PSAB for assessment. No additional information other than that presented at application stage will be considered during the review. The relevant documentation shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting the basis of the information provided in the appeal letter. An appeal that does not provide sufficient detailed reasons may be refused at the preliminary stage as unjustified.

Upon submission of the appeal, the Appeals Board shall be convened within no later than 5 working days to review the appeals presented. All necessary relevant documents will be made available to the Appeals Board by the LAG Manager.

⁴ www.galmajjstral.com

The Appeals Board must conclude the process of appeals by no later than 15 working days from the appeals closure date. Upon finalisation of the process, a detailed report articulating all decisions taken must be presented to the DC.

The decision of the Appeals Committee **is final** and the applicant cannot contest this decision. The DC must notify in writing the decisions to each appellant. The appeals procedure shall be published on MAGF's website.

16. Publication of Final Result

Upon completion of the appeals process, GAL Majjstral shall publish the final result of the projects eligible for financial support on its website and notice board.

The successful applicants will receive a 'Letter of offer' following the publication of the Final list of results. The applicants will be required to send a 'Letter of acceptance' (a draft copy of the Acceptance letter will be sent with the letter of offer) and a Bank Payment Form within 10 working days from the receipt of the 'Letter of Offer'.

If, after 10 working days, MAGF does not receive the letter of acceptance and the Bank Payment Form, it will be considered that the applicant is no longer interested in undertaking the project and funds will be relocated according to the discretion of the LAG.

Should the beneficiary accept the offer, eligible period of expenditure should start from the date of submission of application (*Refer to Article 60 of EU Regulation 1305/2013*)

If the applicant accepts the offer, the bank payment form should be completed and referred to the Front Office of the ARPA. The form must be endorsed by a bank official and should show the IBAN of the applicant.

17. Procurement Procedures

Given that the eligible applicants under this call also comprise Local Councils, the Procurement Guidelines issued by the Department for Local Government must be strictly adhered to. An architect's Bill of Quantities (BOQ) with details is to be presented. This has to be prepared by an architect appointed by the applicant and submitted as part of the application submitted.

In the case of Registered Voluntary Organisations and, where Public Procurement Regulations allow, Local Councils, a minimum of three (3) comparable and independent quotations should be submitted for each line item. It is being suggested that more than three (3) quotes are obtained. **However, only one quotation is required at application stage.** Applicants are then obliged to present three (3) comparable valid quotations for each line item prior to the project implementation, together with an adjudication report. The applicant should send a letter or email to the chosen and rejected suppliers upon issue of the adjudication report, informing them of the organisation's decision.

It is being further suggested that, for comparability purposes, a financial bid form is issued by the Applicant and presented to the bidder. The bidder would quote the price on the bid form accordingly. The financial bid form must include the signature of the bidder. A copy of the Financial Bid Form can be found in Annex 4.

Notwithstanding the above, it is to be specified that quotes issued by bidders on their letterhead are also accepted, as long as the description of the items required from the applicant is comparable with the other quotes of the particular line item.

If the cheapest quotation is not chosen by the applicant, a justification would need to be provided. The applicant is to note that in such cases, the amount of funding co-financed through the EAFRD (2014 – 2020) can only be based on the cheapest quotation obtained.

Should for some reason three (3) quotations cannot be obtained by the applicant, a justification why, should also be provided by the applicant and it would be the Paying Agency's prerogative, after consulting with the MAGF, whether to accept such justification or not.

In the case of infrastructural works for Registered Voluntary Organisations a Bill of Quantities (BOQ), has to be presented at application stage. This has to be endorsed and dated by a warranted architect appointed by the applicant. Nonetheless, applicants submitting a BOQ are still obliged to present three (3) comparable quotations for each line item prior to the project implementation.

It is to be noted that any financial declarations / certificates need to be dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes.

In accordance with the Public Procurement Regulations, expenditure relating to economic operators convicted of a criminal offence are considered ineligible for funding and such expenditure will not be reimbursed by the Agency.

Applicants are guided to refer to the "Guidelines on the Submission of Payment Claims related to Investment Measures" issued by ARPA for details related to the required content and format of quotations and other procurement procedures; these guidelines may be downloaded at the below link:

<https://agriculture.gov.mt/en/arpa/Documents/guidelines/investmentMeasurePaymentGuidelinesFinalEN-V3.0.pdf>

18. Contracting with Beneficiaries

Contracting shall be undertaken by MAGF with the beneficiaries. In the case of entities, contracts are to be signed by the LAG's Chairperson (or any formally authorised delegate) and a legal representative of the beneficiary. In case where the signatory on behalf of the beneficiary is not a legal representative, a power of attorney

must be presented showing delegation of signatories between the legal representative and the appointed signatory. The power of attorney is to be endorsed by a public notary.

The contract shall be given to the beneficiary for verification prior to it being signed. The contract shall be signed in two originals (one for the LAG and another for the beneficiary). Copies must be maintained in a secure location by the parties for a period of seven (7) years from the date of signing.

19. Payment

The Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA) reserves the right to make an advance payment of up to 50% of the total eligible cost of the project. The issuing of an advance payment is subject to the submission of a financial guarantee issued by a recognized financial institution equivalent to 100% of the amount eligible as advance payment.

The facility of interim payments will be provided by the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA). Interim payments together with the advance payment (if applicable) will make up 80% of the total eligible value of the grant agreement.

Interim payments must be preceded with a submission of a request for reimbursement and financial documentation (including invoices and receipts).

In case of infrastructural works a provisional certificate of works prepared by an engineer/architect must also be presented.

The final payment of the remaining 20% of the total eligible cost of the project will be claimed following the completion of the works and submission of the request for reimbursement together with the necessary financial documentation (including invoices and receipts, and a provisional certificate of works prepared by a warranted architect).

Official certification by the architect appointed by the beneficiary is required for settlement of final payment (in case of infrastructural works).

The final payment will be affected once an on-the-spot-check is carried out by MAGF and ARPA and adherence to the contract is confirmed.

The main applicants must present a payment claim through the LAG, so that the necessary verifications and controls are undertaken prior to submission to ARPA for processing.

Claims are to be presented as outlined in ARPA's payment guidelines available at:

<https://agriculture.gov.mt/en/arpa/Documents/guidelines/investmentMeasuresPaymentGuidelinesFinalEN-V3.0.pdf>

In case of irregularities, penalties and sanctions may be applied. These will be deducted from eventual payment claims or through requests for refund of financial assistance paid by ARPA.

The project must be completed and payment claims submitted by not later than 1 year from signature of contract agreement.

The final claim for reimbursement of funds allocated to the project must also be submitted within this deadline.

20. Extension to Contract Timeframes

Should the beneficiary require an extension to the timeframe stipulated in the application form and contract, a written request is to be submitted to MAGF, whilst notifying the Managing Authority. The form to be used in such case is the 'Change Request Form' and the request should be submitted before the actual expiry of the original timeframe.

A request for approval of an extension of the time required in order to terminate the project is to be backed by written justified reasons. Cases related to poor project management will not be accepted. Following review of the request by MAGF, the final decision will be sent to the beneficiary in writing. Should an extension be approved, the period of extension shall be determined by MAGF, after consultation with the Managing Authority.

In cases where amendments to the contract are required, the beneficiary must submit a 'Change Request Form' to MAGF prior to the changes being actually implemented (a priori) and the beneficiary must wait for a reply from MAGF.

If a request for changes to the contract is submitted after these changes have actually taken place (ex-post), the changes will not be eligible for funding and, depending on the extent of the changes, this may lead to the whole project being considered ineligible.

The written request for changes must indicate the changes required, the necessary justification and relevant supporting documentation.

If the applicant wishes to change the specification of the investments, a written request prior to such changes must be sent to MAGF. As an example, funding is approved for the purchase of Model X of a projector and following the contracting, the applicant wishes to purchase Model Y of this projector as the previous model is no longer produced/available, then a request for change must be submitted and the applicant must wait for a reply from the competent Authority.

MAGF will review the request and if the proposal does not affect the nature of the project and remains in line with the objectives of the Measure, the changes may be approved. A notification letter will be sent to the beneficiary in writing and an addendum to the contract shall be carried out and signed between all parties.

If the request for changes is not approved by MAGF, the beneficiary will receive a notification and will be requested to confirm whether the project as stipulated in the contract will be completed or withdrawn.

21. Failure to comply with the contract

Failure to meet the commitments stipulated in the contract shall result in sanctions applied to the amounts committed or paid. The Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency, Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID), the European Commission (EC), the European Ant Fraud Office (DG OLAF) and/or the Managing Authority reserve the right to undertake further checks and controls and to recover any funds from the beneficiary by withholding the bank guarantee in case of advanced payments or to request the beneficiary to refund financial assistance paid out by ARPA.

22. Project Sustainability

It is to be noted that in line with Article 71 of Regulation 1303/2013, in the case of an operation in infrastructure or productive investment, the applicant shall repay the contribution from the EAFRD Funds if within (5) years of the final payment to the beneficiary or within the period of time set out in State aid Rules, where applicable, it is subject to any of the following:

- a. a cessation or relocation of a productive activity outside the programme area;
- b. change in ownership of an item of infrastructure which gives to a firm or a public body an undue advantage;
- c. a substantial change affecting its nature, objectives or implementation conditions which would result in undermine its original objectives.

23. Publicity

In case of information and publicity, the main beneficiaries must abide by the provisions of Part 2 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No. 808/2014, as well as any Publicity/Visibility Guidelines that may be provided by the MAGF through MA.

In order to meet the requirements of the EAFRD Regulations, beneficiaries must ensure that adequate publicity is given to the project with a view to:

- a. making potential participants aware of the opportunities afforded by it;
- b. making the general public aware of the role of the Community in relation to the project;
- c. ensure transparency of the assistance concerned.

- d. As an example, materials used by the Beneficiary and major correspondence, including contracts signed with third parties must include any acknowledgement of EAFRD support.
- e. Any publicity material, such as advertisements, billboards and information leaflets about EAFRD co-financed projects must acknowledge this support.
- f. Publicity of individual projects must be incorporated into the project budget.
- g. Applicants are to be cautious when determining publicity actions for the project.
- h. Applicants should also ensure that the project benefits from any free publicity and that anything that will be proposed to be funded under the project is either obligatory or adds value to the results of the project, taking into account the value for money principle. In this regard, publicity measures of individual projects should take into account the nature of the project and must be relative to the size and objectives of the project.
- i. The Beneficiary should note that publicity may only be used to increase awareness of what EU funds are used for and to disseminate results. Publicity measures undertaken must be project specific.
- j. Publicity and information measures must not be used as a marketing tool to promote an organisation, its products, services or infrastructure. Where a project includes an element of marketing, this must be used to complement but not replace the project's obligatory information and publicity measures.
- k. Marketing efforts should be included as a separate activity in the project and as a separate budgetary allocation and justified accordingly. The Applicant may also make reference to the 'Visual Identity Guidelines' that may be downloaded from the below link:

<https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Pages/Links%20and%20Downloads/Publicity.aspx>

24. Data Protection

GAL Majjistral has the duty to protect data provided in the Application Form. Any queries regarding Data Protection matters should be brought to the attention of the GAL Majjistral. The officer in charge can be contacted by e-mail on: galmajjistral@gmail.com

25. Retention of Documents

The applicant is to retain all documentation in a project file (required to ensure any adequate audit trail) safely stored.

All documents pertaining to the implementation of the project must be retained by the applicant for at least five (5) years following the final payment on the specific project. This is to facilitate audits and the ex-post evaluation of the programme.

26. Basic Terms and Conditions

If a project application is successful, EU Funds will be offered on rigorous terms and conditions, which will be stipulated in the Grant Agreement. In accepting the offer of EU Funds, the Applicant will take on responsibility for compliance with these terms and conditions. These include requirements to demonstrate satisfactory progress in delivering what the project has set out to achieve and adherence to an agreed pattern and time schedule of spending. Failure to meet these conditions and any false information given in the application may lead to the EU Funds being withdrawn and any EU Funds paid being recovered from the Applicant.

All projects are subject to management verifications; audits (by both Malta and EC auditors) and evaluations (programme evaluators). Officials from the MAGF, ARPA and MA and other horizontal stakeholders will also have rights of access to the project and all relevant documentation. Such officials could carry out spot checks (physical and documentary) to establish that sufficient progress is being made in line with the Grant Agreement and that the Beneficiary has put in place systems of management and control that ensure the efficient implementation of the project in line with the relevant Regulations and Procedures.

If the project is selected for funding, the Applicant will be bound by the principles of transparency, good governance, sound financial management and the relevant national regulations.

By submitting the Application, the Organisation is giving its automatic consent to publishing (including on the internet) the details of the Organisation and the project (including budget and implementation period) in line with the obligations in the relevant Council and Commission Regulations.

The applicant should also be aware of the durability clause enshrined in Article 71 of Regulation 1303/2013, which states that an operation retains the contribution from the EAFRD only if that operation does not, within five years from the final payment of the competent authorities, undergo a substantial modification.

The applicant is to declare whether an application for part or all of the proposed project has been submitted of assistance under any other Community Source including European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund (CF), etc. If in the affirmative the applicant is required to indicate all relevant details.

The applicant organisation should note that if the project is accepted, the Applicant will be automatically giving his/her consent to have all the documents and data related to the project, (including name of project leader and other persons relevant to the project, invoices, receipts and documents related to contracts etc...) made available to all the relevant stakeholders including third party evaluators and auditors involved

in the EAFRD fund system. The LAG reminds the Applicant that it is the responsibility of the Applicant to inform any third parties (including contractors) that all data and information relating to the project will be shared with other stakeholders, local and European.

The chosen entity must ensure that all activities are carried out in compliance with applicable national and community rules and any other mandatory requirements as laid down in the Rural Development Programme for Malta (2014-2020). Failure to do so will result in penalties, to the grant received plus interest accrued according to the law.

In case where any relevant permit, including PA permit (DNO or full permit) is required, the valid PA permit and approved drawings or the application submitted to PA and related drawings have to be presented as part of the documentation with the application. Grant agreements for projects in need of such permits will only be signed once the valid PA permit is granted. MAGF reserves the right to reject any project if the PA permit is not presented in time to allow the project to be completed by not later than 1 year from signature of contract agreement.

Once the applicant endorses the contract with the LAG, the applicant will be automatically be giving its consent to the publication of data related to the payments that the ARPA will eventually be affecting. This will be in line with Regulation (EU) 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The regulation requires all Member States of the European Union to publish details of beneficiaries, who received payments under the CAP.

27. Selection criteria and Sub-criteria

An evaluation of the proposals will be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the Selection Criteria grid below:

	SELECTION CRITERIA	Maximum POINTS
1. Relevance to the objective of the measure (max. 20 points)		
a	Evidence that the project contributes to the conservation of biodiversity	5 points
b	Evidence that the project contributes to the creation of green carbon sinks and makes use of specific species of conservation value	5 points
c	Evidence that the proposed investment contributes to the creation of recreational space for visitors	10 points
2. Link to the territory (max. 20 points)		
a	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention can link the natural history of the area	10 points
b	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention can link the socio-demographic development of the area	5 points

c	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention is linked to other sites of ecological value in the same area	5 points
3. Type of project (max. 15 points)		
a	The project is an integrated project in that it incorporates the achievement of more than one objective ⁵	5 points
b	The project is area-based and targets more than one element of green infrastructure within the same area	5 points
c	The project involves a cooperation between more than one local actor	5 points
4. Social impact on the Community (max. 15 points)		
a	The project's information and education components are targeted to children (less than 13 years of age)	5 points
b	The project's information and education components are targeted to youths (over 13 years of age)	5 points
c	The project targets persons from an economically-disadvantaged background/status	5 points
5. Preparedness (max. 15 points)		
a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and regulatory entities has taken place by the main applicants	5 points
b	All PA / DNO permits (if any) and other relevant permits are in hand or, as a minimum, in the application process	10 points
6. Sustainability of the Project (max. 15 points)		
a	Evidence of the project's sustainability following 5 years from its completion	5 points
b	Evidence that the project sustains the environment and climate	5 points
c	Evidence that the investment supports the policies related to gender equality and non-discrimination	5 points
TOTAL:		100 points

To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project must pass all the eligibility criteria (refer to Section 4 of these Guidance Notes) and must also obtain **50 marks** out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria. Please note that in relation to the above, for every criteria there are sub-criteria which the Project Selection Committee will be using to mark the projects.

28. Application requirements checklist

List of requirements and annexes Checklist

1.	One (1) original and one (1) hard copy of the signed project application form and soft copy of the application form saved both in WORD (.doc or .docx) and pdf format including also the supporting documentation	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
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⁵ Refer to 'The Local Development Strategy for the Majjstral Action Group Foundation Territory' - Measure 4 Clause 2d): Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the rural development programme

2.	Copy of ID Card of Project Leader	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
3.	Signed letter of Intent for the Project Leader	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
4.	Title Deeds/Lease or other form of contract for Project Location	<i>If applicable</i>
5.	Owner's Consent in the case of a lease/management agreement/guardianship or any other form of contract for the works to be carried out	<i>If applicable</i>
6.	Signed declaration from owner of the premises specifying the address from where the applicant will be delivering any proposed service or where the investments will be kept for the following 5 years from projected completion date (in cases of investments that are NOT related to the infrastructure)	<i>If applicable</i>
7.	Section 6f of the application duly filled	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
8.	Section 6h of the application duly filled	<i>Applicable for Local Councils only</i>
9.	Copy of Voluntary Organisation (VO) Certificate. (MAGF retains the right to request the latest signed Statute)	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
10.	Financial Accounts for year ending 2018	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
11.	PA permit and latest approved site plans and drawings related to the proposed investment	<i>If applicable</i>
12.	Copy of application with PA and proposed drawings and site plans related to the proposed investment	<i>If applicable</i>
13.	Declaration from architect and/or PA that the enhancement to premises or the proposed use does not require a permit issued from the PA/ERA	<i>If applicable</i>
14.	Declaration from architect that the project location is not on agricultural land and/or designated ecological areas such as Nature 2000 sites and that the project area does not exceed 0.5 hectares (5000 sq/m)	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
15.	Copy of VAT Certificate	<i>If applicable</i>
16.	VAT declaration form (the applicant is to fill Part 1 of the Declaration Form and Annex 5)	<i>If applicable</i>
17.	Itemised guaranteed quotations for all project costs which are not related to infrastructural investment – These quotations should include the date, reference, letterhead of the supplier,	<i>Applicable for VOs and Local Councils (subject to</i>

	<p>details of both supplier and applicant and VAT numbers. If the financial bid form is used, this must also contain the original signature of the bidder. All quotations must be dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes. The applicant has to opt for the cheapest quotation. If this is not the case the applicant will be reimbursed on the cheapest one.</p> <p>Only one quotation is required at application stage. Beneficiary is to follow ARPA guidelines prior to procurement.</p>	<i>adherence to Procurement Guidelines issued by DLG)</i>
18.	A detailed signed Architect's Bill of Quantities for all works to be carried out (This BOQ should include the date, a detailed breakdown of all the works and signatures and must be dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes).	<i>If applicable</i>
19.	Signed and Dated Adjudication Report stating the chosen supplier/s, if a minimum of 3 quotations are submitted at application stage - to be signed by the project leader and another legal representative of the entity	<i>If applicable</i>
20.	Original, signed and dated declaration from a certified auditor, the organisation's head and the financial controller/treasurer (in the case of Local Councils the Mayor and Executive Secretary) confirming that the applicant is committed to the co-financing element (and the VAT element if applicable) and can match it from own financial resources (Annex 2) (dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes).	<i>Applicable to all applicants unless clause 21 refers</i>
21.	Original, signed and dated letter from a commercial bank, signed also by the organisation's head and financial controller/treasurer (in the case of Local Councils the Mayor and Executive Secretary) confirming that the applicant is committed to the co-financing element (and the VAT element if applicable) and has the availability of credit facility to match it (dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes).	<i>Applicable to all applicants unless clause 20 refers</i>
22.	<p>Audited financial statements of year 2018</p> <p><i>The MAGF retains the right to consult with the Director of Local Government to check that the co-financing as declared by the Local Council is available/likely to be met. This assessment by the Director of local Government will be made on the basis of the information provided by the applicant.</i></p>	<i>Applicable for Local Councils only</i>

23.	When applying for the planting or uprooting of trees, photographic evidence is to be submitted, identifying the current state of the site and an indication of the proposed planting and/or uprooting intervention, the type of trees and under which schedule they are listed	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
24.	A Method statement which includes i) a list of native species typical of the ecosystem in the area, ii) a planting scheme and iii) a maintenance plan.	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
25.	Clearance from ERA prior to removal of invasive alien tree species (dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes).	<i>If applicable</i>
26.	Correspondence with ERA, including a written approval on the proposed investment involving green elements	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
27.	If private part is to be financed by a loan, a bank letter of intent or a bank sanction letter is to be provided (dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes).	<i>If applicable</i>
28.	Section 8 of the Application – Declaration	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
29.	All sections of the application have been filled in	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
30.	Annex 1 – VAT Declaration Form	<i>If applicable</i>
31.	Annex 2 – Co-financing form	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>
32.	Annex 3 - Recommended text for Bank letter of intent	<i>If applicable</i>
33.	Annex 4 – Financial Bid Form	<i>If applicable</i>
34.	Annex 5 – Authorisation Letter	<i>Applicable to all applicants</i>

Annex 1 - VAT Declaration Form

Part I – Declaration by Beneficiary

1.	Project Title	<input type="text"/>
2.	Beneficiary Organisation	<input type="text"/>
3.	Beneficiary Organisation Address	<input type="text"/>
4.	Name of Legal Representative	<input type="text"/>
5.	VAT no. (if any)	<input type="text"/>
6.	Brief Project Description	<input type="text"/>

7. Does the organisation have any sales on which VAT is charged or zero rated sales (exempt with credit)?

Yes

No

If **NO**, the organization has no right of recouping VAT from the VAT Department.

If **YES**, please provide a short description of the sales on which VAT is charged.

8. Please identify whether project is directly related to the sales on which VAT is charged or to sales which are zero rated (exempt with credit).

Yes No Partial

If **YES**, for this activity, the organisation would be considered as a taxable person with an obligation for article 10 registration and would have the right of full deduction of input VAT attributable to the project in terms of article 22 of the VAT Act (Cap. 406, Laws of Malta), provided that the project would be entirely used for the purpose of such supplies.

If **NO**, for this activity, the organisation would either be considered as a taxable person doing exempt without credit supplies or a non-taxable legal person with activities outside the scope of VAT and for which registration under article 10 is not required and whereby there would be no right of input VAT deduction under the VAT Act.

If **PARTIAL**, for this activity, the organisation would be considered as a taxable person requiring article 10 registration and would have a partial right of input VAT deduction in terms of article 22 of the VAT Act.

I declare that the above-mentioned information is correct.

Signature and stamp of Beneficiary Organisation	Name of Legal Representative	Date
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For official use only:

Part II – Declaration by VAT Division

Based on the information reported by the Beneficiary in his declaration the VAT status of the beneficiary organisation vis-a-vis the activities envisaged under Technical Assistance is considered as:

Taxable person (right of full deduction)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taxable person (partial right to deduct)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taxable person (exempt with credit)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taxable person (exempt without credit)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-taxable legal person (activities out of scope of VAT)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature and stamp of VAT Department Representative	Name of VAT Department Representative	Date
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Annex 2 – Co-financing Form

To:
GAL MAJJISTRAL Foundation
12, Triq it-Tullier,
Attard. ATD 1631

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

We refer to the application submitted by *(input name of applicant)* to apply for LEADER funds under the Rural Development Programme for Malta (2014-2020).

The application is being made for a total project cost of up to *(input total project cost)* of which 80% funding will be sought through the above-mentioned Programme. Resultantly an amount of *(input co-financing amount to be funded by the applicant any VAT amount if applicable)* will be directly funded by the applicant.

We confirm that *(input name of applicant)* has the available financial resource to meet its own co-financing obligation of *(input co-financing amount to be funded by the applicant any VAT amount if applicable)*.

Yours faithfully,

Name and signature of Head/President of Organisation

Name and signature of Financial Controller/Treasurer

Name and signature of Certified Auditor

Annex 3 - Recommended text for Bank letter of intent

Our Ref:

Date

The Manager
Majjstral Action Group Foundation
12, Triq it-Tullier,
Attard, ATD1631

Dear Sir,

We are informed that _____ has applied for an EU funded call. The Bank is interested and prepared to consider in terms of its credit policy, any application for financial support in connection with this project.

In particular, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, our commitment to provide bank funding, as well as establishment of the conditions applicable to such funding, would only be possible after the following are carried out, to the Bank's satisfaction:

- A detailed assessment of the business and financial plans;
- A viability study of the project;
- A situation analysis, at the time of the application

Kindly note that this letter does not constitute a binding obligation upon the Bank and any application for credit facilities would be subject to a full formal credit analysis, in line with the Bank's normal lending criteria.

Yours faithfully,

Relationship Manager

Annex 4 – Financial Bid Form

Breakdown of Costs

Financial Bid in terms of [RfQ number]

Beneficiary Details: [Name, Address & VAT number]

Contractor Information:

Full Name of Company: _____

Address of Company: _____

Email Address:

VAT number:

Quote Date:

Quote Number:

Item No.	Item Description	Quantity	Unit Price Excluding VAT	Total Price excluding VAT	VAT Rate	Total Price Including VAT
1	<i>(To be written by the Beneficiary – common for all bidders)</i>					
2						
Total						

a. Line Items to be quoted separately

b. The adjudication shall be carried out strictly in line with the items listed within the Financial Bid Form above

Stamp of Bidder/ Name of person representing the company

Signature of Bidder _____

Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020



Part financed by the European Union
Co-financing Rate:
75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



***The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas***

Annex 5 – Authorisation Letter

(Letterhead of Beneficiary Entity)

Mr. Gerald Vella
Majjistrat Action Group Foundation
12, Triq it-Tullier
Attard ATD 1631

(Insert Date)

(Project Title)

Dear Mr. Vella,

I hereby authorise you, as MAGF manager, to request information from the VAT Department on the VAT status of (name of entity applying for the grant) through the submission of the VAT Declaration Form, which is attached to this application.

I also authorise you, as MAGF manager, to request information from the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations regarding compliance of (name of Voluntary Organisation applying for the grant) as at application date.

Yours sincerely,

Name and signature of Head/President of Organisation

Name and signature of Project Leader