EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

European Commission

GUIDELINES

EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD

AUGUST 2017

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The Evaluation Helpdesk is responsible for the evaluation function within the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) by providing guidance on the evaluation of RDPs and policies falling under the remit and guidance of DG AGRI's Unit C.4 'Monitoring and evaluation' of the European Commission (EC). In order to improve the evaluation of EU rural development policy the Evaluation Helpdesk supports all evaluation stakeholders, in particular DG AGRI, national authorities, RDP managing authorities and evaluators, through the development and dissemination of appropriate methodologies and tools; the collection and exchange of good practices; capacity building, and communicating with network members on evaluation related topics.

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GUIDELINES

EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD

AUGUST 2017

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ACRONYM LIST

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCI	Common Context Indicators
CEQ	Common Evaluation Question
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-led local development
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
CMES	Common Monitoring and Evaluation System
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG MARE	Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional Policy
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
EP	Evaluation plan
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI Funds	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
FA	Focus Area
FLAG	Fishery Local Action Group
FTE	Full time equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
M	Measure
MA	Managing Authority
MAPP	Method for Impact Assessment of Programme and Project
MC	Monitoring Committee
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRN	National Rural Network
O	Output
OI	Output indicators
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Paying Agency

PROMIS	Project Result Oriented Management Information System
PSEQ	Programme-Specific Evaluation Question
R	Result
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RI	Result indicators
SFC	Shared Fund Management Common System
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
T	Target
TO	Thematic Objectives
WD	Working Document

FOREWORD

Why guidelines?

Though stakeholders already have several years of experience in the evaluation of LEADER, the new programming period 2014-2020 poses new challenges to properly evaluate the effects of LEADER/CLLD at the EU, Member State, regional and local levels.

The importance of evaluation has risen due to the design of the 2014-2020 rural development policy's new requirements for monitoring and evaluation (see chapter 1.1.3) and the possibility to flexibly programme LEADER/CLLD in RDPs. Stakeholders, therefore, may need guidance in order to comply with the new evaluation tasks, such as the assessment of the primary and secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD to the achievement of the policy objectives, RDP results and impacts, and the monitoring and evaluation of CLLD strategies[1].

Based on the existing legal framework and guidance, these guidelines aim to assist stakeholders in the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD interventions and reporting on these activities. For this purpose, the guidelines offer practical advice on how to prepare and conduct the evaluation activities of LEADER/CLLD when carried out as part of the RDP evaluation but also when evaluating/self-assessing at the local level.

The guidelines have been drafted by a team of experts from the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development (Vincenzo Angrisani, Jean-Michel Courades, Robert Lukesch, Julija Marosek, Matteo Metta, Marili Parissaki, Magda Porta, Carlo Ricci, Jela Tvrdonova and Hannes Wimmer). Representatives of DG Agriculture and Rural Development have ensured the compliance of the guidelines with the EU's policy framework. Representatives from the Member States have commented on the draft versions of the guidelines during the 9th meeting of the Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP and during Sounding Board[2] meetings. The ENRD Contact Point and EIP Service Point were also invited to comment on the guidelines.

Who are the target groups of these guidelines?

The guidelines for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD have been drafted for different groups of rural development stakeholders:

- **Managing Authorities** will find information about the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level: the legal framework and the purpose and focus of the evaluation. Practical guidance will show how to prepare, manage and coordinate the assessment of contributions of LEADER/CLLD interventions and how to report, disseminate and follow up on the findings of the evaluation. Moreover, Managing Authorities will find valuable information on how to support LAGs when they carry out evaluation activities at the local level. Paying Agencies may find relevant information for their operations database.
- **NRNs** will find guidance on what type of support they can provide to LAGs for conducting their evaluation tasks.
- **Evaluators** will find comprehensive explanations of all relevant legal texts and the overall rationale behind the requirements. The guidelines present evaluation approaches for the assessment of LEADER/CLLD contributions to RDP's results, impacts and objectives, as well as approaches for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the local level.
- **Officials within DG Agriculture and Rural Development** may use the guidelines as a reference document for any questions arising concerning the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD.
- **LAGs** will find recommendations on how to conduct evaluation activities at the local level. Information is provided on how the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level is linked to the evaluation activities at the LAG level

[1] The need to provide more methodological guidelines for LEADER/CLLD is also rooted in legal framework, namely in Annex VI point (1) of Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 808/2014.

[2] Sounding Board of the Thematic working group on guidelines "Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD" was composed, amongst others, of representatives of DG AGRI, of DG MARE, of the Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating of the CAP 2014-2020 and of the ENRD Contact Point.

and what support could potentially be provided to them by the MA and other stakeholders.

How are the guidelines structured?

The guidelines consist of four parts.

PART 1 introduces LEADER/CLLD as part of the rural development policy and shows its links with other CLLD instruments financed by the ESI Funds. It discusses the purpose and the legal framework for the evaluation. The evaluation concept and the role of various stakeholders in the evaluation process are also shown.

PART 2 explains the evaluation cycle at the RDP level and describes how to assess the contributions of LEADER/CLLD towards fulfilling the EU's, national's and RDP's objectives. This includes the assessment of primary and secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD operations to rural development FAs. Furthermore, this part also describes the assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism and of the added value.

PART 3 provides recommendations for LAGs on how to conduct evaluation activities at the local level, and what support the MA, NRN and other stakeholders may provide to LAGs for this purpose. This part also describes several tools and examples that may be used in the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the local level. It focuses on strategies funded exclusively by the EAFRD, (i.e LAGs mono-funded by the EAFRD).

PART 4 (Annex) includes the glossary.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD in the new programming period 2014-2020

1.1.1 CLLD: What is new?

A new instrument in the EU policy architecture

Community-led local development (CLLD) was introduced as a new policy instrument to support territorial cohesion in the programming period 2014-2020. CLLD supports addressing the local needs in urban, rural and fishery areas and the specific needs of chosen target groups. It mobilises local potentials and strengthens the linkages among actors within the supported areas. Overall, CLLD contributes to the Europe 2020 Strategy by unlocking smart, sustainable and inclusive growth potential across the EU.

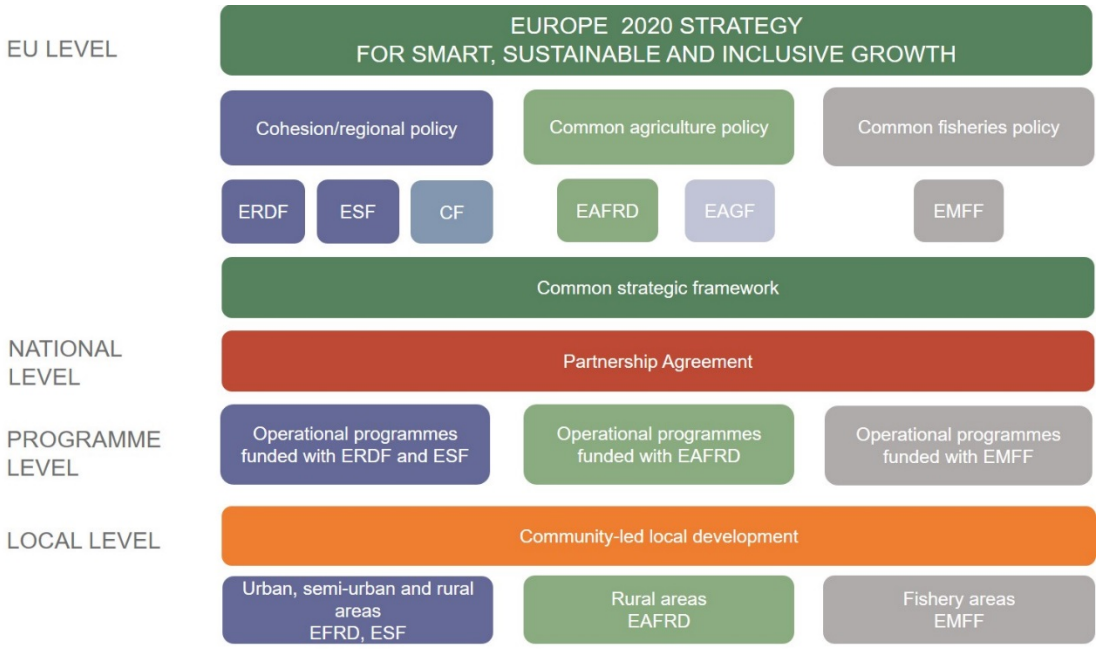
CLLD builds on the experiences of the LEADER approach, by further promoting projects carried out through local partnerships in a bottom up way, via area-based, multi-sector local development strategies. CLLD supports the enhancement of the local economy through the creation of sustainable jobs, utilising local resources, strengthening social cohesion, networking, cooperation and innovation. LEADER, with its clear linkage to rural areas, will continue to be used under the EAFRD as LEADER/CLLD.

CLLD is programmed in the Partnership Agreement and in relevant national/regional ESI Funds programmes. Different policies can be joined at the local level in one CLLD strategy to deliver results contributing to the achievement of wider EU objectives, going beyond the focus of a single policy (see figure below).

Flexibility in addressing the local needs and fostering local potentials

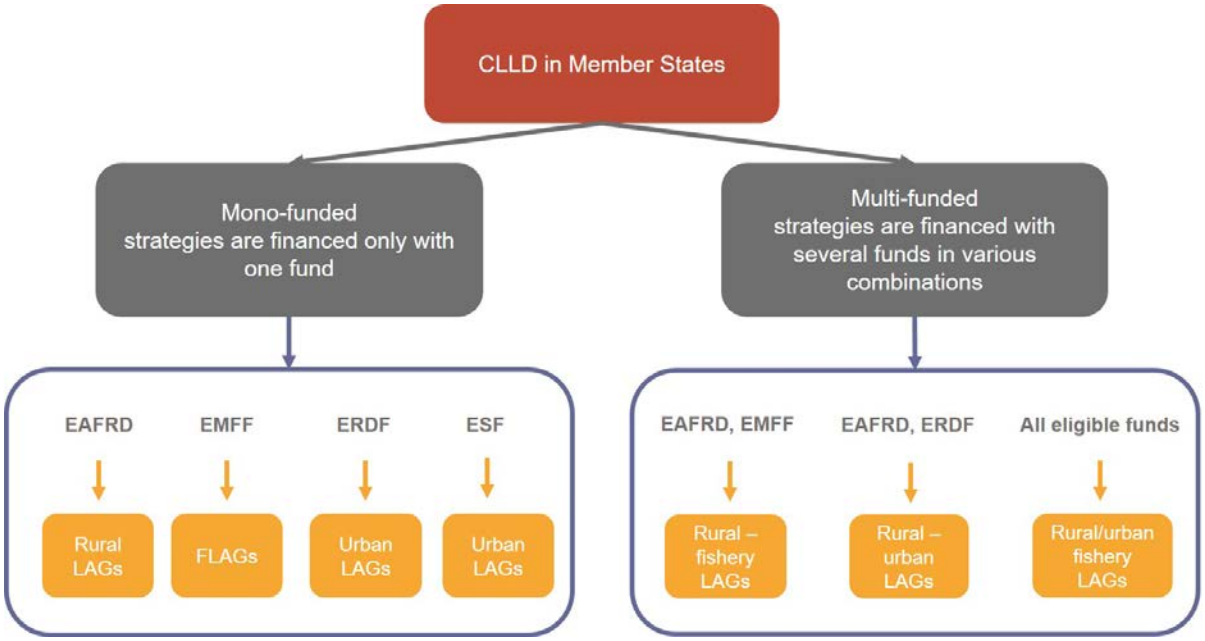
The CLLD architecture provides flexibility in addressing specific needs at the local level. Member States can choose from a broad range of policy measures supported by various ESI Funds. Two possible scenarios can be adopted by Member States: using only one fund (mono-fund), or using several funds (multi-fund). CLLD is, however, only mandatory under the EAFRD in the form of LEADER. In the event that Member States opt for the use of several funds, they can apply various combinations in order to meet their territorial needs.

Figure 1. CLLD within the EU policy architecture for the programming period 2014-2020



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

Figure 2. Options for CLLD in the Member States



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

Strengthening the LEADER approach

LEADER/CLLD is implemented by applying **Community-led local development (CLLD)** and is built on specific characteristics. These characteristics have in the past programming periods been known as the 'LEADER method' or the '7 LEADER principles'. In these guidelines, we call these characteristics the 'LEADER method'. The main features of CLLD are[3]:

- **A focus on specific sub-regional areas** and territories designated by the local population in a bottom up way;
- **A public-private partnership = local action group (LAG)**, which represents the territory and its population and leads the development process with no interest group nor public authorities having a majority in the decision-making process;
- **An area based strategy** created and implemented through a bottom up and participatory decision-making process, organised by LAGs, to address the area´s most urgent needs;
- **Multisector local development strategy** to foster and link the local development potentials of various sectors for the achievement of local objectives;
- **Innovation** as a cross cutting objective in the development of the LAG's territory;
- **Networking** among actors inside the LAG's territory, among LAGs and other public-private partnerships, in order to establish a stronger foundation for the transfer of knowledge, and exchange of experiences;
- **Cooperation** among local actors and among LAGs from different territories within the Member State, the EU and outside of it.

These features have been further strengthened in the current programming period by:

- Reinforcing the preparatory support for local partnerships (e.g. capacity building, training and networking to facilitate better preparation and implementation of local development strategies);
- Strengthening the role of LAGs in governing rural territories (e.g. more local decisions on actions supported by CLLD strategies and

[3] Article 32.2. of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

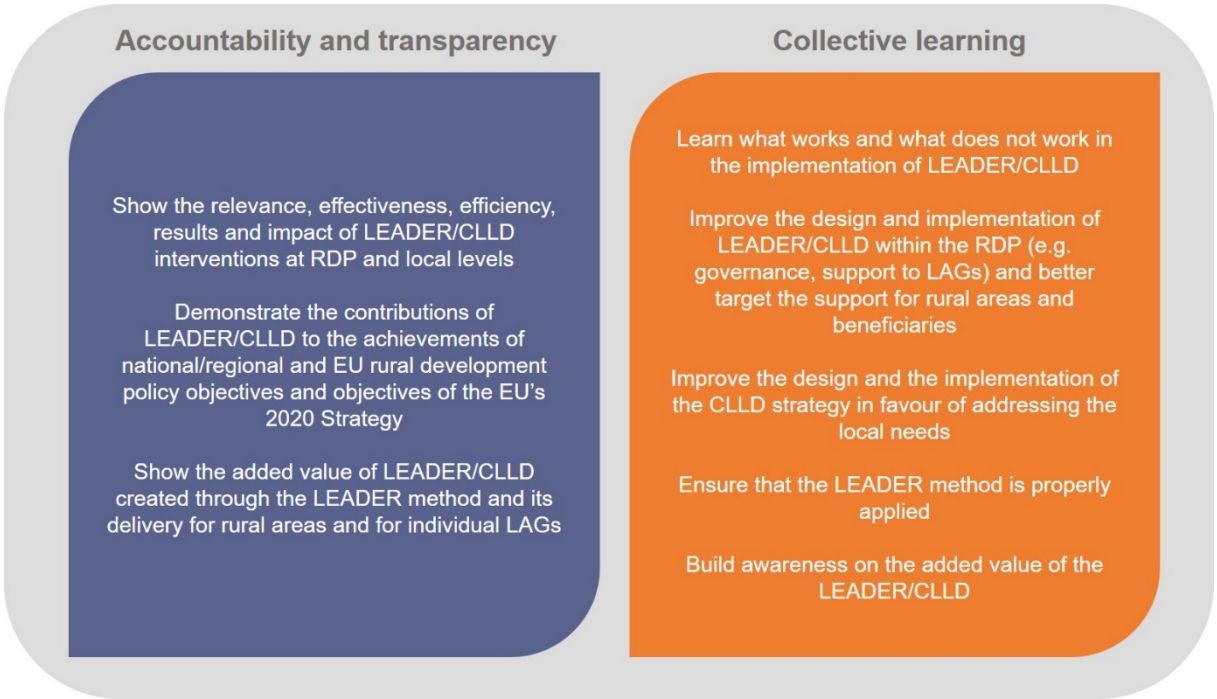
more flexible financial rules[4] to implement LEADER/CLLD at the local level);

- Integrating the monitoring and evaluation arrangements into the CLLD strategies to improve their design and implementation;
- Focusing more on animation to enable greater exchange and cooperation between stakeholders (e.g. explicit allocation of funds for animation);
- Strengthening the participation of the private sector in the partnership (through a specific rule requiring the inclusion of private sector partners' participation in project selection decisions);
- Streamlining transnational cooperation (e.g. through common rules concerning publishing selection procedures and deadlines for project selection).

1.1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation of LEADER/CLLD helps policy makers, programme managers, LAGs and beneficiaries to better use their resources in addressing the needs of the local population. In this respect, the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD has a summative function (accountability and transparency) as well as a formative function (collective learning).

Figure 3. Purpose of evaluating LEADER/CLLD



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

[4] Taking into consideration the possibilities given by the legal framework, namely as stated in Articles 67, 68 and 69 of Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013.

1.1.3 Legal framework and guidance for the evaluation

CLLD is one of two[5] ESI fund instruments, which aim to promote integrated approaches of territorial development. Additonally, CLLD promotes the engagement of regional/local actors and local communities in the implementation of programmes[6].

The Common Provision Regulation specifies that CLLD[7]:

- Shall be **focused on specific sub-regional areas, led by local action groups** (LAGs) and carried out through integrated, multi-sectoral, and area-based **local development strategies**, designed to take into consideration local needs, including those innovative features, networking and cooperation;
- **Shall be supported** by the EAFRD as LEADER/CLLD and;
- **May also be supported** by the ERDF, ESF and EMFF.

Legal provisions for the monitoring and evaluation of CLLD strategies

The Common Provision Regulation mandates that each LAG will carry out specific monitoring and evaluation activities linked to the CLLD strategy[8]. For this purpose, LAGs are required to include in their CLLD strategy a description of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements[9]. The costs linked to the monitoring and evaluation of the CLLD strategy can be covered by the running costs of the LAG[10].

The legal requirement for evaluations by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation set in Article 54(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 does not apply to CLLD strategies. Article 54(1) applies to "operational programmes" and "rural development programmes", not to "community-led local development strategies".

Moreover, the Commission Implementing Act for the EAFRD, asks the MA to describe in the evaluation plan[11]:

- activities needed for the evaluation of contributions of the CLLD strategies to rural development objectives;
- planned support for the evaluation at the LAG level.

The Rural Development Regulation also requires the information resulting from evaluation activities to be included in the **Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs)** submitted in 2017 and in 2019[12], namely:

- **in 2017:** quantification of programme achievements through the assessment of the complementary result indicators and answering the relevant evaluation questions;
- **in 2019 additionally:** contributions to achieving the Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through, inter alia, the assessment of the programme´s net contributions to changes in the CAP impact indicator values, and relevant evaluation questions.

[5] Together with the Integrated Territorial Investments for the ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF and Cohesion Fund. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Art. 36.
[6] Commission staff working document: Elements of Common Strategic Framework to ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and EMFF
[7] Article 32.1 and 32.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
[8] Article 34.3 g) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
[9] Article 33.1 f) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
[10] Article 35. d) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
[11] Annex I, Part I. points 9.3a) and 9.3b) of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014
[12] Annex VII, point 7 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

This implies that chapter 7 in these two AIRs shall include information on the contributions of the operations implemented under the CLLD strategies to the rural development objectives. The AIR must contain a quantification of the result indicators and answers to the CEQs. This requires an assessment of those rural development Focus Areas (FAs) where the operations implemented via CLLD strategies show primary and secondary contributions.

The Commission Implementing Act further defines the **Common Monitoring and Evaluation System** (CMES) **for rural development**[13] established in the Rural Development Regulation[14]. The CMES provides a minimum set of elements, which must be used in the evaluation of RDPs (including the interventions implemented via LEADER/CLLD). The CMES and its elements are further described in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) Handbook and its annexes[15] as well as in various guidance documents[16].

For LEADER/CLLD the CMES provides:

- An RDP **intervention logic,** in which LEADER/CLLD is primarily programmed under the FA 6B and has contributions to other FAs[17].
- A set of specific **common output and target indicators**, which should be used to collect monitoring data on the implementation of LEADER/CLLD. Information regarding additional common result indicators linked to the FAs, should also be used in the assessment of the contributions of operations implemented under the CLLD strategies[18].
- **Common evaluation questions** (CEQs), chiefly CEQ no. 17, which is linked to FA 6B, and linked to those RDP objectives to which LEADER/CLLD contributes[19].
- **Data items for LEADER/CLLD** listed in the database for Pillar II operations to be collected for output and target indicators via the monitoring system[20];
- Specific **LEADER/CLLD related guidance** in various documents of the Evaluation Helpdesk (e.g. Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results, Establishing and Implementing the Evaluation Plan of 2014-2020 RDPs etc.)[21].

[13] Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014
[14] Article 67 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013
[15] http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=21095&no=3
[16] http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/monitoring-evaluation/index_en.htm and http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/european-evaluation-helpdesk-rural-development/evaluation-helpdesks-publications/guidance
[17] Working paper: Guidelines for strategic programming for the period 2014-2020
[18] Annex IV of of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 and Annex 11 of Guidelines „Assessing RDP results“
[19] Annex V of of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014
[20] Article 70 and 71 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013
[21] http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/european-evaluation-helpdesk-rural-development/evaluation-helpdesks-publications_en?2nd-language=fr

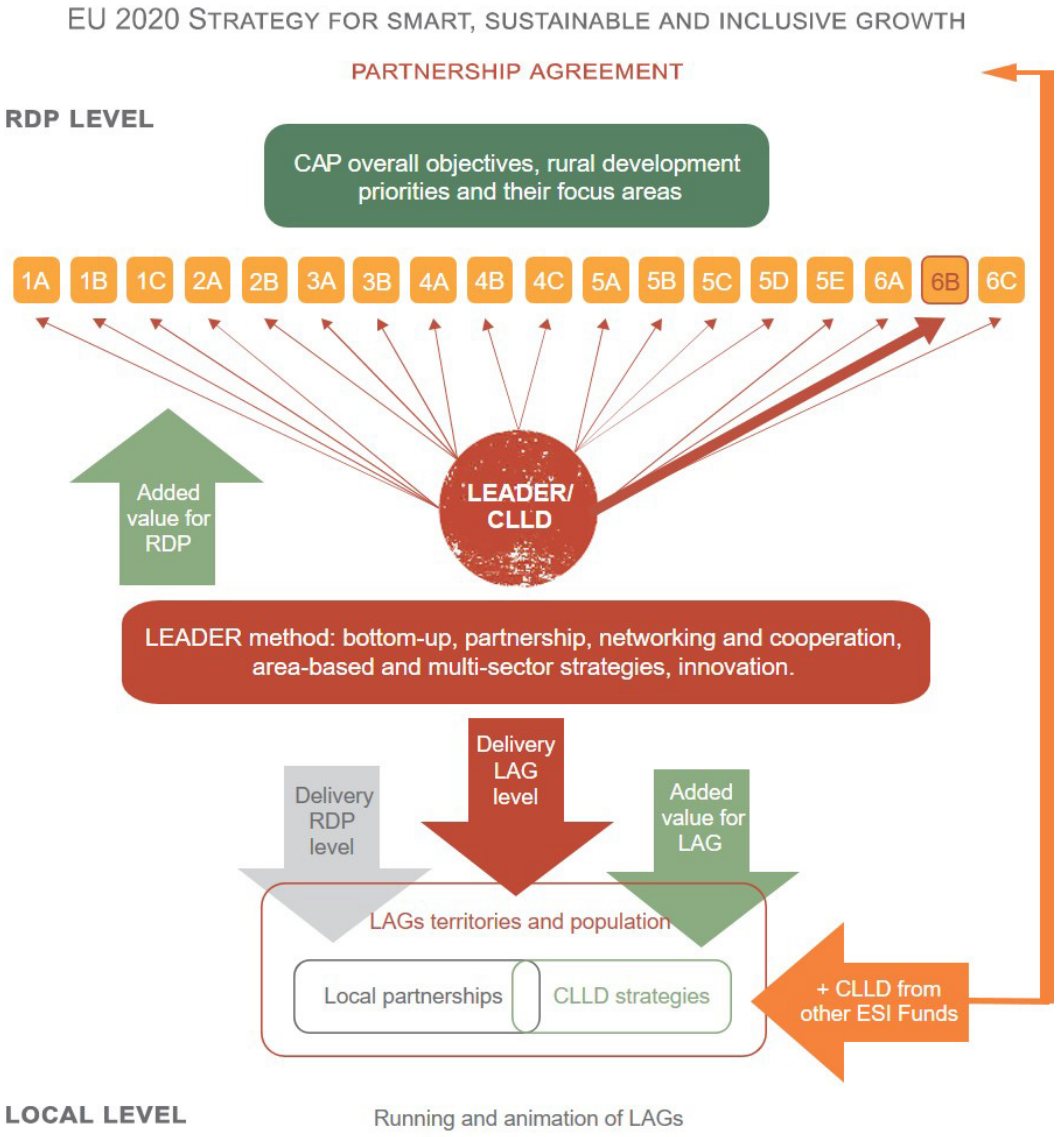
1.2 Conceptualizing the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD

The use of CLLD is provided for in the Partnership Agreement as well as in relevant ESIF programmes, and is delivered at the LAG level by applying the LEADER method (see chapter 1.1.1.):

- **At the programme level:** in the case of the EAFRD LEADER is a self-standing measure linked to specific programme priorities,
- **At the local level:** one or several ESI Funds can be used to support the operations delivered via the CLLD strategy and the LAG's activities within the given LAG's territory. The CLLD strategy's objectives must correspond to the objectives of the related ESI Fund(s) used.

Figure 4 below illustrates the above described components of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP and local levels.

Figure 4. Concept of the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP and local levels



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

In RDPs, CLLD is programmed as LEADER/CLLD under FA 6B[22], but can contribute to any of the RDP's FAs and the cross cutting objectives of innovation, environment and climate change. Through the RDP it also contributes to the CAP objectives - balanced territorial development of rural areas and consequently to the EU 2020 thematic objectives/headline targets.

At the local level, LEADER/CLLD is implemented through LAGs' activities, through the CLLD strategy, running of the LAGs and animation/capacity building[23]. The most important activity is the preparation and implementation of the CLLD strategy, which acts as a small programme at sub-regional level. It has its own intervention logic composed of local objectives and actions/groups of operations to address the local needs of the LAG territory.

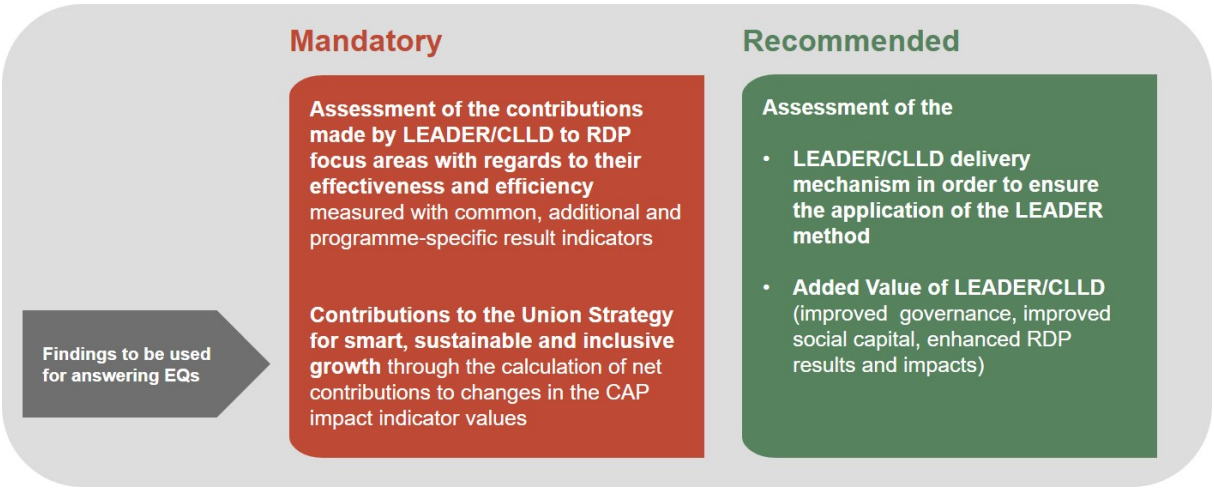
CLLD is implemented with **a specific method**, which, if correctly applied, will **generate added value** in the form of improved social capital, improved governance and enhanced results and impacts of programme/strategy implementation, compared to implementation without the LEADER method (see figure 7 in chapter 1.2.3).

1.2.1 Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level

Who is responsible for the evaluation at the RDP level?

The responsibility for the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD as part of the RDP lies with the MA who should **contract an external evaluator or** appoint an **internal evaluator** who is functionally independent of the authorities responsible for the design and implementation of the programme. **The MA** has a key role in planning and preparing the LEADER/CLLD evaluation. This includes identifying the relevant evaluation needs and setting up a monitoring and evaluation system, which ensures the availability of data and information for the evaluation. The MA is responsible for the quality of the evaluation, as well as for the reporting, dissemination and the follow up of the evaluation findings. The evaluation of LEADER/CLLD can be either included as a part of the RDP evaluation or as a self-standing evaluation.

What is the focus of the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level?



[22] RDP UK England programmed LEADER/CLLD under the FA 6A

[23] Article 35.1 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

The focus of the evaluation at the RDP level is clearly defined by the legal acts (see also chapter 1.1.3):

- **Assessment of the LEADER/CLLD contributions to the RDP's FA** objectives[24]. This assessment covers the analysis of contributions of operations implemented via CLLD strategies including cooperation projects[25] and of their effectiveness and efficiency. **Effectiveness** relates to the extent to which LEADER/CLLD has contributed to the RDP's objectives. **Efficiency** relates to the cost of these contributions. Effectiveness and efficiency are measured through common, additional and programme-specific result indicators[26] linked to the respective FAs. The **quantification of secondary contributions is not mandatory**. However, it is very useful to demonstrate the full achievements of LEADER/CLLD. The share of LEADER/CLLD contributions should be shown separately when calculating the gross values of the common complementary result indicators. Optionally, this share may also be calculated for other common, additional and programme-specific indicators, which are used in the assessment of RDP results under the FAs 2A, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D
- **Assessment of LEADER/CLLD contributions to achieving the Union Strategy** for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This is performed for the AIR in 2019 and for the ex post evaluation through, amongst others, the assessment of the programme´s net contributions to changes in the CAP impact indicator values (e.g. I14 - rural employment rate, I15 - degree of rural poverty, and I16 - rural GDP per capita). Findings from the assessment should be used in the answers of the common and programme-specific evaluation questions, which are related to the EU level objectives and to the overall RDP specific objectives.

Furthermore, it is **recommended** to include the following aspects:

- **The assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism** looks at the extent to which the programme administration and involved stakeholders have ensured the application of the LEADER method when implementing LEADER/CLLD through various rules and procedures. This refers to decisions on multi or mono-funding, the LAG selection process, the facilitation of transnational cooperation, the degree of freedom granted to LAGs for choosing and implementing types of operations and for developing their own actions/groups of operations, the degree of LAG participation in project selection and financing, the scope of animation activities of LAGs, and the criteria for cooperation project selection, etc.
- **The assessment of the added value of LEADER/CLLD** refers to the benefits that are obtained as a result of the proper application of the LEADER method, compared to those benefits, which would have been obtained without applying this method. The added value of LEADER/CLLD at the programme level can be expressed as improved social capital, improved governance and enhanced RDP results and impacts.

[24] This assessment relates to the reporting on evaluation in the AIR, Annex VII, point 7 of Regulation (EU) No 808/2014, for AIR submitted in 2017 and 2019.

[25] In case a given RDP has many LEADER/CLLD transnational / transregional (for regional programmes) cooperation projects, it is recommended to plan and carry out at the programme level a LEADER/CLLD specific evaluation of cooperation.

[26] Guidelines „Assessement of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017", http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017

1.2.2 Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the local level

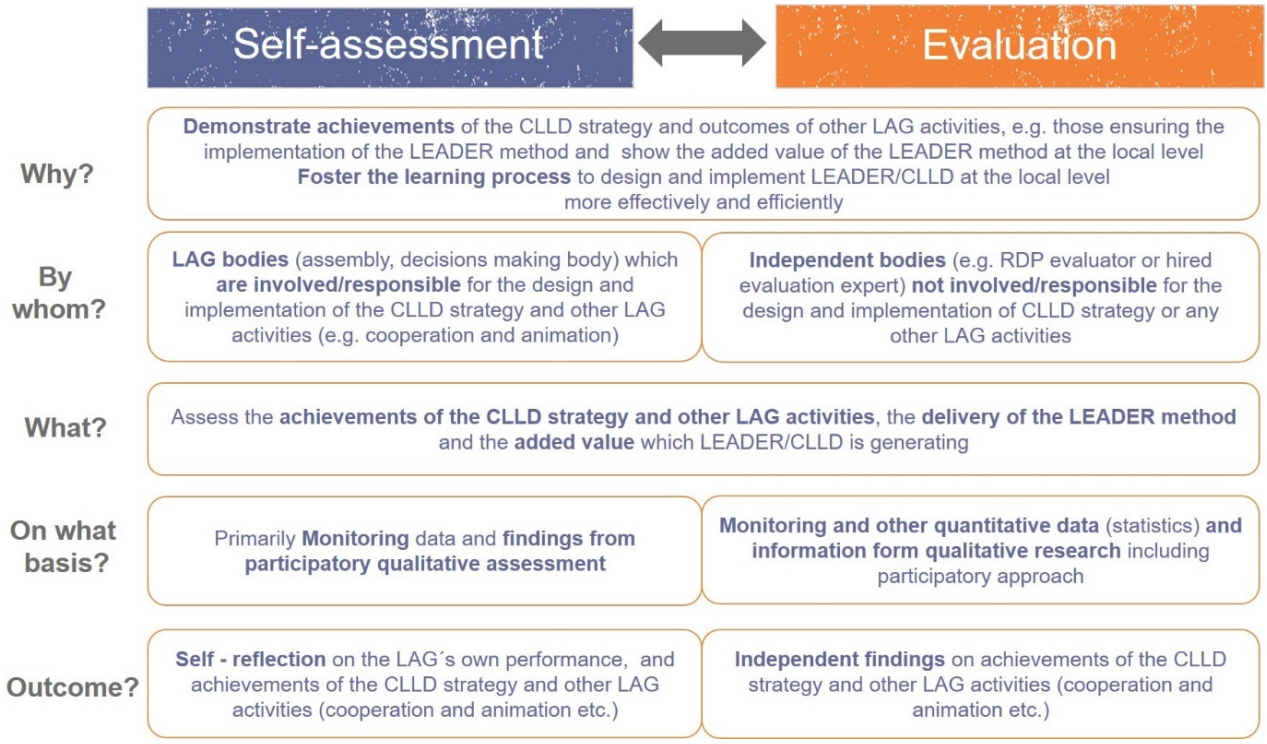
Who is responsible for the evaluation activities at the local level?

Monitoring and evaluation activities linked to the CLLD strategy, at the local level, are the responsibility of the **LAG**[27] (see legal provisions in chapter 1.1.3). The LAG has the following possibilities to carry out the **evaluation activities**:

- **Self-assessment**: when the assessment is done by the LAG, namely by those who are **involved in / responsible** for the design and implementation of the strategy (LAG members, decision body, LAG management, etc.).
- **Evaluation**: when the assessment at the local level is done by an **independent** body with evaluation expertise that is **not involved in / responsible for** the design and implementation of the strategy and of other LAG activities. This would be an external evaluation expert.
- **A combination of self-assessment and evaluation:** The LAG may hire an **external expert** to lead and facilitate the process of self-assessment. This expert may have just a moderating role, but s/he may also act as an expert and provide judgements and advice. There is in fact a continuum between self-assessment and formative evaluation practices. It is up to the LAG to decide on the appropriate form of strategic reflection and to precisely define the role the facilitator is supposed to play.

The following figure describes the links and differences between self-assessment and evaluation.

Figure 5. Self-assessment and independent evaluation at local level



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

[27] Article 33 - 34 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

The decision to carry out a self-assessment and / or an evaluation must be coherent with **what has been specified in the CLLD strategy.** LAGs may assess both the mandatory parts (CLLD strategy) as well as the optional parts (the LAG animation, the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism and the added value).

If the CLLD strategy defines under the monitoring and evaluation arrangements both an evaluation and self-assessment, it is recommended to use for both exercises the same set of evaluation questions and indicators and collect data only once. The self-assessment can benefit from the evaluation findings and vice versa.

In case the LAG has opted for an evaluation, the following **contracting situations** may occur at the local level:

- A single LAG hires an evaluator. In this case, the evaluator will be paid by the LAG from its running costs.
- Several LAGs (with or without the intervention of the NRN or an intermediary body) decide to tender an external evaluation. In this case, one LAG may take the lead and act on behalf of the whole group. This option makes it possible to compare evaluation findings between different LAGs (e.g. governance and management and interventions in thematic fields). In this case, the financing of the evaluator will be shared by all the LAGs together out of their running costs budgets.

When **tendering and selecting external evaluation experts** in the Member States specific public procurement rules need to be complied with, when applicable. The contracting party should establish a transparent selection criteria covering the evaluation experiences, evaluation capacities, ability to collect and use information and data.

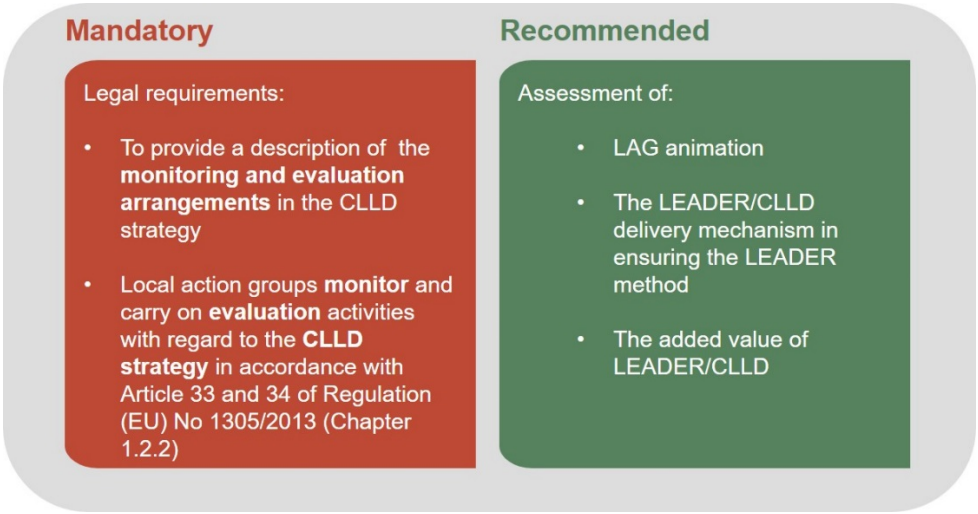
The MA of the RDP plays an important role in supporting LAGs in their task to monitor their CLLD strategy and to prepare the evaluation activities (e.g. the MA could provide a standard outline of the terms of reference specifying the minimum evaluation requirements). The MA may also decide to delegate certain support tasks to other stakeholders. The NRN could, for example, provide evaluation trainings to LAGs, the Paying Agency could assist LAGs in the development of an integrated / shared database with the RDP (i.e. a LAG operations database)[28].

For the evaluation activities at the local level the **participation of stakeholders,** and of the broader public (LAG staff, LAG members, intermediary bodies, and beneficiaries) is particularly useful. Participation by these groups helps to increase transparency and learning. Local actors can be involved in evaluation activities by fostering their participation in the local monitoring committee and/or in the local evaluation steering group. These bodies ideally should be introduced at an early stage of implementation of the CLLD strategy.

What is the focus of the evaluation activities of LEADER/CLLD at the local level?

There are mandatory as well as recommended evaluation activities at the local level. The mandatory task for LAGs is to provide a description of the management and monitoring arrangements of the strategy and a description of specific arrangements for evaluation, as well as **carry out specific monitoring and evaluation activities linked to the CLLD strategy**. Apart from this, the legal acts do not further specify the evaluation focus at the local level (see chapter 1.1.3).

[28] DG AGRI, Rural Development Monitoring (2014-2020), Working Document for the Rural Development Committee, August 2014. http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-indicators/output/working-document-rd-monitoring-implementation-report-tables_en.pdf



As for the mandatory evaluation focus, the **assessment of the CLLD Strategy** concerns:

- **The assessment of the CLLD strategy´s coherence**: internally – between the strategy's objectives, planned inputs, the combination of interventions and expected outputs, results and impacts; externally – between the several instruments implemented together in the same territory); and **relevance** in addressing the most important needs of the LAG territory, deriving from the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment;
- **The assessment of contributions of the CLLD strategy's operations** (including cooperation projects) **towards the achievement of the CLLD strategy's objectives** and the effectiveness and efficiency of these contributions;
- Analysis of the factors of success and failure regarding the achievement of the CLLD strategy's objectives.

In addition to the mandatory assessment of the CLLD strategy, the guidelines **recommend** including at the local level also:

- **The assessment of the LAG animation** i.e. the LAG's capacity to animate with the aim to raise the awareness, readiness, cooperation and networking capabilities of the local people;
- **The assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism** in ensuring the LEADER method (e.g. the balanced participation and representation of the local population in the LAG's decision making structures, the LAG's management structures, rules and procedures to prepare and implement the CLLD strategy and cooperation projects);
- **The assessment of the added value** generated through the delivery mechanism and the animation, i.e., the **LEADER method when properly applied** (e.g. changes in peoples´ behaviour leading to the improvement of social capital and local governance, as well as to enhanced results, all of which eventually would contribute to structural changes in the LAG area).

What are the implications for self-assessment/evaluation if LEADER is part of a multi-funded CLLD strategy?

The multi-fund character of CLLD has implications for the self-assessment/ evaluation at the LAG level, particularly because all the operations supported under the various funds are contributing to the same strategy, and should create synergies towards the achievement of the objectives/results. In this context, it will be challenging to disentangle the effects arising from the different operations/funds if they are all contributing to the same strategy.

When evaluating multi-funded CLLD strategies, several aspects could be assessed: the articulation/complementarity of the application of the several funds in the same territory (in sum, coherence), the effectiveness of the governance and coordination process when managing several

funds etc. To assess these aspects, it is advisable to develop appropriate evaluation elements.

Additionally, the **extent to which the related ESI Funds enabled the LAG to address the needs and potentials** could be further explored. This assumes that the integrated and multi-sectoral dimension of the strategy will be reinforced by the multi-fund approach, and that cooperation will benefit from new partners from other funds.

These guidelines focus on CLLD strategies funded exclusively by the EAFRD (i.e. LAGs funded only by the EAFRD).

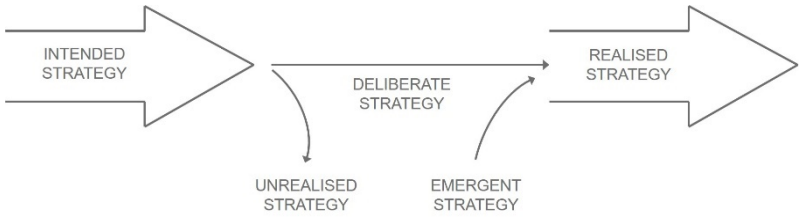
1.2.3 Key terms: How we understand them and how they relate to each other

This chapter introduces key terms, which are useful for the further understanding of the guidelines. More terms are defined in the glossary (see Annex).

Strategy

*Although the term **strategy** can be defined in many ways, it usually comprises (i) a long-term vision, (ii) short and medium term goals and (iii) optional pathways to reach these goals in a foreseeable future. A well-explained strategy should set out (i) WHAT shall be achieved, with and for (ii) WHOM and give clear indications on (iii) HOW that shall happen. Henry Mintzberg makes a very useful distinction between the **intended strategy**, which is represented by the CLLD Strategy document, and the **realised strategy**, which is what actually has been implemented in the end[29].*

Figure 6. Types of strategies



The realised strategy is the result of the intended minus the unrealised strategy, which get discarded, plus the emergent strategy, which gets brought in over time (see figure 6[30]). Even if the LAG has undertaken some revision to better reflect the deliberate strategy during implementation, it will not be fully consistent with what has actually been done in the end. The evaluator refers to the intended strategy mainly in the coherence and relevance check. For the evaluation of the LAG's performance and the CLLD Strategy's outcomes, the evaluator should look at the realised strategy, and assess if it derives from the written (original or revised) document. S/he will have to work on adapting the intervention logic during the first steps of the evaluation.

This is analogous to what happens at the programme level: The Member State or region provides a strategic framework in order to explain and break-down the European Commision rules for LEADER measure 19 and for providing support for LAG's operations. How the measure is implemented will always differ from what has been written in the original documents.

When the guidelines refer to the term strategy, the default reading should be "realised strategy" because this is the main concern of any evaluation (with the notable exception of the ex ante evaluation).

[29] Mintzberg, H. (2008): Strategy Safari. The complete guide through the wilds of strategic management. Pearson Education, Canada.
[30] ibid

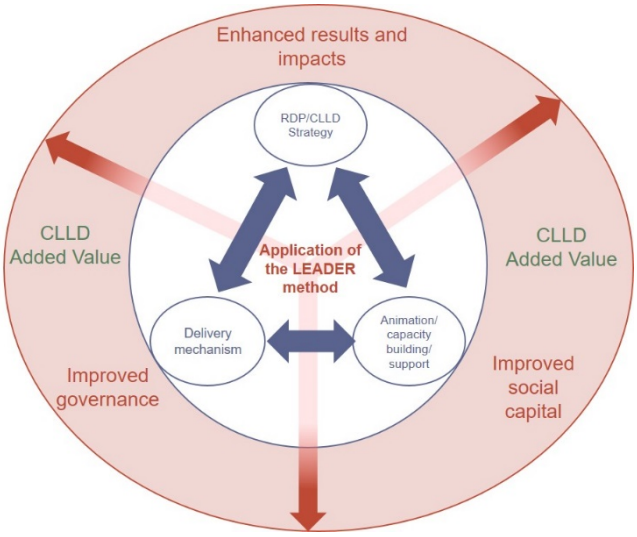
Added Value of LEADER/CLLD

The conceptual framework offered by these guidelines builds on the following assumptions:

The added value of LEADER/CLLD is defined as the benefits that are obtained through the proper application of the LEADER method, compared to those benefits, which would have been obtained without applying this method (see glossary, annex 1). The added value of LEADER/CLLD manifests itself in:

- ***Improved social capital**, which is understood as a multidimensional concept, which includes features of social organisations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (see glossary, annex 1).*
- ***Improved governance** comprises the institutions, processes and mechanisms through which public, economic and civil society stakeholders articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences in order to manage public affairs at all levels in a collaborative manner.*
- ***Enhanced results and impacts** of programme/strategy implementation, as compared to implementation without the LEADER method.*

Figure 7. Added value of LEADER/CLLD



The added value of LEADER is generated through

***(1) The implementation of the programme/ strategy**, namely the implementation of Measure 19 of the RDP and of the CLLD Strategy, i.e. the operationalisation in form of projects and the results and impacts they produce;*

***(2) The RDP and LAG delivery mechanism**, i.e. the set of rules, procedures and administrative arrangements, which ensure that strategy objectives become concrete actions on the ground (see glossary, annex 1).*

***(3) Capacity building support/animation**: The support the MA provides to encourage and enable the beneficiaries, directly or via the NRN, in using Measure 19 of the RDP, as well as the LAG's capacity to animate (i.e. all its operations which are not directly project-related, aiming to raise the awareness, readiness, cooperation and networking capabilities of the local people to contribute to developing their area).*

All three components, the implementation of the programme/strategy, the capacity building support/animation provided, and the delivery mechanism at both levels are intimately intertwined. These three elements form an inseparable whole. With the help of these distinctions we will obtain, and that is the main point, three different perspectives, three different looks on the reality. While the delivery mechanism is about rules, procedures and controls, the animation is about developing capacities at individual, organisational and societal levels and "soft" forms of support. Support activities can be directly project-related or be rather system-related. Making these distinctions provides the evaluator with a more comprehensive picture of what is happening on the ground, and with a richer conceptual frame to identify the factors, which in the end will have led, or led not, to LEADER added value.

The LEADER method is the combined application of its principles:

(1) area-based local development strategies;
(2) bottom-up approach;
(3) public-private partnerships (e.g. LAGs),
(4) multi-sector approach;
(5) innovation;
(6) networking;
(7) territorial cooperation.

These operational principles are closely intertwined. It is hard to imagine that one single principle (e.g. the multi-sectoral approach, would yield its potential in cases where the other principals are neglected. Exploring theapplication of the LEADER method from the perspective of all the seven principles will provide the full picture of how consistently the method has been applied.

2 EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD AT THE RDP LEVEL

2.1 What and how to evaluate at the RDP level?

The process of evaluating the LEADER measure is similar to the evaluation of the RDP[31]. The working steps for **preparing, structuring and conducting the evaluation** of LEADER/CLLD can be carried out together with those of the wider RDP evaluation activities. However, a separate stand-alone evaluation of LEADER/CLLD is also possible. Reporting on the LEADER/CLLD evaluation is part of the reporting of the overall RDP evaluation findings (unless a stand-alone evaluation is carried out).

The MA will decide in the evaluation plan:

- **What will be evaluated** in relation to LEADER/CLLD?
- **Which activities** will be conducted in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (e.g. how the data and information will be collected)?
- **How will the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level be linked to the LAG level?**
- **How will the evaluation be conducted?** By whom and in what form? As part of the RDP evaluation or as a stand-alone evaluation?
- **Which capacities and resources** will be allocated to conduct the evaluation?
- **When will the evaluation be conducted** (in 2017, 2019, ex post)?

Figure 8. Evaluation cycle of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level

Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

[31] see Guidelines on the Assessment of RPD results https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

The evaluation plan may also include programme-specific evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators on LEADER/CLLD. The evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level can include the following aspects (see chapter 1.2.1):

- Assessment of the LEADER/CLLD primary and secondary contributions to RDP FA objectives and assessment of contributions to achieving the Union Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (mandatory)
- Assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism (recommended)
- Assessment of the added value of LEADER/CLLD (recommended)

The assessment of the mandatory and recommended aspects is described step-by-step in the following chapters.

2.2 The evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD contributions to the RDP FA objectives and contributions to achieving the Union Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (mandatory)

2.2.1 What to assess?

The LEADER/CLLD measure contains several sub-measures: the preparation and implementation of the CLLD strategy, the running of LAG and the animation/capacity building and cooperation projects among LAGs and other partners.

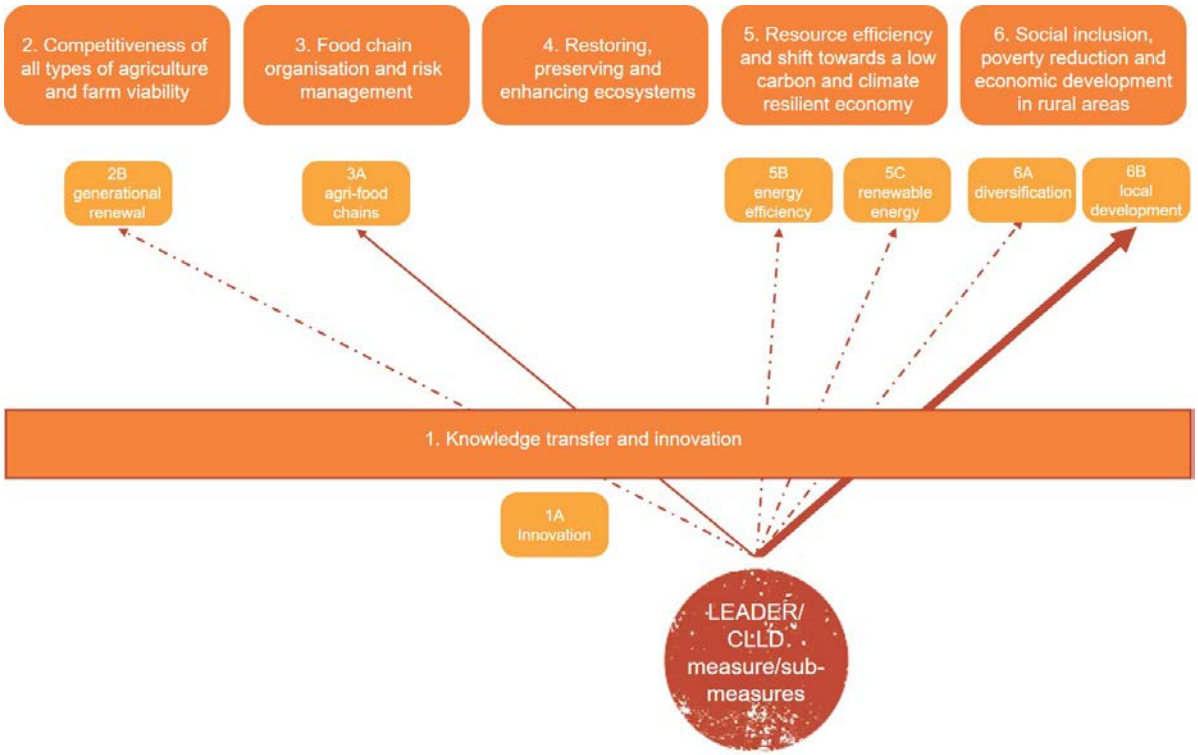
The evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD contributions to the achievement of the objectives under the FAs and RD priorities concerns the measure's effectiveness (to what extent has the measure contributed to the achievement of the objectives?) and efficiency (at what cost?). This requires the calculation of the contributions of the operations implemented under LEADER/CLLD. Ideally (it is **not mandatory**), the evaluation should also quantify the **secondary contributions** to other FAs, to show a more complete picture of the achievements of LEADER/CLLD.

- **Primary contributions** to the hierarchy of RDP objectives are expected in relation to "local development in rural areas" (FA 6B under which the LEADER/CLLD is programmed by default).
- **Secondary contributions** of LEADER/CLLD are contributions of operations implemented via CLLD strategies to any other FA than 6B. Two types of secondary contributions can be expected:
  - **Predominant secondary contributions** to FAs to which the operations contribute significantly;
  - **Additional secondary contributions** to FAs to which the operations contribute not significantly.

The following examples help to distinguish primary and secondary (predominant and additional) contributions of LEADER/CLLD.

Example 1

First, the operations implemented through LEADER/CLLD, which primarily contribute to FA 6B (local development) are shown in a full solid line in the figure below. Second, they contribute to FA 3A (agri-food chain, promotion of local markets and short supply circuits) shown in a full thin line in the figure below. Additional secondary contributions can be expected for the FA 6A (diversification and job creation – interrupted line), 1A (promoting innovative operations), 2B (supporting young farmers for non-agriculture diversification), 5B (encouraging energy efficient projects) and 5C (supporting production of renewable energy via diversification).



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

Example 2:

Case 1: *A project was launched to improve tourism services in a LAG territory in a High Nature Value (HNV) area that includes the training of local service providers on the environmental value of HNV areas.*

Primary contribution *to local development through the provision of improved tourism services (programmed by default under FA 6B).*

Secondary contributions *to the knowledge base of rural areas (linked to FA 1A) and to the protection of biodiversity in High Nature Value areas (linked to FA 4A):*

- ***predominant secondary*** *contribution to the knowledge base (FA 1A)*
- ***additional secondary*** *contribution to biodiversity (FA 4A)***.**

Case 2:

A project supported the reconstruction and equipping of a building with wood processing technology on a farm. This project increased the productive base of the farm and created one job, while the biomass from the wood processing has been used to produce bio-fuel.

Primary contribution *to local development (programmed by default under FA 6B).*

Secondary contributions *to the production of renewable energy (link to FA 5C) and to the performance of the farm (link to FA 2A):*

- ***predominant secondary*** *contribution to the production of renewable energy (FA 5C)*
- ***additional secondary*** *contribution to the improvement of the farm's performance (FA 2A)*

The evaluation of LEADER/CLLD should also consider assessing the **contribution of LEADER/CLLD** to the **thematic objectives** (notably, TO1, TO3, TO8 and TO9[32]) and subsequently to the **Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**[33]. LEADER/CLLD contributes to the thematic objectives through its input to (a) the objectives of the RDP priorities FAs, and (b) the CLLD objectives defined in the Partnership Agreements.

While for (a) the contribution to FAs is evaluated during the assessment of RDP results, for (b) the assessment is done in the evaluations of the Partnership Agreements through the evaluation of RDPs. When LEADER/CLLD and the instruments from other OPs funded by the ERDF, ESF or EMFF are implemented together under one CLLD strategy, the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency at the programme level should include an analysis of the complementarity and synergies between various CLLD instruments.

Figure 9. Vertical and horizontal links between the ESI Fund's implementation levels

Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

[32] Article 9 of Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013: TO1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation, TO3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agriculture sector (EAFRD), and of the fishery and aquaculture sector (EMFF), TO8: promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility TO9: promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

[33] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

2.2.2 Step-by-step: how to assess the contributions of LEADER/CLLD to policy objectives?

Step 1: Check the consistency of the common evaluation elements with the LEADER/CLLD intervention logic

The first step is to analyse the intervention logic of the LEADER/CLLD measure inside of the RDP and to check whether the common evaluation elements (evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators) are consistent with it[34].

There is one CEQ associated with FA 6B,[35] under which LEADER/CLLD is primarily programmed, *CEQ 17: "To what extent have RDP interventions supported local development in rural areas?".* This CEQ has six proposed common judgment criteria, which are linked to three common result/target indicators[36].

Table 1. Judgment criteria and indicators for CEQ 17: "To what extent have RDP interventions supported local development in rural areas?"

Judgment criteria	Indicators
• Services and local infrastructure in rural areas have improved • Access to local infrastructure and services have increased in rural areas • Rural people have participated in local actions • Rural people have benefited from local actions • Employment opportunities have been created via local development strategies • Size of rural territory and population covered by LAGs has increased	• % of rural population covered by local development strategies (FA 6B - result indicator) • Jobs created in supported projects (FA 6B - result indicator)

The CMES contains the following common output and target indicators for LEADER/CLLD.

Table 2. Common output and target indicators for LEADER

Common indicator	Output	Target
Population covered by LAG	O18	T21
Number of LAGs selected	O19	
Number of Leader projects supported	O20	
Number of cooperation projects supported	O21	
Number and types of project promoters	O22	
Unique identification number of LAG involved in cooperation project	O23	
Number of jobs created		T23

[34] *For a detailed guidance on the consistency check see previous guidance documents, e.g.* "Capturing the success of your RDP: Guidelines for the ex post evaluations 2007-2013" and "Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017"

[35] WD: Common Evaluation Questions for Rural Development programmes 2014-2020, ,,

https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/european-evaluation-helpdesk-rural-development/evaluation-helpdesks-publications/guidance_en

[36] WD: Common evaluation questions for 2014-2020 RDPs, https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/european-evaluation-helpdesk-rural-development/evaluation-helpdesks-publications/guidance_en

LEADER/CLLD also contributes to other FAs than 6B. Consequently, besides CEQ 17, all the CEQs linked to other FAs to which LEADER/CLLD contributes should also be taken into consideration when checking the consistency. For example, if in a given RDP LEADER/CLLD also contributes to FA 6A, the following evaluation question will apply: *CEQ 16: "To what extent have RDP interventions supported the diversification, creation and development of small enterprises and job creation?".* In this case, all the judgment criteria and result indicators (jobs created in supported projects) associated with CEQ 16 will also form part of the consistency check.

The common evaluation elements provide a minimum basis to allow for the assessment of primary and secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD and ensure the comparability of evaluation results across the EU. However, they are not sufficient to fully capture all types of primary and secondary contributions. It therefore may be necessary to develop **additional evaluation elements** (e.g. additional judgment criteria and additional LEADER/CLLD related indicators (see examples below)).

Example - the common indicator does not capture all the issues expressed in the CEQ

If LEADER/CLLD shows secondary contributions to FA 6A, the common indicator "jobs created in supported projects" only addresses one component of CEQ16, namely the one related to employment. This indicator does not capture the contributions to SME creation nor to diversification, which are the other components of CEQ 16.

How to deal with this situation?

In order to answer CEQ no. 16, it is possible to use **additional indicators** as proposed in the Working paper: common evaluation questions for RDPs 2014-2020:

- % of small enterprises in the non-agricultural sector created with the RDP support (diversification)
- % of small enterprises created with the RDP support (SME creation

Example – the common indicator does not capture all the effects caused by LEADER/CLLD in the same issue (employment)

Target indicator T23 (= result indicator R24) is defined as number of jobs created in Full Time Equivalents (FTE) through support for the implementation of operations under the CLLD Strategy funded through the RDP under LEADER. This implies that the indicator **counts jobs created through the project** as suggested in the application form, at the time of completion of the project and as validated via the sample of completed projects later in the programming period. The indicator **does not cover** maintained jobs.

For example: A farmer sets up a shop and seeks support from the LAG through the CLLD strategy. He creates one **new job which lasts at least 12 months** (1 FTE) as mentioned in the application form. Due to the success of the shop, the farmer also creates an **additional new (part-time) job**, which represents 0.5 FTE (1 person working part-time (50%) for at least 12 months). This means that the project generates a total of 1.5 FTE of newly created jobs. This value (1.5 FTE) is monitored with the target indicator T23 and confirmed through an ad hoc survey conducted by the paying agency after project completion.

To count **maintained jobs,** evaluators would have to use an **additional indicator.** For instance: "number of jobs maintained due to the project".

Step 2: Develop programme-specific evaluation elements

While additional evaluation elements (see previous step) are needed to complement the common ones, there may also be the **need to develop programme-specific evaluation elements** for capturing programme-specific effects of LEADER/CLLD or to break down the rather general CEQs.

For LAGs and MAs this is an opportunity to link the two levels of evaluation, by developing a better understanding of the local level effects and their contributions to the RDP level. The development of evaluation elements helps to make the LEADER/CLLD intervention logic more explicit and to show the importance of the approach and its added value.

The MA may have developed programme-specific evaluation questions and indicators already in the programming stage and included them in the RDP evaluation plan. However, the MA or evaluators can still develop them when preparing the evaluation[37].

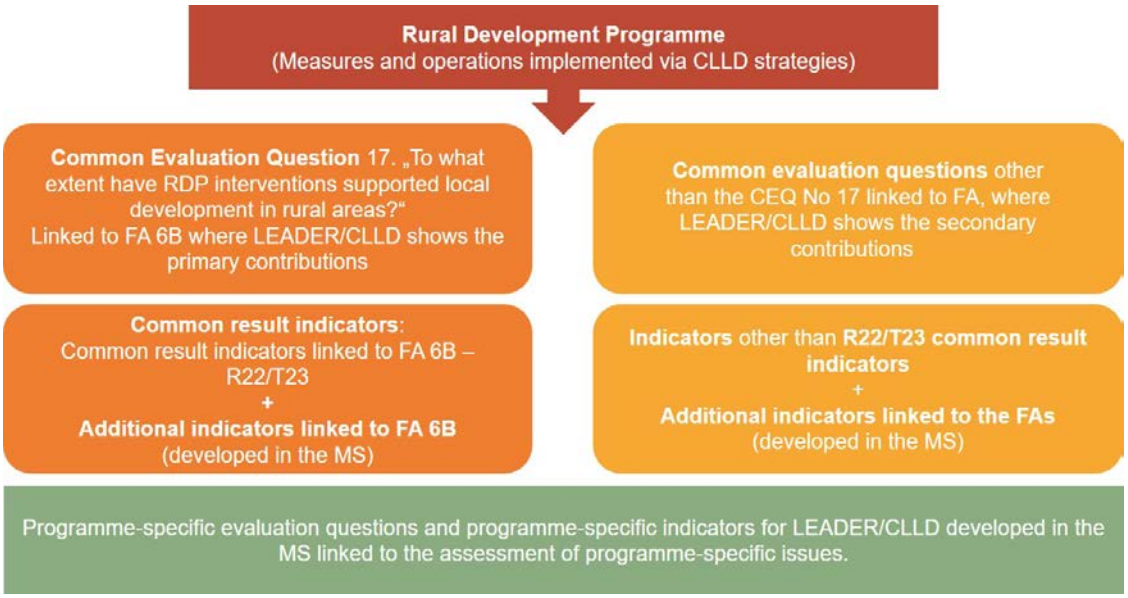
Programme-specific evaluation elements should be linked to:

- Programme-specific FAs to which LEADER/CLLD contributes (e.g. economic use of forestry, or quality of food);

Programme-specific objectives to which the LEADER/CLLD measure contributes (e.g. particular target groups or sectors which LEADER/CLLD might focus on);

- LEADER/CLLD related evaluation topics and cross-cutting issues to which LEADER/CLLD contributes (described in section 9 of the RDP, e.g. innovation, environment and climate change);
- Programme-specific objectives towards the Partnership Agreement with LEADER/CLLD contribution (e.g. TO9 promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination);
- LEADER/CLLD added value.

Figure 10. The complete picture of the evaluation scope



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

[37] Detailed information on developing programme-specific evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators can be found in existing guidance (“Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017”,http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en).

The following box shows examples of programme-specific evaluation questions[38].

Rationale for the development of LEADER/CLLD-specific evaluation questions:

The evaluation elements listed in the table show a mix of RDP objectives, which LEADER/CLLD can specifically contribute to. Therefore, in addition to the CEQs for the respective FAs, programme-specific evaluation questions may be developed to measure the contribution of LEADER/CLLD to territorial development in rural areas.

Evaluation question	Judgment criteria	Result indicators
Possible breakdown for FA 6A "To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to the creation of sustainable employment opportunities for young people and women?"	• Employment opportunities have been created	• No. of employed, including self-employed, for more than 6 months, under 25 years • No. of employed, including self-employed, for more than 6 months, women
Possible breakdown for FA 6A or 3A "To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to increasing the added value of local products?"	• Added value of local products has increased	• Increase of the number of local products finalised (produced, processed and packaged) • Increase on the margin of local product's producers in the final price of local products
Possible specific intervention of the RDP "To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to the transition towards a zero-carbon society?"	• Renewable energy supply has increased (using solar, wind and water power) • More waste is recycled • Resource productivity has increased	• Increase of production of energy from farms (biofuels, wind, solar, …) • Increase of production of energy by community owned projects (wind, solar, …) • Increase of waste recycled in rural communities • Increase of energy savings in leisure and tourism projects

[38] Further information on how to develop programme-specific evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators can be found in the Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017.http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

The following box shows examples of LEADER/CLLD related programme-specific evaluation questions[39]

The synthesis of the ex ante evaluations 2014-2020 has identified the most common categories of LEADER/CLLD objectives. On this basis, some examples of PSEQs are shown:

Examples of LEADER/CLLD objectives	Examples of PSEQs
Active dealing with demographic challenges, family and care structures (e.g. DE-Brandenburg & Berlin)	"To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to increased provision of social care for dependents?"
Conservation and care of the natural heritage and the countryside (e.g. DE-Baden-Wurttemberg)	"To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to improved conservation of natural heritage?"
Improvement of supply chain and local production systems, in relation to food, agriculture, craft and fishery (e.g. IT-Bolzano)	"To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to better local production systems?"
Promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction (e.g. UK-Northern Ireland)	"To what extent have LEADER/CLLD operations contributed to social inclusion of disadvantaged groups?"

Step 3: Identify evaluation approaches and methods for LEADER/CLLD

LEADER/CLLD operations that are implemented through CLLD strategies are included together with other RDP operations into the calculation of common, additional and programme-specific output, result and impact indicators. *Output indicators* are used to measure direct outputs of LEADER/CLLD operations. *Result indicators* measure the primary and secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD to FAs and the achievements of their objectives. *Impact indicators* are typically used in the overall assessment of RDP effects on rural areas and in the assessment of the achievements of regional, national and EU rural development objectives.

When deciding on methods, the following considerations should be made:

Table 3. Identification of quantitative and qualitative methods

	Quantitative methods	Qualitative methods
When to apply?	To capture the primary and secondary contributions of the LEADER/CLLD measure to the achievement of the objectives of the FAs.	In cases of no or low uptake under the CLLD strategies. For the initial analysis and the triangulation of quantitative findings.
How?	A sampling of beneficiaries, which carry out operations under the CLLD strategy and which have been flagged as providing secondary contributions (both predominant and additional) to specific FAs. Data collected via sampling are used to calculate contributions of LEADER/CLLD operations to values of indicators linked to the FAs, where contributions are expected.	Use the tools presented in the Guidelines: Assessment of RDP Results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017, PART III, Annex 10, (e.g. interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries, focus groups, and case studies).
Further information	Guidelines "Assessment of RDP Results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017", PART III, Annex 11.	Guidelines "Assessment of RDP Results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017", PART III, Annex 10.

[39] http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/rural-development-reports/2015/ex_ante_rdp_synthesis_2014_2020/fulltext_en.pdf

Step 4: Collect data and information

Data and information for evaluating LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level should be collected for the:

- Output and result/target indicators for FA 6B;
- Result/target indicators for the FAs to which LEADER/CLLD shows secondary contributions;
- Common context indicators (these are pertinent for several FAs);
- Additional and programme-specific indicators on LEADER/CLLD;
- Impact indicators at the later stages of the programming period.

Additional qualitative information, needed for answering the evaluation questions, should also be collected.

The operations database records data for common output and target indicators on operations implemented through the CLLD strategies and contributing primarily and secondarily to the rural development FAs (see table 2)[40]. Ideally, the MA should provide a shared IT system, which is able to collect and process relevant data and information for the monitoring and evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP and local levels.

The MA can use the operations database for the assessment of primary and secondary contributions, for the collection of data for complementary result indicators and for additional and programme-specific indicators linked to LEADER/CLLD. For example, if LEADER/CLLD operations contribute to the FA 6A and the MA is using the additional indicator "number of created SMEs", the required data for this additional indicator can be collected via the operations database as well[41].

An example of a LEADER/CLLD operations database can be found here.

Step 5: Analyse information and answer evaluation questions

The collected data are used to calculate the necessary indicators (common, additional and programme-specific). These are the indicators linked to FAs to which LEADER/CLLD contributes primarily or secondarily and those related to common and programme-specific evaluation questions. The values of indicators and the collected qualitative information are then analysed and used for answering the evaluation questions. This information is also needed for reporting the contributions of LEADER/CLLD to the RDP's results/impacts at the RDP, national and EU levels. This helps to draw lessons for designing and implementing LEADER/CLLD more effectively and efficiently.

[40] The Working Document "Data item list for Pillar II Operations database"

[41] Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for evaluation in 2017, Annex 11 – Fiches for answering the CEQ 1 – 21, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

Do

- Identify the support, which actors responsible for M&E may need to fulfil their obligations in terms of data provision
- Specify and plan capacity building activities for both the MAs and LAGs, (e.g. on the use of the shared operations database)
- Develop additional evaluation elements if the common elements are not sufficient to fully capture all types of primary and secondary contributions
- Develop programme-specific evaluation questions if there are specific LEADER/CLLD contributions to programme-specific FAs and RDP specific objectives or specific LEADER/CLLD related evaluation topics
- Start the collection of data as early as possible to minimise data gaps and comply with timing
- Consider also qualitative indicators

Don't

- Underestimate the need for capacity building on data collection, recording and provision
- Develop overly complex databases
- Underestimate the time needed for data collection and recording
- Develop evaluation questions that are at a high level in the intervention logic, e.g. "to what extent does LEADER/CLLD contribute to smart growth?"
- Only think of numbers. Many of the LEADER/CLLD achievements are intangible or discernible only in the long-term

2.3 The evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism (recommended)

2.3.1 What to assess?

The **LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism** plays a major role in the application of the LEADER method. The delivery mechanism is defined as "the set of rules, procedures and individual steps employed to translate the objectives of the policy into the final implementation of actions by the recipients of the funds"[42].

The rules and procedures to implement LEADER/CLLD are established first at the RDP level by the MA. LAGs also play a role in shaping the rules and procedures, when adapting them to the specific local needs and conditions. For example, a MA could provide a minimum set of measures, which are implemented by LAG specific selection criteria (see chapter 3.1.).

The LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism significantly affects how much added value is generated. For example, if two Member States employ different rules, and deadlines for transnational cooperation (TNC) project applications, it makes it difficult to prepare and run TNC projects. Under such conditions the cooperation principle is threatened and, consequently, also the LEADER method. Another example could be, if a Member State limits the types of operations to be implemented via CLLD strategies, this could threaten the bottom up, area based and multi-sector approach in the development of the LAG area.

It is recommended to assess whether the RDP delivery mechanism allowed for the implementation of the LEADER method (to the full extent of its 7 principles). For this purpose, it is necessary to look at the rules, procedures and individual delivery steps. **The assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism is not mandatory**. It is, however, important for the overall LEADER/CLLD evaluation, and also provides information for the evaluation of the added value.

The assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism helps stakeholders to understand in what ways the rules and procedures affected the application of the LEADER method.

[42] See ENRD (2011): Thematic Working Group 4 - Delivery Mechanisms of Rural Development Policy. Final Report

2.3.2 Step by step: how to assess the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism?

Step 1: Develop programme-specific evaluation elements

The evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism asks, "**To what extent has the RDP delivery mechanism ensured the application of the LEADER method?"** At the RDP level, it focuses on those delivery stages that are under the control of the MA. The figure below displays examples of stages and steps in the delivery mechanism.

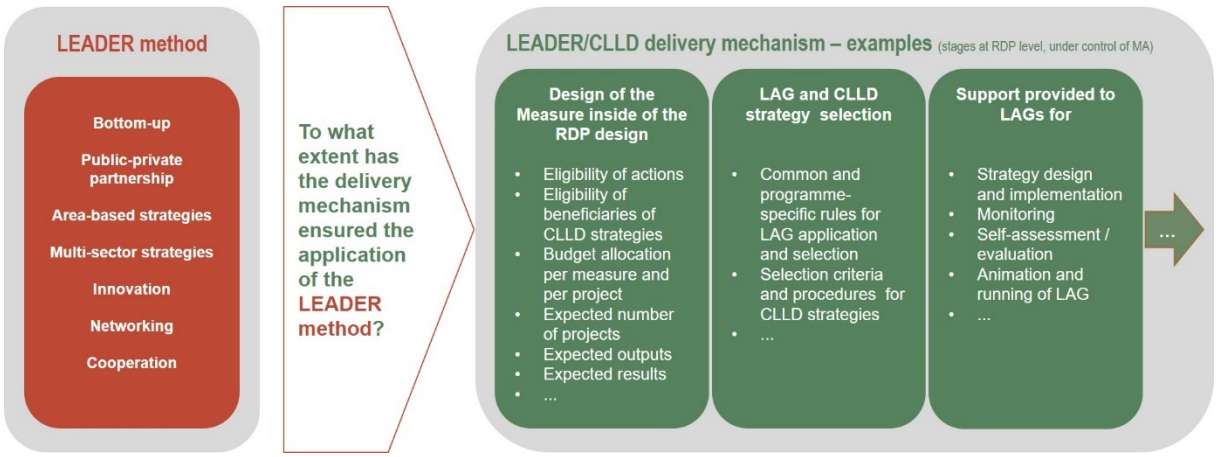
To assess the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism, the following working steps are suggested:

- **Specify the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism**. It should be considered that the delivery mechanism of Measure 19 is on the one hand part of the overall delivery mechanism of the RDP and, on the other hand, it has to incorporate the LEADER method.
- **Define programme-specific criteria** in a way that expresses an "ideal application" of the LEADER method, to collect evidence, provide judgments and find suitable indicators. These will be mainly output indicators, although it might be useful to include some process indicators (e.g. average duration of standard procedures).

Here are some examples of how the delivery mechanism put in place and run by the Managing Authority (possibly in collaboration with other intermediary bodies and the NRN) could be explored:

- To what extent and how did the MA influence the formation and delimitation of LAG areas?
- To what extent and how have local actors (e.g. LAGs from the previous period) participated in the design of the LEADER measure and the delivery mechanism?

Figure 11. Linking the LEADER method with the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism at the RDP level



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

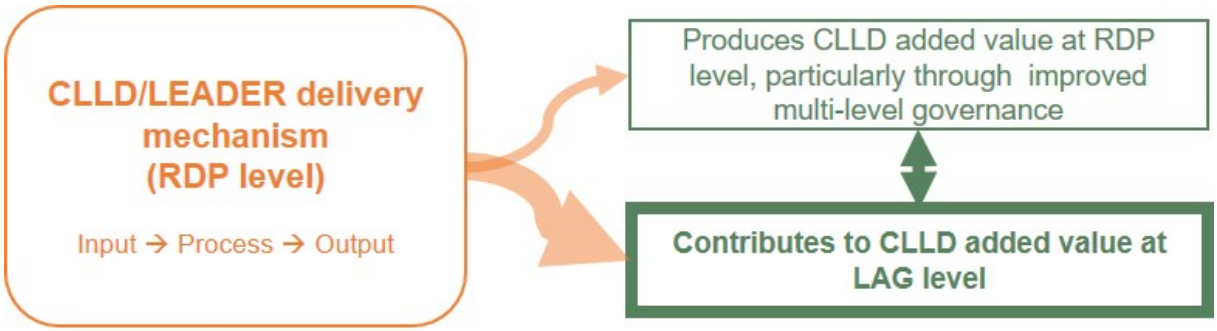
- What criteria for local partnerships have been applied in addition to the EU requirements?
- How was the selection process of CLLD Strategies designed and organised (communication, eligibility criteria, specific consideration of innovation, horizontal EU themes or national issues)?
- What role did the MA play in the implementation period, particularly in the designation of priority themes and in the process of project approval, and how did that affect the decision-making processes at the LAG level?
- Which provisions were made to ensure networking and cooperation?
- To what extent and in which ways did the MA provide support to develop LAG capacities, particularly new ones (1) In the submission phase (2) in the implementation phase?

Most effects of the CLLD delivery mechanism at the RDP level will materialise at the local level, allowing for an assessment of the influence the RDP delivery mechanism had on the application of the LEADER method at the local level and on the outcomes of the LAG's operations in general. What is considered as an output at the RDP level - the rules, frameworks, support provided to LAGs etc. constituting the delivery mechanism - turns into an input at the LAG level.

If further effects are generated will mainly depend on how the LAGs use these inputs (e.g. in shaping the delivery mechanism at the local level and implementing the CLLD Strategy, while meeting the requirements of the LEADER method). This means that the further outcomes of the programme delivery mechanism are embodied in the added value of the LEADER method. Therefore, to explore the results, we refer to table 3 in chapter 2.4.2, where we present an example of programme-specific evaluation elements aiming to assess the CLLD added value.

Recursive effects on **multi-level governance at RDP level** should also be taken into consideration: The more the interactions between RDP and LAG levels, including other players such as NRN and intermediary bodies, are subject to ongoing reflection and the learning processes, the more capacities will be built up to manage complex multi-level governance successfully and in the ways that foster the art of sound decision-making under the terms of shared responsibilities across levels. These possible effects on social capital among stakeholders and multi-level governance can be addressed with RDP level result indicators.

Figure 12. Possible effects of the RDP delivery mechanism across levels



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

Step 2: Identify and select evaluation methods

Evaluation methods, which are most adequate to assess the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism are primarily of a qualitative nature. The strong socio-economic dimension reflected in the CLLD principles, suggests that a participative evaluation approach can be very suitable. **A participatory evaluation** of the delivery mechanism should involve those stakeholders who can provide useful information about the effects of LEADER/CLLD and the application of the CLLD principles (Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, NRNs, LAGs and others).

The methods proposed for this assessment are inter alia:

a) standard evaluation methods, such as interviews, surveys and case studies;

b) participatory methods, such as Most Significant Change Monitoring, Potential and Bottleneck Analysis, 'Plugging the leaks' or 'Local multiplier 3'[43];

c) innovative participatory methods, such as the MAPP method, which is well suited for analysing the CLLD principles in comparison to standard RDP measures;

d) network analysis methods, such as Social Network Analysis or Social Accounting[44].

Step 3: Collect data and information

The required information for the evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism is defined by the specific evaluation methods used for its assessment. Additional information may also be collected through qualitiative methods by the evaluator through focus groups, face-to-face interviews, etc.

Step 4: Analyse information

The collected data and information from stakeholders are analysed and interpreted with a view to judge on the actual application of the LEADER method in each RDP. The findings can be used in the answers to programme-specific evaluation questions linked to the CLLD principles.

Do

- Consider the CLLD principles as an integral part of the implementation of LEADER/CLLD
- Use mostly qualitative methods to answer the evaluation question
- Consult existing guidance on a broad range of useful participative methods

Don't

- Isolate the CLLD principles from each other without considering them as a coherent whole of the LEADER method
- Underestimate the usefulness of qualitative methods for evaluating the LEADER method

[43] These methods are well described with examples in the Helpdesk Working Paper 'Capturing Impacts of Leader and of measures to improve quality of life in rural areas', July 2010, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/fms/pdf/98275CF6-C4FD-1908-07DE-1F1EA065BC29.pdf

[44] Idem

2.4 The evaluation of the added value of LEADER/CLLD (recommended)

2.4.1 What to assess?

The added value of LEADER/CLLD is defined as the benefits that are obtained through the proper application of the LEADER method. At the RDP level, it is measured through the assessment of (a) the improvement of social capital among involved stakeholders, (b) changes in the RDP governance due to LEADER/CLLD, and (c) the positive effects of the LEADER method on the results and impacts of the RDP.

a) **Social capital** is a multidimensional concept which includes: "features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit". Social capital draws on processes which are crucial in community development and the functioning of a cohesive and inclusive society.

The **assessment of social capital** as an added value of the LEADER method at the RDP level considers social processes, capacities and relationships among all stakeholders involved. For example, the proper application of the LEADER method can:

- strengthen the **mutual support and trust** among the MA, PA, NRN, LAGs and their beneficiaries and enhance the participation of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of a bottom-up approach.
- lead to genuine partnerships between stakeholders at all levels, **shared norms and values** and to the facilitation of effective and efficient communication.
- allow for the **enhancement of knowledge, skills and information**, through well established networking and cooperation among involved stakeholders, which is needed to implement LEADER/CLLD and to accomplish its objectives.

b) **Multi-level governance** is an important concept for the implementation of EU policies[45]. It is characterised by frequent and complex interactions between various governmental and non-state actors that are mobilised in cohesion policy-making and in EU policy in general.

Multi-level governance in the context of LEADER/CLLD can be understood as the horizontal and vertical interactions among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved in the implementation of LEADER/CLLD at the EU, national, regional and local levels. These interactions can take the form of operationalised and institutionalised cooperation when LEADER/CLLD is designed and implemented in line with the LEADER method.

The assessment of multi-level governance as an added value of LEADER/CLLD should, for example, account for the following:

- **enhancing the shared management of LEADER/CLLD**:
  - between different levels (vertical) e.g. between the MA, LAGs, and NRNs to facilitate broader participation of the public sector and NGOs/civil society as equal partners;
  - at the same level (horizontal) e.g. between the MA and PA to facilitate the smooth implementation of LEADER/CLLD; between MAs of other operational programmes in order to improve collaboration and governance between various ESI funds to reach CLLD objectives under the partnership agreement (e.g. shared use of an operations database), between LAGs in order to facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge.

[45] http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Pages/multi-level-governance1.aspx

- **innovative governance practices** in LEADER/CLLD (e.g. participatory public-private working groups for developing national/regional guidelines for the design of LEADER/CLLD).

c) **Enhanced RDP results and impacts:** LEADER/CLLD represents a different form of implementing the EAFRD: It uses the LEADER method for addressing local needs and contributing to the EU/ national/regional rural development policy objectives. CLLD strategies are developed by LAGs and therefore allow for better tailored interventions. LAGs are entrusted with decision making power on what, where, to whom and how the funds will be used to address local needs and to meet the relevant objectives.

When applying the LEADER method, added value will also be generated in terms of **enhanced RDP results and impacts.** For measuring this aspect, the following could be considered:

- The contributions to achieve rural poliy objectives can be increased with a more effective and better integrated approach in targeting the needs of rural areas.
- The proper application of the bottom-up approach can generate **more sustainable jobs**. These jobs are more suited to local needs, provide better income opportunities for the local population and help to stop depopulation of rural areas.
- The proper application of the innovation principle can help to generate more **innovative products**. With these it may be possible to reach the niche markets inside and outside of the CLLD territory.

The assessment of the added value of LEADER/CLLD is not mandatory, yet, it is very useful. It helps to understand what the EAFRD, if implemented through the LEADER method, is producing in addition to the effects that are generated through the regular way of implementing rural development measures.

2.4.2 Step-by-step: how to measure the added value of LEADER/CLLD?

Step 1: Check for specific objectives regarding added value of LEADER/CLLD in the intervention logic and develop programme-specific evaluation elements

There are no common evaluation elements for evaluating the added value of LEADER/CLLD. Member States should therefore develop them to assess this aspect. While this is ideally done at the beginning of the programming period, it can still be done at a later stage when RDP evaluators formulate respective evaluation elements, which can be further consulted with stakeholders. **Programme-specific evaluation questions** should cover the following dimensions:

1) the improvement of social capital generated among involved stakeholders;
2) the multi-level governance of LEADER/CLLD;
3) the enhancement of the RDP's results and impacts due to the application of the LEADER method.

Examples of programme-specific evaluation elements for the assessment of the added-value of LEADER/CLLD

Evaluation question	Judgment criteria	Result indicators (quantitative and qualitative)
To what extent has LEADER/CLLD led to the generation of added value at the RDP level?	The implementation of LEADER/CLLD led to the improvement of social capital	• Improvement of the mutual support and trust among the MA, PA, NRN, LAGs (shared norms and values) • Enhancement of the participation of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of LEADER/CLLD • Increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of communications between stakeholders • Enhancement of the capacity (knowledge, skills and information) of stakeholders involved in LEADER/CLLD implementation (e.g. strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation).
	The implementation of LEADER/CLLD led to the establishment of an effective multi-level governance system	• Development of innovative governance practices • Improved coordination between different levels of governance • Improved quality of interactions between relevant institutions • Improved quality of interactions between public and non-public stakeholders
	The RDP's results were enhanced due to the implementation of the LEADER method	• Increase in the capacities of the stakeholders involved in LEADER/CLLD • RDP results have been enhanced (same result indicators as for RDP evaluation, used to measure the effects of operations implemented via M19 compared with those effects of operations implemented via other Measures) *Note: consider only FAs with secondary effects from M19.*

Before formulating the programme-specific evaluation elements, it is important to define the added value expected at the RDP level in all three dimensions. This concerns the formulation of objectives to be achieved through the added value of LEADER/CLLD and the definition of evaluation topics and related programme-specific evaluation elements.

Step 2 and 3: Identify and select evaluation methods/approaches, collect data and information

After having defined the above-mentioned evaluation elements (evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators), it is important to determine what data and information needs to be collected. For many of the proposed indicators data could be collected through the monitoring of activities as organised by the Managing Authorities, NRNs and others (e.g. working groups, seminars, workshops etc.). In this context, surveys, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders involved in LEADER/CLLD are also important sources for quantitative and qualitative indicators (mainly results indicators as mentioned in the previous table). The selection of data and information collection techniques will depend on the applied evaluation methods. For the assessment of the added value of LEADER/CLLD the evaluators may need to rely primarily on qualitative methods.

For assessing the added value of LEADER/CLLD, the methods proposed for the evaluation of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism may be applicable (see chapter 2.3.2). An overview and short description of relevant qualitative methods can be found in other existing guidance[46].

Step 4: Analyse information and answer evaluation questions

Data and information collected from various types of LEADER/CLLD stakeholders should be analysed and interpreted with the aim of judging on the scale and scope of the generated added value. For example, the analysis should try to demonstrate:

- if linkages and capacities (knowledge and skills) among the LEADER/CLLD stakeholders at various governance levels were strengthened;
- If the horizontal and vertical interactions among stakeholders involved in the implementation of LEADER/CLLD has increased (e.g. if the LAGs have been involved in shaping the LEADER/CLLD measure in the RDP); and
- if the application of the LEADER method in the delivery mechanism has enhanced the RDP's results (by achieving rural policy FAs and RDP objectives in a more effective way).

The collected evidence is used to answer the programme-specific evaluation questions. The findings will ultimately help to design and implement LEADER/CLLD more effectively and efficiently.

[46] Guidelines for ex post evaluation of 2007-2013 RDPs http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/evaluation/library/evaluation-helpdesk-publications/en/evaluation-helpdesk-publications_en.html, and guidelines for Evaluation of NRN https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/european-evaluation-helpdesk-rural-development/evaluation-helpdesks-publications/guidance_en

Do

- Consider the added value as an integral part of LEADER/CLLD
- Think of improved multi-level governance, improved social capital and enhanced RDP results and impacts as the three dimensions of the added value of LEADER/CLLD
- Use participatory methods and triangulate them

Don't

- Misjudge the added value as an isolated component of LEADER/CLLD
- Consider the added value as an indirect effect of LEADER/CLLD

2.5 Reporting on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level

At the RDP level the findings of the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD are reported together with evaluation findings of the RDP in the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) and in the ex post evaluation report. Optionally, a separate evaluation report could also be drafted (e.g. in case a self-standing evaluation of LEADER/CLLD is carried out). The evaluation findings can be disseminated in various formats depending on the stakeholders to whom they are addressed.

Reporting in the SFC template for the Annual Implementation Report (AIR)

Answers to the common evaluation questions in the AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019

LEADER/CLLD is typically programmed under the FA 6B, but also contributes to other FAs in line with the LEADER/CLLD intervention logic. Consequently, findings on the contributions of LEADER/CLLD can be reported in principle in all FA-related common evaluation questions (CEQ) in chapter 7 of the SFC template for the AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019. Relevant FA-related common evaluation questions are those for which operations implemented via CLLD strategies have shown primary or secondary contributions (see chapter 2.3.1).

LEADER/CLLD contributions are reported in the SFC template in the following way:

- Either quantified as a share of the values achieved in the common result/target indicators and additional indicators, if Member States used them to provide answers to CEQs[47];
- Assessed qualitatively with theory-based or qualitative methods[48].

Primary contributions of LEADER/CLLD as programmed by default under the FA 6B will be reported for the AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019 mainly via the answer to CEQ no. 17 (see chapter 2.3.1).

Secondary contributions should be reported through all answers to CEQs, which are linked to FAs to which LEADER/CLLD has contributed. In the case of CEQ no. 4, 11, 12, 13, and 14[49] the secondary contributions should also be shown as

[47] Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017, Annex 11, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

[48] Guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017, Annex 10, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

[49] WD: Common evaluation questions for RDPs 2014-2020, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/working-document-common-evaluation-questions-rural-development-programmes_en

Table 4. Overview of reporting on LEADER/CLLD, responsibilities for reporting and target groups.

Reporting format	Responsible	Recipients
LEADER/CLLD evaluation findings as part of the AIR submitted via the SFC template (System for fund management in the EU)	MA	European Commission
LEADER/CLLD evaluation findings as part of the RDP's ex post evaluation report	Evaluators	MA, Monitoring Committee (MC), European Commission
Self-standing evaluation report on LEADER/CLLD	Evaluators	MA, MC, European Commission
Summaries of evaluation findings on LEADER/CLLD	MA and evaluators	Various groups of LEADER/CLLD stakeholders MC, LAG associations, beneficiaries, NRNs, etc.
Short summary of evaluation findings on LEADER/CLLD focused on the major issues	MA	The general public

a share of the gross values calculated of the common and additional indicators used to answer the respective CEQ.

In addition to FA-related CEQs, LEADER/CLLD contributions will be considered in answers to other types of CEQs, such as:

- CEQ no. 19 on programme synergies, in chapter 7 of the AIR submitted in 2017;
- CEQ no. 29 on programme contributions to the CAP objective of achieving balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities, including the creation and maintenance of employment, in chapter 7 of the AIR submitted in 2019;
- Other CEQs related to EU level objectives, if applicable in chapter 7 of the AIR submitted in 2019.

Answers to programme-specific evaluation questions in the AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019

MAs may have included in the evaluation plan a specific evaluation topic linked to LEADER/CLLD (e.g. assessment of the LEADER method or one or more of the CLLD principles) and accompanied it with programme-specific evaluation question(s). Programme-specific evaluation questions may also be developed at a later stage by the evaluator and agreed with the MA. In both cases, the MAs will be asked to report on the related evaluation findings in a specific table (answers to programme-specific evaluation questions) in chapter 7 of the AIR submitted in 2017 and 2019.

Reporting in the standard AIR

Member States are required to report on any LEADER/CLLD related evaluation activity, completed evaluation and communication activities in the standard AIR – chapter 2. If the MA has decided to conduct a stand-alone evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (focused on LEADER/CLLD as a whole or on a specific aspect) and if it has been included in the RDP evaluation plan, the MA will be asked to report on this evaluation in chapter 2 of the standard AIR for the year in which the evaluation took place.

Reporting in the RDP ex post evaluation

At the time of programme completion, but no later than 2024, the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD within the RDP's ex post evaluation should demonstrate its contributions to the RDP's objectives, results and impacts and their effectiveness and efficiency. In a similar fashion to the AIRs submitted in 2017 and 2019, the ex post evaluation should also provide the updated answers to the CEQs. These updated answers should reflect all interventions completedand contributions of LEADER/CLLD. Moreover, the contributions of LEADER/CLLD operations to the indicators' values should be quantified.

Self-standing evaluation report on LEADER/CLLD

In cases where the MA has in addition to the mandatory EU-related evaluation activities also included a self-standing evaluation of LEADER/CLLD in the evaluation plan, it can be

expected that evaluators will provide a full evaluation report to the MA. It will include findings, conclusions and recommendation for policy makers and other involved stakeholders to improve the design and implementation of LEADER/CLLD in the areas concerned.

Other reporting formats

The MA should disseminate evaluation findings in a more user-friendly format than those used for official EU-reporting. While the latter seeks to make aggregation and processing of information at the EU-level more efficient, the formats used by Managing Authorities can be targeted to specific audiences and be made more attractive and reader-friendly. These formats could include, for example, a brief overview of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations for a broader public, or short versions of answers to evaluation questions for various audiences. Specific summaries can be used to report to the Monitoring Committee or various stakeholders' associations.

2.6 Dissemination and follow-up of evaluations of LEADER/CLLD at the RDP level

Dissemination of the LEADER/CLLD evaluation findings

The value of evaluation depends on the dissemination, follow-up and use of its findings. The **communication and dissemination of evaluation findings** plays a crucial role in:

- increasing the level of ownership;
- facilitating the flow of knowledge about LEADER/CLLD contributions to the RDP's objectives;
- recognising the importance of the LEADER method for the creation of added value;
- ensuring accountability and the use of evaluation results in the RDP.

The communication[50] and dissemination[51] system of LEADER/CLLD is integrated in the broader system of the RDP. It is important to specifically define, which evaluation findings should be transmitted to the different LEADER/CLLD stakeholders. The main format and information channels are decided by the MA, who may work in conjunction with the NRN. Evaluation reports should be made available to all relevant actors and the general public (e.g. via the MA's/RDP's website). Evaluation findings can only be utilised if they are communicated to the target recipients in a timely and effective manner.

An effective communication and dissemination strategy should:

- take advantage of social media and new technology for the dissemination of LEADER/CLLD results;
- use meetings and workshops to enhance discussions and thereby contribute to a better understanding and interpretation of the evaluation findings and recommendations;
- combine approaches that incorporate oral and written, formal and informal communication.

Follow-up of the evaluation results

Evaluation is a strategic management tool. When used effectively, evaluations findings lead to an improved design and implementation of LEADER/CLLD and stimulate a culture of organisational learning and enhance the accountability of results.

The MA is responsible for the quality of evaluations. Evaluations of high quality are more likely to contribute to better policy design and more effective delivery.

The mechanisms to follow up the recommendations of the LEADER/CLLD evaluation are the same as those for the RDP and, thus, described in the Guidelines on "Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017".

[50] How to select the channel to transmit the information.

[51] To what extent/in what scope is the spread done.

3 EVALUATION OF LEADER/CLLD AT THE LAG LEVEL

3.1 What and how to evaluate at the local level?

What to evaluate at the local level?

As stipulated in PART I of the guidelines there are mandatory as well as recommended elements for conducting the evaluation activities of LEADER/CLLD at the local level (see chapter 1.2.2.). For a comprehensive and robust evaluation and self-assessment, the guidelines provide information on what can be considered as a highly-recommended **practice.**

These guidelines focus on CLLD strategies funded exclusively by EAFRD, i.e. LAGs mono-funded by EAFRD.

In addition to the **mandatory assessment of the CLLD strategy,** the guidelines recommend an assessment at the local level with regard to (see chapter 1.2.2):

a) the LAG animation,

b) the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism in ensuring the LEADER method,

c) the added value of LEADER/CLLD.

While these components are useful to be distinguished from an analytical point of view (see chapter 1.2.3), they are not easily separable from each other. In Figure 15, we depict the interrelationship between the implementation of the LEADER method, with special emphasis on

- the delivery mechanism at both the RDP and LAG levels, and
- the LAG activities:
  - from the wider perspective of the animation of the territory, and
  - from the closer perspective of CLLD strategy implementation.

All these combined are supposed to generate the LEADER added value, which should manifest itself in improved social capital and local governance, as well as in enhanced results from projects.

At impact level, these dynamics are supposed to bring forth structural changes in the area different from those which would have been achieved without applying the LEADER method. These changes should:

- be more responsive to the needs of specific parts of the population and the territory as a whole;
- be more innovative in relation to what has been tried out before in the same area or elsewhere in similar areas;
- be more sensitive to the global aspects of local development (e.g. in respect to climate change, resource productivity, environmentally sound production patterns, demography, migration and social cohesion);
- be more sustainable (as opposed to being superficial and prone to bouncing back into the previous state of affairs when the support is expiring);
- push further changes towards the intended direction: this self-propelling dynamic is meant by the double-headed arrows in figure 15.

The enhancement of social capital can be seen both as an ultimate effect of the implementation of the LEADER approach and as a catapult for changes in the entrepreneurial skills, changes in the use and valorization of local resources (natural, cultural, historic), changes in the administrative capacities of the local authorities (e.g. municipalities; intercommunal cooperation; etc.); changes in the institutional capacities (for drawing in, generating and keeping knowledge in the area; for defending the interests of disadvantaged groups; for enabling forms of cooperation and networking; for governing and managing the public goods, e.g. nature and environment, landscapes, water, cultural heritage, public space in towns and villages).

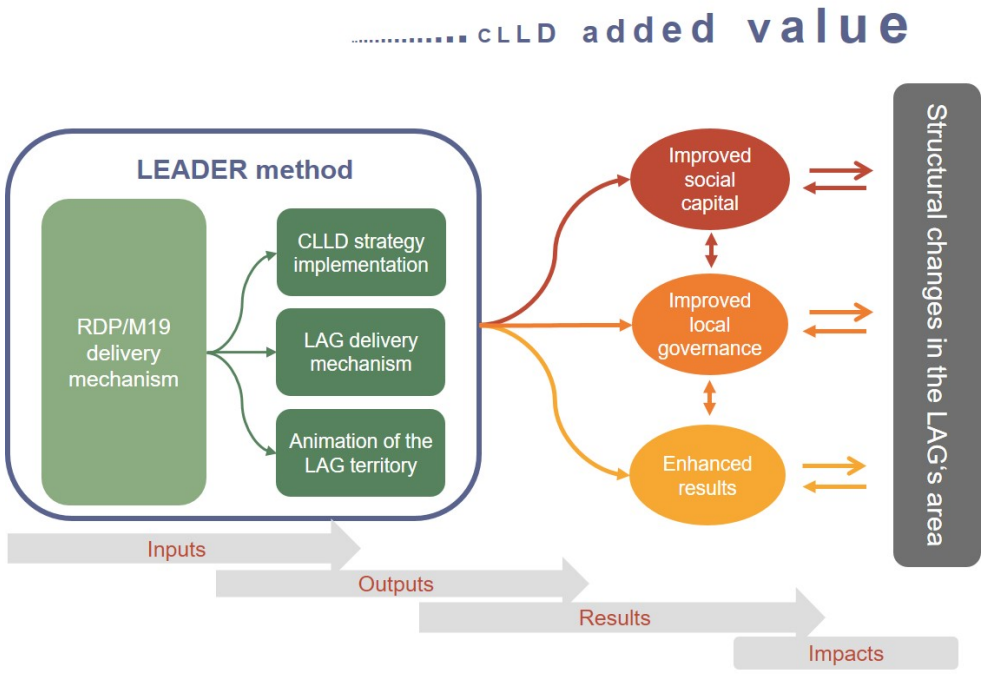
Social capital is embodied in the collective capacity of key actors to create and develop new ideas and solutions, as well as in formal and informal

networks which, for example, allow for the exchange of experiences between different backgrounds and different type of areas, etc.

The added value of LEADER/CLLD at the local level is produced through various **types of LAG activities,** which are implemented in line with the **LEADER method**. These different types of LAG activities include at a minimum: [52]

- **Preparation, project selection and implementation of the CLLD strategy** is the most prominent LAG activity. It concerns activities linked to the communication and provision of support to project generation, design, implementation, monitoring and cooperation projects.
- **Animation of the LAG territory** may include different types of initiatives that can be:
  - linked to the CLLD strategy implementation[53], focused on empowering local actors and their willingness to face the challenges through the implementation of projects supported by the LEADER/CLLD Strategy (e.g. integrated investments, which enhance the competitive advantages of a given territory; appropriateness of investments on local services and infrastructures);
  - not directly linked with the CLLD strategy or a specific project, focused on the territory and the population as such (e.g. facilitate exchanges between stakeholders as stipulated in the legal framework, enhance the awareness for local (natural and cultural) heritage).

Figure 13. Relations between delivery mechanism, LAG activities and added value



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

[52] In addition to the above activities, the LAG may conduct other activities and projects and use other funds, e.g. social inclusion projects, infrastructure projects, etc.

[53] Measure fiche LEADER local development, chapter 5.4 "Animation: Costs of animation of the CLLD strategy in order to facilitate exchange between stakeholders, to provide information and to promote the strategy and to support potential beneficiaries to develop operations and prepare applications"

The **LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism** provides an institutional backbone which extends from the European level down to the local level. In line with the provisions put in place by the EAFRD Regulation, in particular for Measure 19, it is mainly set up by the Managing Authorities responsible for the national and regional RDPs. Within this pre-established framework, the LAG may adapt and set up its own rules and procedures (project selection criteria, profiles of target beneficiaries, etc.) in order to implement its operations and meet the needs of the territory (see chapter 2.3.1).

The LEADER method (see chapter 1.1.1.) is supposed to be applied even before any intervention in the area starts: In the shaping of the LAG, in the making of the CLLD strategy, but first and foremost in pre-establishing the framework of the RDP/M19 delivery mechanism within which the LAG is designing its own local CLLD strategy delivery system. The LAG may modify its own rules and procedures during the implementation period.

The assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism allows one to identify gaps and challenges linked to the rules and procedures as designed at the RDP and LAG levels and thereby facilitate the safeguarding of the LEADER method.

All types of LAG activities mentioned above are implemented with inputs (e.g. ESI funds). They produce tangible outputs (e.g. number of activities, technologies, buildings and other assets, trained people), tangible and intangible results (e.g. more jobs, new enterprises, products, services, new skills knowledge) as well as tangible and intangible impacts (e.g. better income, better employment structure, better infrastructure, better social capital).

While all the above-mentioned outputs, results and impacts can in principle also be produced with mainstream RDP measures, strategies that are implemented according to the LEADER method are expected to produce added value. The added value at the local level is generated in the form of **improved social capital, improved local governance and enhanced results**.

The assessment of the added value shows which additional benefits (improved social capital, improved local governance, enhanced results) have been created due to the proper application of the LEADER method through the LAG's activities.

How can the added value be observed?

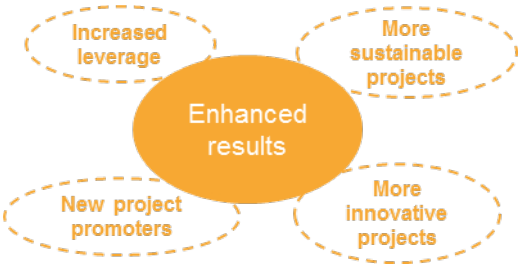
The application of the CLLD principles are supposed to improve the social capital and local governance in the LAG's area by triggering the behavioural change of key actors and/or the population at large. **Behavioural changes** may relate to (i) mental models and beliefs required (motivation, self-esteem) to engage in a behaviour; (ii) abilities and capacities of individual and collective actors (trust, reciprocity, cooperation and networks); (iii) new opportunities (i.e. access to resources and social support (skills, knowledge, advice)). There

are ways to evaluate the type and direction of behavioural changes. A certain behaviour may be (i) increased, (ii) decreased, (iii) enhanced, (iv) improved, or even (v) maintained despite negative pressures.

Improved local governance may be expressed by i) the readiness to broaden the decision-making processes by including wider parts of the communities and more stakeholders, respecting social, geographical, institutional and gender balance, ii) the ability and capacity to accept shared leadership of the area, iii) the capacity to manage funds from various public and private sources, iv) by strengthening the capacity to build partnerships and cooperative management, an active role in shaping multi-level governance, etc.

The desired changes in the **social capital** and local governance should already be articulated in the preparation of LAG activities, (e.g. described in the intervention logic of the CLLD strategy or in the rationale of the cooperation projects and various animation activities).

In cases where the LAG's activities do not feature the expected changes in the social capital and in its intervention logic, the evaluation or self-assessment team can (i) either try to make them explicit, (i.e. derived from what the LAG has put into action), or (ii) to try and conduct the observations while using various assessment methods.



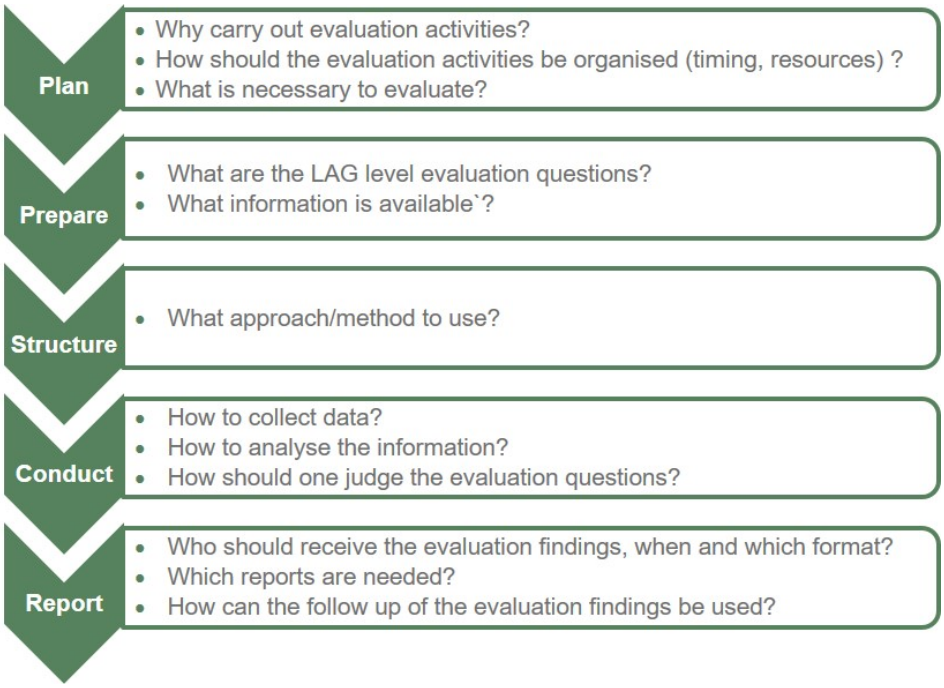
Finally, the added value of the LEADER method should also be manifest as **enhanced results**, (i.e. the type and quality of projects implemented should make a difference to those which are or theoretically would have been implemented under different programmes/measures). These differences may express themselves in new project promoters, different kinds of projects which emerge due to a lower threshold for getting access to funding, in projects which have stronger and more durable support in the local population as they are better at responding to their needs and embedded in the local structures, which make the projects and the additional effects they may trigger more sustainable. This kind of comparative analysis is not easy to conduct in a context where every project is unique; but if this question is raised in a discursive setting (e.g. focus group), the evaluator will get reliable answers because local actors usually know about the difference the LEADER method makes in comparison to other (or earlier) support interventions.

How to evaluate at the local level?

The evaluation process at the LAG level is in general analogous to the one at the RDP level (see chapter 2.1)**.** Some selected key questions need to be explored by the LAGs when carrying out the respective evaluation activities as described in the following chapters.

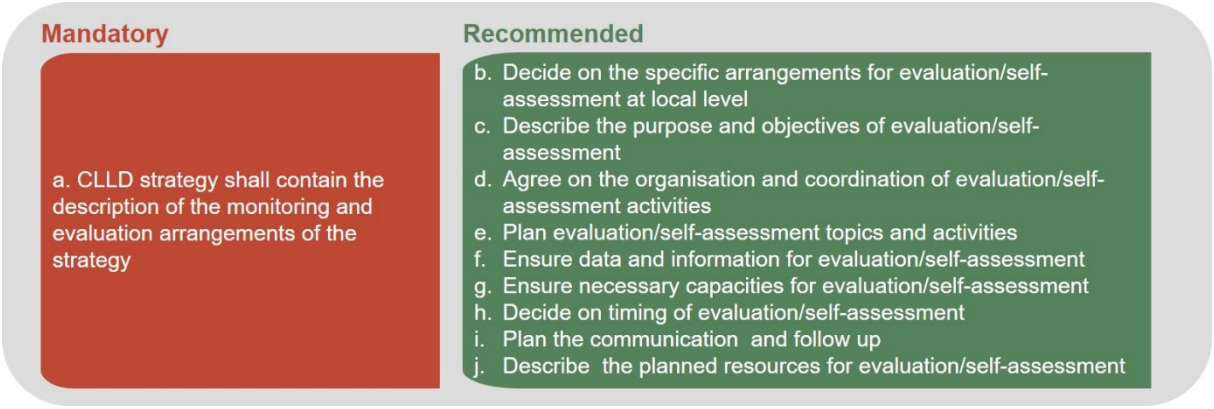
In the 2014-2020 period, there are new legal requirements in relation to monitoring and evaluation activities at the LAG level. Therefore, local stakeholders may need specific support to accomplish these tasks. The main actor responsible for supporting LAGs in monitoring and evaluation activities is the MA, who can delegate parts of this duty to other stakeholders such as the NRN, the Paying Agency or other public bodies. Examples of possible support activites for LAGs are summarised at the end of the following chapters 3.2 to 3.5 in textboxes.

Figure 14. Key questions to be answered in the evaluation steps



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

3.2 STEP 1: Planning the evaluation activities at the LAG level



a. Provide a description of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements (mandatory)

According to the legal framework, a **description of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements** of the CLLD strategy is a mandatory task for all LAGs. The description should preferably specify what type of evaluation activities the LAG will choose for the assessment of the CLLD strategy. Furthermore, it should provide details on the purpose of the assessment activities, the specific coordination mechanisms and the responsibilities of the involved actors. Specific topics and activities of the assessment may be described. The provisions to ensure that the necessary data is available at the right time should be included. A timeline for the process of the evaluation/self-assessment can support thecoordination of all activities. Mechanisms for capacity building and the follow-up and communication of the evaluation results may also be helpful.

It is recommended that the monitoring and evaluation arrangements are described in the form of an **evaluation plan** as part of the CLLD strategy. Managing Authorities could establish minimum requirements for the contents of such a LAG-level evaluation plan. Possible contents of such an evaluation plan are described under the following sub-headings.

b. Decide on the specific arrangements for the evaluation activities at the local level (recommended)

Evaluation activities at the local level can take the form of an evaluation or a self-assessment (see also chapter 1.2.2). The choice of evaluation activities and their description must, however, be in line with the respective requirements of the MA.

c. Describe the purpose and objectives of the evaluation/self-assessment (recommended)

It is important that the LAGs clarify for themselves **why** they conduct evaluation activities (purpose). The LAGs may aim to increase the transparency and accountability of their activities, demonstrate their outcomes and achievements, or stimulate learning on how to better design and implement future LAG activities.

d. Agree on the organisation and coordination of evaluation/self-assessment activities (recommended)

In the **description of M&E arrangements** the LAGs will provide details on how monitoring and evaluation activities are organised and coordinated. The LAG´s **governance structure** may, for example, include a responsible monitoring and evaluation manager, the establishment of a LAG monitoring committee or a working group for the LAG´s self-assessment.

Coordination between the MA and LAGs should ensure that linkages with RDP monitoring and evaluation are established (e.g. using a shared information system with the RDP to collect data and information for monitoring and evaluation activities at the local level).

The LAG should still ensure, at the local level, that monitoring and evaluation activities are well coordinated. Moreover, in case the LAG conducts an evaluation as well as a self-assessment, both activities should be coordinated (e.g. by using the same set of evaluation questions, indicators,

monitoring data, and by exchanging findings for reporting at local level) (see chapter 1.2.2).

e. Plan evaluation/self-assessment topics and activities (recommended)

Evaluation topics are the basis for the formulation of LAG specific evaluation questions.

Specific topics for evaluation activities can be identified by LAGs:

- assessment of the achievements of the CLLD strategy (strategy results, impacts and their effectiveness and efficiency in the achievement of the strategy's objectives), (The assessment of impacts at LAG level is more an estimation of impacts than a measurement!);
- assessment of the added value generated through the delivery mechanism and the animation activities;
- assessment of other topics chosen by LAGs (e.g. quality of local partnerships, efficiency of management, specific key projects/initiatives, local identity).

Common evaluation/self-assessment topics could also be developed by a group of LAGs. This is particularly useful if several LAGs implement together cooperation projects or networking on specific themes.

Monitoring and evaluation activities can be described in a sequence of steps - preparing, structuring, and conducting evaluation activities, reporting, disseminating and follow-up of evaluation findings. LAGs should describe how these activities will be organised, implemented and backstopped.

f. Ensure data and information for evaluation/self-assessment (recommended)

The monitoring arrangements of LAGs must ensure that all required data and information is available for carrying out the defined evaluation activities. This includes the provision of access to the RDP operations database, the collection of additional quantitative and qualitative information for LAG specific indicators.

An **integrated/shared database** between the MA and LAGs is considered to be good practice in order to facilitate the assessment of the CLLD strategy. It links the monitoring of the CLLD strategy with the monitoring and evaluation at the RDP level. A single information system allows for better streamlining of the information for evaluations at the RDP level. Furthermore, it is possible to use the same database for the evaluation/self-assessment at the LAG level, while incorporating also data collected for the LAG specific indicators into this system. It is recommended that LAGs get full access to an integrated/shared database and can use its data.

g. Ensure necessary capacities for the evaluation activities at local level (recommended)

A training for the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation activities of LEADER/CLLD at the local level (e.g. LAG monitoring committee, LAG steering group, LAG management staff, board members) should be organised and implemented.

h. Decide on timing of the evaluation/self-assessment (recommended)

It is essential that LAGs plan the timing of all steps in monitoring and evaluation activities, ideally along the RDP monitoring and evaluation milestones. The MA may also propose that LAGs adapt their evaluation activities of the CLLD strategy to the time plan of the assessment of the RDP results in 2017, the assessment of RDP results and impacts in 2019, and the ex post evaluation. The MA may also offer the possibility to modify the CLLD strategy based on findings and recommendations of the evaluation activities.

i. Plan the communication and follow up of evaluation activities (recommended)

The findings of evaluation activities should be shared with the target audience within the LAG territory (LAG members and population) and outside of it (MA, NRN, other LAGs). This can be

done in the form of a report in different formats for different target audiences: While the report to the MA can be a more comprehensive document, the communication of findings to LAG members and a wider audience may take a more user-friendly format (e.g. a presentation, a brochure, web pages, or videos).

Support for planning and communicating evaluation results is essential. A communication plan for evaluations would typically define the target audiences for the communication activities and define what would be communicated to whom at which stage (see figure 17).

j. Describe the planned resources for the evaluation activities (recommended)

LAGs should finance monitoring and evaluation activities from their running costs[54]. Keeping in mind that resources will be limited, it is necessary to plan them carefully.

Figure 15. Planning communication activities in relation to the evaluation

Who?	Target audience (e.g. policy makers, stakeholders, general public)
What?	Subject of interest to target audience
How?	Communication channels
When?	Timing and frequency of communication
Who does it?	Responsibility for communicating

Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2016.

STEP 1 - PLANNING

What support can be provided to LAGs?

Managing Authority

- Provide an **internal manual** establishing an optional common monitoring and evaluation/self-assessment system for all LAGs
- Draft **minimum requirements for monitoring and evaluation** arrangements to be included in the CLLD strategy
- **Analyse the needs and** establish a **capacity building plan** with training packages for LAGs
- Provide a **tool to develop a communication plan** for evaluations
- Allocate **financial resources for M&E** from the RDP's TA

National Rural Network

- Provide **training packages** and training support tailored to LAGs (e.g. on how to plan the evaluation of the CLLD strategy)
- **Organise knowledge transfer** in the planning of M&E among LAGs

[54] Article 35.1 (d) of Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013

3.3 STEP 2: Preparing the evaluation activities at the LAG level

Mandatory	Recommended
No specifications in the legal acts	a. Prepare for the assessment of LAG activities: 1. Check the consistency of the intervention logic of the CLLD Strategy; 2. Link the intervention logic to the evaluation elements of the CLLD strategy, b. Develop evaluation questions and indicators for the assessment of delivery mechanisms and animation activities. c. Develop evaluation questions for the analysis of the expected impacts in terms of CLLD added value at the local level.

a. Prepare for the assessment of LAG activities (recommended)

1. Check the consistency of the intervention logic of the CLLD strategy (recommended)

The implementation of the CLLD strategy is the most important activity of the LAG. Through this strategy, the LAG aims to make a change in the LAG's territory and for the LAG's population. Interventions are tailor-made to address the most important needs. They work in favour of local objectives and produce expected results and impacts, which contribute to the LEADER/CLLD added value at the local level. When assessing the strategy, it is therefore important to look at the extent to which the local strategy objectives have been achieved (effectiveness) and at what costs the results/impacts have been produced (efficiency).

The starting point is the **internal and external consistency check of the CLLD strategy´s intervention logic**. The intervention logic has typically already been constructed during the design of the CLLD strategy. Its coherence and relevance should have been examined during the LAG selection process under the aegis of the RDP MA. However, as changes might have occurred in the LAG's area or in the policy design, it is useful to revisit the intervention logic. The consistency check covers the following aspects:

- Checking the consistency of the CLLD strategy with the updated SWOT of the LAG's territory (at the time of the evaluation/self-assessment) and its needs assessment (**relevance).** Strategy objectives and expected results and impacts [55] must reflect the LAG's area's needs.
- Checking the CLLD strategy´s **coherence** by exploring if the planned activities and budgets are sufficient to generate the expected outputs, results and impacts. Are the activities likely to contribute to the achievement of the strategy´s hierarchy of objectives (internal consistency check)? Are they in harmony with the territorial development objectives established at the national/regional levels (external consistency check)? Are the expected outputs likely to generate the expected results and impacts (vertical coherence)? To what extent do the emerging effects correspond to the strategic objectives (horizontal coherence)?

In case inconsistencies are found, the intervention logic should be revisited with the following steps:

- Review the hierarchy of objectives, expected outputs and results (i.e. considering possible modifications) regarding their relevance in addressing the identified needs and potentials.

[55] Article 33.1.c) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

- Adjust, complement or redefine the objectives, expected outputs and results if the architecture shows gaps or ambiguities.
- Check the vertical and horizontal coherence of the adapted intervention logic of the CLLD strategy[56] towards the LAG's area's needs and towards the wider regional/national/EU levels objectives.

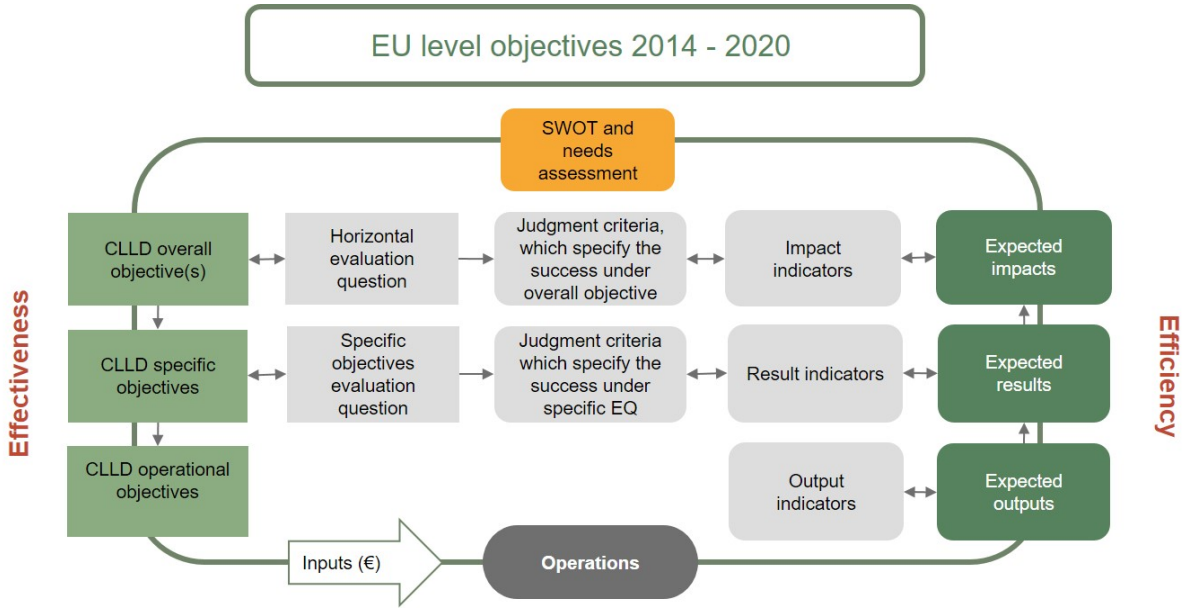
2. Link the intervention logic to the evaluation elements of the CLLD strategy (recommended)

The evaluation/self-assessment of the CLLD strategy is carried out with the help of evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators. Typically, these evaluation elements are developed by the LAGs[57].

Evaluation questions ask to what extent the strategy´s objectives have been achieved. **Judgement criteria** specify the success in achieving these objectives. **Indicators** are used to collect the evidence to answer the evaluation questions.

The evaluation elements should be consistent with the objectives and expected effects defined in the strategy's intervention logic. For example, if the objective is" Stimulate the emergence of new micro-enterprises and improve the competitiveness of existing ones in the food sector by supporting diversification and production of added value" the evaluation elements could be those shown in the following tool.

Figure 16. Consistency check between CLLD intervention logic and evaluation elements



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

[56] This approach is similar to that of revisit the RDP intervention logic described in the guidelines: Assessment of RDP results: *how to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017, Evaluation Helpdesk, 2016, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en*

[57] Managing Authority can also develop LEADER/CLLD related programme-specific evaluation questions. These should be answered by LAGs and provide programme-specific indicators for this purpose in additional to CMES common indicators.

Examples of evaluation elements for assessing the CLLD strategy (mandatory component)

Evaluation Questions	Judgement Criteria	Indicators	
		Output Indicators	Result Indicators
"To what extent has the CLLD Strategy been able to stimulate the emergence of new micro-enterprises and improve the competitiveness of existing ones?"	• Small enterprises have been created • Small enterprises have diversified their economic activity • The variety of small enterprises products/offers has increased • Small enterprises have been developed • The diversity of customers has increased	• Number of supported small enterprises • Number of new products/offers developed by the supported small enterprises • Total investment of the supported projects	• Jobs created in supported projects • Gross added value on supported small businesses • Increase of the number and different types of customers

If the objective is to "enhance entrepreneurship and generate new ventures based on valorisation of local resources and marketing", the success expressed via the judgment criteria would be: **"**more new ventures finalising local products, and a larger share of local products on the market". The indicators to collect this evidence would be the number of ventures, the number of new final local products, the share of local products on the market.

The LAG should check the consistency between the CLLD strategy´s intervention logic and the evaluation questions and indicators before the evaluation starts. Consistency is given, when the objectives of the CLLD strategy are covered by horizontal and specific evaluation questions. Evaluation questions are ideally specified with judgment criteria and linked to impact/result indicators, which are used to measure the strategy's impacts and results [58].

This check will help LAGs to see if there are any gaps in the consistency between the CLLD strategy's intervention logic and the evaluation elements (evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators). If gaps are detected, the LAGs should revise/complete the evaluation elements.

b. Develop the evaluation questions and indicators for the assessment of the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism and the animation activities (recommended)

During the implementation phase, the adoption of the LEADER method should be assured by the interaction of an adequate delivery mechanism with intensive animation and capacity building activities:

The LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism is an essential input for the implementation of LEADER/CLLD at the local level. It is largely framed by the MA, but there is some scope for most LAGs to shape or adapt the delivery mechanism. The evaluator should therefore try to distinguish as far as possible both realms. The

[58] Find out more about the consistency check between the intervention logic and the evaluation elements in the *Guidelines Assessment of RDP results: How to prepare for reporting on evaluation in 2017*, PART II, chapter 5.2, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/guidelines-assessment-rdp-results-how-prepare-reporting-evaluation-2017_en

RDP/M19 delivery mechanism should be assessed as a relevant context (which constitutes furthering and/or hindering factors).

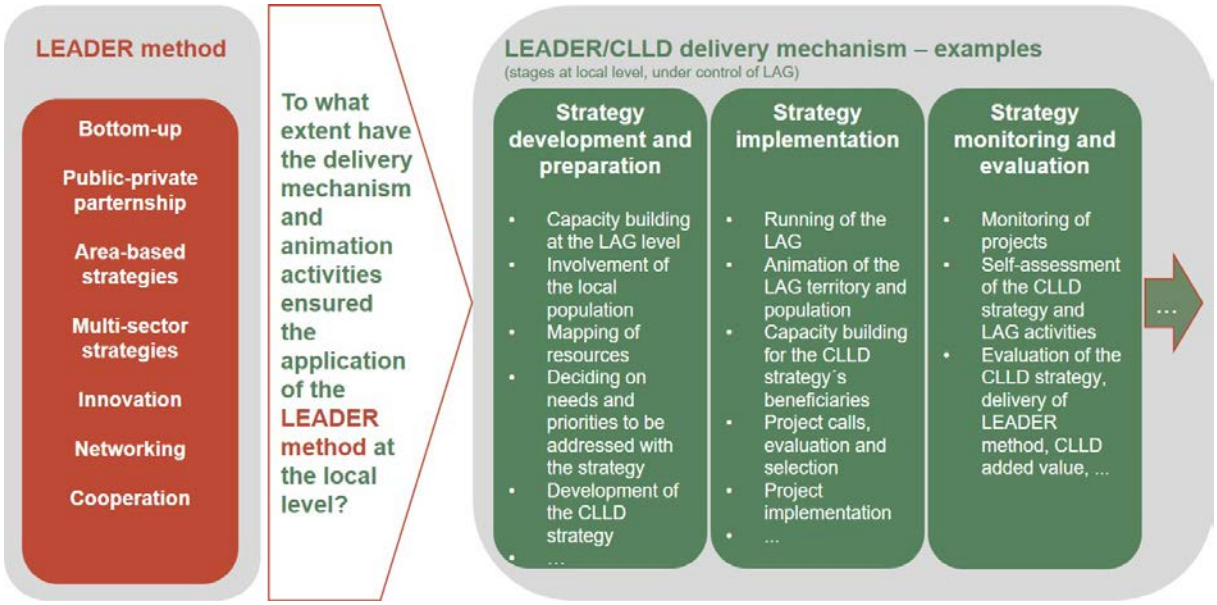
The EU legal framework specifies that in the programming period 2014-2020 there should be a greater focus on animation and capacity building (e.g. through the explicit provision of preparatory support and a LEADER start-up kit; the explicit allocation of funds for animation; and the increase in the budget for running costs and animation to 25% of the total public expenditure incurred in the CLLD strategy). Animation and capacity building focus on the facilitation of exchanges between stakeholders, the provision of information, promotion of the strategy, the supporting of potential beneficiaries in developing operations and preparing applications.

The immediate effect of the application of the LEADER method is the good implementation of the local development strategy. Its longer-term effects consist primarily in learning achieved at the individual and organisational level (capacity building, growth of skills, trust-building, evolutionary changes in the action of local networks and communities, improvement of regulatory frameworks and practices, etc.) and in the benefits linked to the improvement of social capital and local governance (and other possible kinds of positive externalities).

The traditional evaluative analysis based on the quantitative measurement of cause-effect links can be difficult to apply and not suitable enough for several reasons:

- First, local development projects often do not explicitly identify the expected effects in terms of governance or organisational learning. They exist but are implicit

Figure 17. Linking the LEADER method with the delivery mechanism at the local level (example)



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017

- (undeclared) and indistinct (non-localised, in the sense that the specific communities to be involved are identified during the implementation phase rather than at the design phase).
- The main factors at stake, such as the change of beliefs and degree of mutual trust, political, organisational and institutional culture, are difficult to measure.
- It is very difficult to identify the medium to long term effects type and to attribute it exclusively to a specific project (net effects) as:
    - the interactions between the various actors through which they arise follow circular paths dictated by relationships of interdependent characteristics of complex systems and are difficult to derive from linear cause-effect dynamics;
    - moreover, given the fact that actors in the same area and at the same time receive a multitude of incentives in terms of cooperation and networking, (increased start-up dynamics, more learning and cultural activities, involvement in new partner ships, etc.), does it make any sense trying to understand to what extent have each of them influenced future behaviours?

Clearly, the more the analysis goes away from the processes, the more the picture becomes uncertain. It is therefore necessary to provide a solid basis for the analysis of the animation process and **delivery mechanism at the level of results** with a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, to provide a picture interpretable in terms of measurable "target results" to follow the progress and to intercept the immediate effects, and on the other hand, collect an additional set of information (actors, networks, evolutionary processes, etc.) to better target the search and analysis of medium to long term effects in terms of added value.

Fundamentally, it consists in assessing the effectiveness with which the LAG interacts with its territorial system in order to achieve development goals in line with the LEADER/CLLD strategy. This type of interaction implies different categories of specific capabilities:

- Local partnership cohesion - Is the ability to promote an appropriate composition of the local partnership by ensuring that the institutional, social and economic reference system in its various components is represented and proactive within it. This implies a process of facilitating relationships between partners in building a trusted atmosphere and getting the right quality of participation to achieve an effective process of organisational learning where the partnership becomes a coalition that can foster innovation to enhance and add value to shared strategies.
- Bottom up activity – is the "local networking" capital, made up of experience, reliability, reputation, transparency, communication and relationships. It is a network of communication channels that enable the identification and sharing of knowledge (knowledge pooling), thus facilitating the listening and interpretation work, the detection of local potential, the building of shared visions and the mobilisation of social energies towards achieving development goals.
- Aptness to facilitate innovation – The environment that allows the delivery mechanism to stimulate and permit the emergence of innovative and pilot projects and/or the increase of the rate of innovation inside supported projects (e.g. through the multi-sectorial approach or cooperation).
- Cooperation & networking – The ability to interact effectively with external actors or to become a credible partner, to foster cooperation initiatives with other territories to strengthen local action and to connect with "over-territorial networks" that work in sectors related to the key elements of the local development strategy.

The following table shows which evaluation elements can be used to assess this kind of processes.

Examples of evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators to assess combined results of delivery and animation

Evaluation Questions	Judgement Criteria	Indicators	
		Output Indicators	Result Indicators
To what extent did the delivery mechanism and the animation activities lead to the generation of added value?	Involvement of the relevant rural development actors within the partnership has been assured	• Number and diversity of LAG members • Participation rate of relevant stakeholders in partnership activities	• Scoring of perceived changes in the cooperative behaviours and decision making among partners.
	Collaboration of the local community (economic and social interest groups and representatives of public and private institutions) in supporting the development process has increased	• Number and type of support activities to local projects • Number and type of cooperation structures that emerged	• Scoring of the perceived changes in the level of mutual trust among involved stakeholders • Amount of leverage supporting LDS (mobilisation of public and private funds of various sources and/or voluntary work)
	The LAG had the ability to mobilise and deliver local rural development through innovative responses to old and new rural problems	• Number of supported projects with innovation or pilot character • Number and type of cooperation structures that emerged	• Weighting of 'innovation' projects in the overall expenditure (%)
	Fostering relations, and connections and building projects with external institutions with the goal to strengthen and improve (innovate) local actions	• Number and type of networks where the LAG participates • Number and type of cooperation projects supported • Number and type of members/local actors involved in cooperation projects and networking activities	• % of local strategies/initiatives receiving concrete benefits from networking and cooperation activities • *Specific result indicators linked to the objectives of the cooperation projects and of the networking activities*

The LEADER/CLLD added value is supposed to emerge through the implementation of the CLLD Strategy using the CLLD delivery mechanism and supported by LAG animation. The added value of LEADER/CLLD is generated by LAG activities in the form of changes in the behaviour of local actors involved in these activities. This leads to the

improvement of social capital and local governance and to structural changes in the LAG territory in the long run (see chapter 3.1).

The dimensions in which we expect measurable effects to emerge are:

- Improved local social capital.
- Improved local governance.
- Enhanced strategy implementation results.

c. Develop evaluation questions for the analysis of the expected impacts in terms of CLLD added value at the local level

These changes may be captured first at the level of results, as the previous section on the generation of added value from the delivery mechanism and animation shows. In the long run, these changes are supposed to contribute to structural changes, at the impact level. As the LAG level evaluation takes place at the end of the term, it will be unlikely that impacts on these dimensions can be corroborated by hard findings. However, it is not only useful but necessary, in terms of learning, to provide a space for common reflection on the possible emergence of impacts, looking specifically at the trajectories of change, which are represented by the intervention logic and to what extent this has been realised. This investigation should include a joint analysis of signs of change, which have not been anticipated in the intervention logic, but seem to point towards the emergence of unexpected impacts.

For the assessment of the added value it is necessary to formulate the expected added value (improved social capital or improved local governance) and to define related evaluation questions, judgment criteria and indicators.

For assessing the changes in the **local social capital**, the related evaluation questions could explore:

- the density and quality of interactions among local actors and those with external resource providers or institutional partners at different levels of decision-making;
- the capacity of local actors to organise themselves in various forms of partnerships, networks, lobbies, interest and solidarity groups; developing bridging and bonding capacities;
- the increase in trust and confidence among actors in the LAG territory;
- the awareness of local identities and of the image or reputation of the area, of its people, resources and products;
- the enabling and encouraging of the younger generation to link their future perspectives with a vision of the area they live in;
- the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of and the relations between local actors;
- the routines of organisations, cooperation systems and networks;
- the new or altered rules governing the social interactions and societal reproduction.

For assessing changes in **local governance,** the related evaluation questions could explore:

- the involvement of different actors (e.g. of public and non-public actors) in a dynamic and interactive way of social learning, their diversity and representativeness (e.g in a decision-making body);
- the steering and governance mechanisms (hierarchy, partnerships, interaction solidarity);
- the mastering of complex interactions and negotiations in the multi-tier regional governance system;
- the strengthening of interdependent relations of local actors, based on a local identity and or a collective interest;
- the creation of incentives to keep the actors engaged and committed around common objectives;
- the cooperation and networking (e.g. exploring to what extent LAGs have obtained a central position as a development agent in the area);
- the role of actors in the power-structures (understood as position of an actor in the social network rather than only its formal power);

For assessing the added value embodied in **enhanced strategy implementation results** the related evaluation questions could explore

- the kind and quality of projects that the LEADER method has allowed to support compared to other support schemes;
- if new or different project promoters have become able to get support for their activities as compared to other support schemes;
- how far new potentials of the area have been addressed and been awakened by the LAG's activities;
- how much has innovation been invigorated by the LAG's activities;
- how far has the generation, identification, funding, and accompanying support strengthened the responsiveness of the projects to local needs and their sustainability;
- widening the group of potential beneficiaries, increased local mobilisation and indirectly encouraging non-beneficiaries to participate in the development process.

STEP 2 - PREPARING

What support can be provided to LAGs?

Managing Authority	• Provide a **matrix for checking the consistency** of the CLLD strategy's intervention logic. • Propose optional **programme-specific evaluation questions** and indicators linked to the CLLD strategy, LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism and the added value. • Develop a standard outline for **Terms of Reference** for conducting an optional evaluation.
National Rural Network	• Provide a **training for LAGs** on how to assess the intervention logic, how to develop LAG specific evaluation elements, how to draft Terms of Reference for an optional evaluation. • Organise an **exchange of good practices** on LAG level indicators, evaluation questions, examples of Terms of Reference, etc.

3.4 STEP 3 and 4: Structuring and conducting the evaluation at the LAG level

Mandatory

a. Collect data via the operations database for the RDP evaluation (linked to the common set of CMES indicators for LEADER/CLLD and to the programme specific indicators identified by the MA)

Recommended

b. Decide on the evaluation/self-assessment approach,
c. Ensure that the data and information fit the needs of the evaluation/self-assessment
d. Ensure the collection of data and information
e. Analyse the data and information collected using evaluation methods and tools.
f. Interpret the evaluation findings, answer the evaluation questions and provide conclusions and recommendations

a. Collect data via the operations database for the RDP evaluation (mandatory)

The starting point for conducting evaluation activities for the CLLD strategy assessment is the **monitoring data collected by the LAGs** on the immediate outputs of the operations under the CLLD strategy.

For a forward-looking data-collection the LAGs will consider what data will be needed at a later stage of the evaluation and self-assessment.

- In the case of a self-assessment of the results and impacts of the CLLD strategy the LAG will need to collect in addition to monitoring data, further qualitative information by using participatory methods.
- In the case of an evaluation of the strategy's results and impacts, the evaluators will collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence through advanced evaluation methods.

Ideally, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will be used to triangulate the evaluation findings. Qualitative methods may include participative components, such as focus groups and interviews, which are preferably used in the cases where a self-assessment is chosen. For instance, for the assessment of results and impacts of the LAG's animation and capacity building activities, it is relevant to use mostly qualitative and participatory methods. For the evaluation, qualitative methods are also used whenever quantitative data is not accessible or difficult to collect. The selection of a robust evaluation method should consider the ability to link strategy outputs, results and impacts and establish a coherent cause-effect relationship. A counterfactual analysis can be considered whenever feasible.

Methods used for the assessment of the CLLD strategy should be able to assess the **factors of success and failure.** This includes the analysis of **internal factors**, such as the design and targeting of the strategy, its delivery, the partnership structures and cooperation processes, and the LAG management and administration. Moreover, also **external factors** are assessed, such as changes of the socio-economic and environmental conditions, political issues, etc. Governance-related aspects, which concern both internal and external factors (e.g. interplay between the LAG and other tiers of programme implementation) could also be analysed. **The assessment of the results and impacts of the LAG's animation and capacity building** will rely mostly on qualitative and participatory methods.

b. Decide on the evaluation/self-assessment approach (recommended)

In the structuring phase the approach and methods for the evaluation activities are further fine-tuned.

- In the case of a **self-assessment** the LAG will decide, which methods to apply for the assessment of the CLLD strategy, the LEADER/CLLD delivery mechanism and the added value.
- In the case of an **evaluation** the final choice of methods should consider the evaluators´ recommendation (as expressed in the evaluation proposal). For tendering the evaluation, the LAG should ideally have a good capacity

to judge on the quality of the suggested methods. (see chapter 1.2.2.).

- The involvement of well-experienced evaluation experts is advisable.

c. Ensure that data and information fits the needs of the evaluation/self-assessment (recommended)

The choice of the evaluation methods and the pre-existing set of indicators determines which types of data and information is still needed and should be collected during the **observing** phase. The LAG (self-assessment) and evaluator(s) (evaluation) will review the available data.

LAGs should be aware of:

- the importance of having a complete set of data from monitoring (common and specific indicators and other relevant information);
- the usefulness of maintaining the operations database, thereby avoiding difficulties in tracking the achievements of the CLLD strategy's objectives;
- the need of having data in an appropriate format for the evaluator (e.g. the information system should easily allow for the download of relevant quantitative data on the approved/concluded operations in an excel or access-format);
- other possible sources of information that might be used (e.g. statistics, information from surveys, participatory self-assessments).

d. Ensure the collection of data and information (recommended)

In the **observing** phase the LAG (self-assessment) and evaluator(s) (evaluation) develop and apply the tools to collect the required additional information. All available data and information will then be gathered, aggregated and processed.

If both self-assessment and evaluation are used, it is useful to link the data collected via a self-assessment with the data collected by the evaluators. The LAG, its members, and the CLLD strategy beneficiaries should be prepared to collaborate with the evaluator and participate in the evaluation activities or offer the results of the self-assessment to the evaluator. For example, LAGs have valuable information on the implementation of their activities (e.g. self-assessment reports, annual implementation reports, LAG's internal databases). The evaluator will explore these sources together with other relevant existing information (CLLD strategy monitoring, annual implementation reports, formal statistics). If data gaps exist, they can be bridged with additional information to be collected by the evaluator (data collected through statistics, surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.).

The LAG (self-assessment) and evaluator(s) (evaluation) should check the collected data and information regarding its (i) sufficiency to answer the evaluation questions; (ii) validity and consistency in order to carry out the triangulation process; (iii) reliability, confirming the information sources.

Support tool – Operations database

The Managing Authority can facilitate the LAG level evaluation/self-assessment by providing access to existing data and by designing the **operations database**, which will facilitate the LAG to collect data for LAG specific indicators. An example of such an integrated operations database can be found on the website of the European Evaluation Helpdesk.

e. Analyse the data and information collected using evaluation methods and tools (recommended)

All available data and information are systematically processed and synthesised by the LAG (self-assessment) and evaluator(s) (evaluation) during the **analysing** phase by making use of different tools and methods. A good practice is if methods are applied by the LAGs and then by evaluators. This allows for a better comparison and validation of the findings.

f. Interpret the evaluation findings, answer the evaluation questions and provide conclusions and recommendations (recommended)

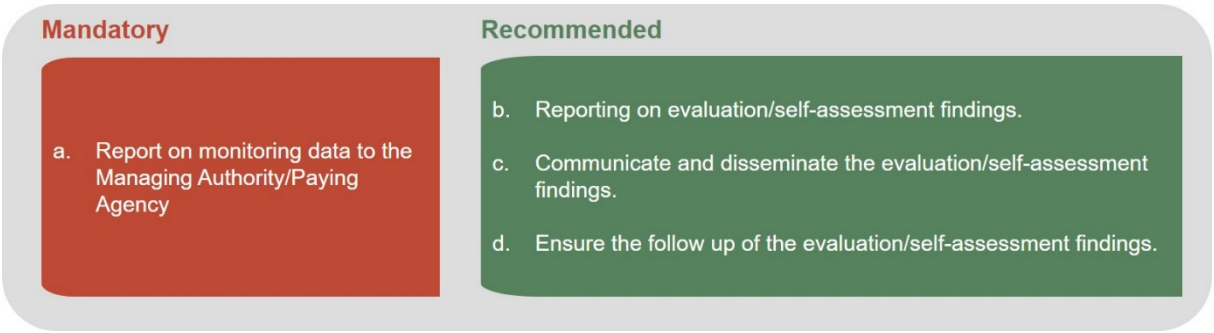
In the **judging phase,** the LAG (self-assessment) / evaluator(s) (evaluation) interprets the findings and uses them in answering the evaluation questions. Based on the findings the LAG / evaluator draws conclusions and recommendations on the relevance and coherence of the CLLD strategy; the strategy's results and impacts, its effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the objectives and the proper application of the LEADER method and the generated added value.

STEP 3 & 4 – STRUCTURING & COLLECTING

What support can be provided to LAGs?

Managing Authority	• Provide **methodological guidance** for LAGs on evaluation approaches and methods suitable for the local level. • Ensure **access to the operations database** to be used for the self-assessment and evaluation.
National Rural Network	• Offer trainings/exchange on how to use evaluation methodologies and data collection for the LAG level evaluation/self-assessment. • Ensure transfer of evaluation experiences at the LAG level.

3.5 STEP 5: Reporting, disseminating and following-up the evaluation at the LAG level



a. Report on monitoring data to the Managing Authority/Paying Agency (mandatory)

The only EC requirement for LAGs on reporting concerns monitoring data. LAGs must submit regularly the data on the implementation of operations via the CLLD strategies, which is collected by the MA through an IT system. For this purpose, they use the monitoring tables as set up in the Working Document Rural development monitoring – implementation report tables and the *WD Data item list for Pillar II Operations database for outputs and targets*.

b. Reporting on evaluation/self-assessment findings (recommended)

The LAG should publicly account for its activities and achievements in local development. Thus, the reporting on evaluation findings at the local level can be considered as a relevant instrument to increase the accountability and transparency of the LAG. It fosters collective learning and informs about the results and impacts and added value of LEADER/CLLD at the local level.

In the case of a self-assessment, the LAG may wish to share its findings with LAG members and the population. LAGs can use different formats to inform different target audience in a user-friendly way (information on a web page, brochure, leaflet, local media, etc.). Events may be organised to disseminate findings to LAG's members and the population.

In the case of an evaluation, the evaluators prepare the evaluation report. The report does not have to be extensive, but it should be easy to read in order to be disseminated and discussed with LAG members, as well as with the broader public of the LAG's territory. It is important to use the evaluation findings and subsequent discussions with stakeholders as an input to further improve the CLLD strategy, the delivery of the LEADER method and the LAG's activities in general. Lessons from the evaluation are also fed into the next round of strategy development.

Support tool - minimum requirements for reporting

The Managing Authority can optionally facilitate the LAG level reporting on evaluation with the provision of **indicative (non-mandatory) minimum requirements for reporting.** This could include the timing of the reporting and thus help to ensure that the findings can be used for the assessment of RDP results and impacts. Moreover, this allows for the comparison and exchange of experiences between LAGs.

c. Communicate and disseminate the evaluation/self-assessment findings (recommended)

The evaluation/self-assessment findings should be communicated and disseminated to different target audiences by LAGs, MAs or NRNs. LAGs should in each case ensure that dissemination and communication activities are well developed and start immediately after the evaluation/self-assessment's final approval. Two of the main challenges in communicating the evaluation findings are to identify who the target audience is and to produce and disseminate information useful for those users.

For the evaluation/self-assessment at the local level it is important to include not only the target

audience, CLLD beneficiaries and LAG members, but also the entire LAG population.

LAGs may use different communication tools for different target groups (e.g. an executive summary of the evaluation report, articles summarising the main findings). Various dissemination channels (e.g. websites, public events, mass mailings, TV, radio) can be used for this purpose.

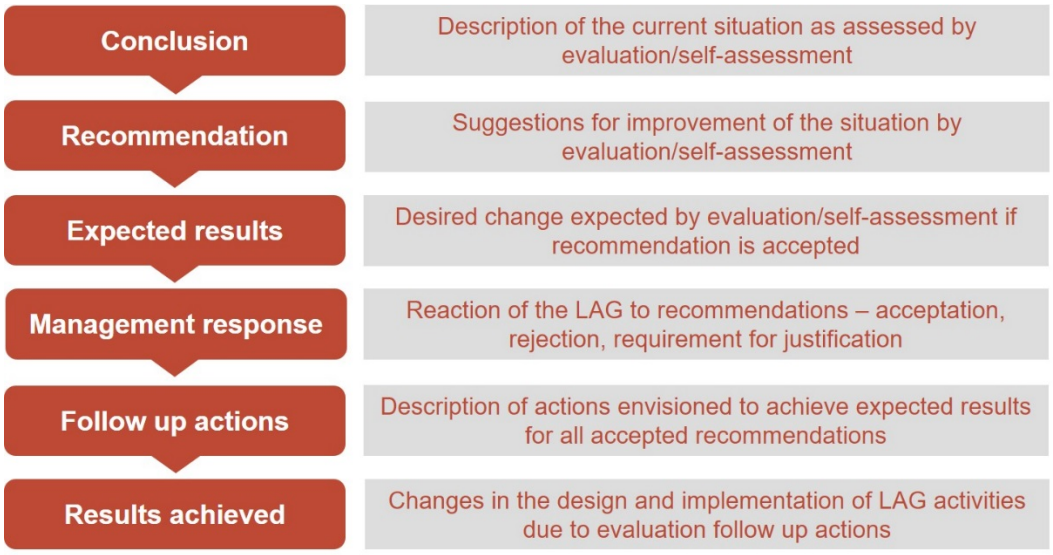
d. Ensure the follow up of evaluation/self-assessment findings (recommended)

Evaluation is a strategic management and learning tool. It provides an opportunity for the stakeholders to reflect about the evaluation findings and possible improvements. LAGs are advised to follow up on conclusions and recommendations in order to:

- ensure public accountability and transparency in local governance;
- facilitate the debate about strategy definition and priorities with relevant stakeholders;
- improve the strategy design and implementation;
- motivate stakeholders and LAG managers to actively participate in improving the performance of the LAG and stimulate a culture of organisational learning;
- enhance the application of the LEADER method;
- generate more CLLD added value.

LAGs should follow up on the recommendations of the evaluation/self-assessment and define the necessary management responses. Follow-up actions should lead to concrete results. The figure below shows how the follow up of the evaluation/self-assessment findings could be organised.

Figure 18. Organisation of the follow up of the evaluation findings



Source: European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017.

Support tool: how a LAG can facilitate the follow up of the evaluation

Conclusion	The composition of operations under the specific objective 1, "Develop entrepreneurial skills and knowledge of the local population", and their design (eligibility of actions, beneficiaries and budget) is not sufficiently effective to reach the above objective.
Recommendation	It is recommended to broaden the scope of eligible beneficiaries, activities and budget under the existing operations to better target the need to enhance skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship. It is recommended to include operations supporting the business infrastructure (business incubators, consultancy services, micro-loans, etc.).
Expected result	More and better targeted operations towards potential and existing business communities to increase their knowledge and skills.
Management response	Modification of the CLLD strategy under the specific objective 1.
Follow up actions	Change the composition and design of operations under the specific objective 1, new operations involved in supporting the business infrastructure.
Results achieved	A larger number of entrepreneurs with more and better skills to start and develop their businesses.

STEP 5 – REPORTING, DISSEMINATING, FOLLOWING-UP

What support can be provided to LAGs?

Managing Authority

- **Support** (or a manual) for submitting monitoring data in reports.
- Provide **outline** of evaluation/self-assessment report and/or **evaluation communication plan**.

National Rural Network

- Provide a **training for LAGs** (e.g. on how to assess the intervention logic, develop LAG specific evaluation elements, draft terms of reference for an optional evaluation).
- Organise an **exchange of good practices** on LAG level indicators, evaluation questions, examples of Terms of Reference, etc.

4 ANNEX

4.1 Glossary

Added Value of LEADER/CLLD

The added value of LEADER/CLLD refers to the benefits that are obtained thanks to the proper application of the LEADER method, compared to those benefits, which would have been obtained without applying this method. The added value of LEADER/CLLD can be expressed as improved social capital, as improved governance and as enhanced results and impacts of programme/strategy implementation.

Beneficiary

Person or organisation directly affected by the intervention whether intended or unintended. Beneficiaries receive support, services and information, and use facilities created with the support of the intervention (e.g. a family which uses a telephone network that has been improved with public intervention support, or a firm which has received assistance or advice). Some people may be beneficiaries without necessarily belonging to the group targeted by the intervention. Similarly, the entire eligible group does not necessarily consist of beneficiaries.

Common Indicators

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. In the context of the rural development policy, the set of common indicators, binding for all Member States, serves to measure achievements and changes at both RDP and European level.

Common Monitoring and Evaluation System

Art.14 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014 establishes a common monitoring and evaluation system, which includes: a.) an intervention logic showing the interactions between priorities, focus areas and measures; b.) a set of common context, result and output indicators, including indicators to be used for the establishment of quantified targets in relation to rural development focus areas and a set of pre-defined indicators for the performance review; c.) common evaluation questions; d.) data collection, storage and transmission; e.) regular reporting on monitoring and evaluation activities; f.) the evaluation plan; g.) the ex-ante and ex-post evaluations and all other evaluation activities linked to the rural development programme, including those required to fulfil the increased requirements of the 2017 and 2019 annual implementation reports; h.) support to enable all actors responsible for monitoring and evaluation to fulfil their obligations.

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)

CLLD is a specific tool for use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. CLLD can mobilise and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives.

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) strategy

Community-led local development strategy means a coherent set of operations the purpose of which is to meet local objectives and needs, and which contributes to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and which is designed and implemented by a local action group.

Delivery Mechanism

The delivery mechanism can be defined as “the set of rules, procedures and individual steps employed to translate the objectives of the policy into the final implementation actions by the recipients of the funds”.

Effectiveness

The extent to which objectives pursued by an intervention are achieved. An effectiveness indicator is calculated by relating an output, result or impact indicator to a quantified objective.

Efficiency

Best relationship between resources employed and results achieved in pursuing a given objective

through an intervention. Efficiency addresses the question whether the more effects could have been obtained with the same budget or whether the same effects could have been obtained at a lower cost. An indicator of efficiency is calculated by dividing the budgetary inputs mobilised by the quantity of effects obtained.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a process of judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and the needs they aim to satisfy. Evaluation looks at the effectiveness, the efficiency, the coherence and at the relevance of an intervention.

Evaluation Plan

It sets out the evaluation activities including the institutional arrangements (evaluation governance) and management provisions (evaluation management) for a whole programme implementation period.

Evaluation Question

A question that needs to be answered by evaluators. These are usually posed by those commissioning an evaluation. Evaluation questions normally feature in the terms of reference of evaluation projects.

Evaluator

The people who perform the evaluation, usually in a team in complex programmes that require a mix of skills and competencies. Evaluators gather and interpret secondary data, collect primary data, carry out analyses and produce the evaluation report. They must be independent vis à vis the commissioning body or programme managers.

Focus Area

The European Union has identified six priorities for Rural Development. These are broken down into 18 “focus areas” in order to better detail the aims of each priority and to facilitate programming. The Rural Development programmes have to quantify ex-ante specific targets in relation to each focus area. Member states have to report regularly on progress in achieving these targets during the programming period.

Full - Time Equivalent Employment (FTE)

Full - time equivalent units are used to improve the comparability of measures of employment. Figures for the number of persons working less than the standard working time of a full - year full - time worker should be converted into full time equivalents, regarding the working time of a full - time full - year employee in the unit. Included in this category are people working less than a standard working day, less than the standard number of working days in the week, or less than the standard number of weeks/months in the year. The conversion should be carried out based on the number of hours, days, weeks or months worked.

Governance

It comprises the institutions, processes and mechanisms through which public, economic and civil society stakeholders articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Hierarchy of Objectives

This is a tool that helps to analyse and communicate objectives and shows how interventions contribute to global, intermediate and operational objectives. It organizes these objectives into different levels (objectives, sub-objectives) in the form of a hierarchy or tree, thus showing the logical links between the objectives and their sub-objectives. It presents in a synthetic manner the various intervention logics, derived from the regulation, that link individual actions to the overall goals of the intervention.

Impact

In an impact assessment process, the term impact describes all the changes which are expected to happen due to the implementation and application of a given policy option/intervention. Such impacts may occur over different timescales, affect different actors and be relevant at different scales (local, regional, national and EU). In an evaluation context, impact refers to the changes associated with a particular intervention which occur over the longer term.

Indicator

Tool to measure the achievement of: an objective; a resource mobilised; an output accomplished; an effect obtained; or a context variable (economic, social or environmental). The information provided by an indicator is a datum used to measure facts or opinions. An indicator must, among other things, produce simple information which is communicable and easily understood by both the provider and the user of the information. It must help the managers of public interventions to communicate, negotiate and decide. For that purpose, it should preferably be linked to a criterion on the success of the intervention. It should reflect as precisely as possible whatever it is meant to measure (validity of construction). The indicator and its measurement unit must be sensitive. The quantity measured must vary significantly when a change occurs in the variable to be measured.

Internal Coherence

Correspondence between the different objectives of the same intervention. Internal coherence implies that there is a hierarchy of objectives, with those at the bottom logically contributing towards those above.

Intervention

Intervention is used as umbrella term to describe a wide range of EU activities including: expenditure and non-expenditure measures, legislation, action plans, networks.

Intervention Logic

The intervention logic is the logical link between the problem that needs to be tackled (or the objective that needs to be pursued), the underlying drivers of the problem, and the available policy options (or the EU actions actually taken) to address the problem or achieve the objective. This intervention logic is used in both prospective Impact Assessments and retrospective evaluations.

Judgement Criteria

Also known as evaluation criterion, this specifies an aspect of the evaluated intervention that will allow its merits or success to be assessed. Judgement criteria are closely connected to evaluation questions; the criterion is used to answer an evaluation question. One or more judgement criteria are derived from each question.

LEADER

This term is a French acronym meaning Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (in English: 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy'). It is a community-led local development method for mobilising and developing rural communities through local public-private partnerships (local action groups). It helps rural people, groups and enterprises to consider the potential of their area and to encourage the implementation of integrated and innovative local development strategies. In its first two generations as a Community initiative (Leader I: 1991-93 followed by Leader II: 1994-99) it was focused on disadvantaged rural areas. In 2000-2006 (Leader+), the method was expanded to cover all types of rural area. The approach was then mainstreamed in 2007- 2013, as an integral part of the European Union's Rural Development programmes, covering some 2 200 rural territories across 27 member states. In 2007, Leader was extended to the fisheries sector. During the period 2014 - 2020, Leader continues under Rural Development. It is also available under the cohesion policy as a common instrument called community-led local development.

LEADER Method

The LEADER method is the combined application of the LEADER principles:

- Bottom-up approach;
- Area-based approach;
- Local partnership;
- Multi-sectoral integration;
- Networking;
- Innovation;
- Inter-territorial and international cooperation.

Monitoring

An exhaustive and regular examination of the resources, outputs and results of public interventions. Monitoring is based on a system of coherent information including reports, reviews, balance sheets, indicators, etc. Monitoring system

information is obtained primarily from beneficiaries and is used essentially for steering public interventions. When monitoring includes a judgement, this judgement refers to the achievement of operational objectives. Monitoring is also intended to produce feedback and direct learning. It is generally the responsibility of the actors charged with implementation of an intervention.

Net effect

Effect imputable to the public intervention and to it alone, as opposed to apparent changes or gross effects. To evaluate net effects, based on gross effects, it is necessary to subtract the changes which would have occurred in the absence of the public intervention, and which are therefore not imputable to it since they are produced by confounding factors (counterfactual situation). For example, the number of employees in assisted firms appears to be stable (change or gross effect equal to zero). However, it is estimated that without support there would have been 400 redundancies (counterfactual situation). Thus, 400 jobs were maintained (net effect).

Objective

Clear, explicit and initial statement on the effects to be achieved by a public intervention. A quantitative objective is stated in the form of indicators and a qualitative objective in the form of descriptors. Specific objectives concern the results and impacts of an intervention on direct beneficiaries. A global objective corresponds to the aim of the intervention. The aim of an intervention is to produce an impact expressed in global terms, e.g. reducing regional disparities in development levels. Objectives may also be intermediate. Objectives which specify outputs to be produced are called operational objectives. If the objectives of a public intervention have not been clearly defined beforehand, the evaluation can try to clarify them afterwards. In that case, it is preferable to refer to implicit objectives. Objectives should be expressed in SMART terms (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-dependent).

Partnership Agreement

It is the document prepared by the Member State with the involvement of partners in line with the multi-level governance approach, which sets out the Member State's strategy, priorities and arrangements for using the ESI Funds in an effective and efficient way so as to pursue the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and which is approved by the Commission following assessment and dialogue with the Member State.

Primary contributions of LEADER/CLLD

Direct contributions of operations implemented under LEADER/CLLD to the objective linked to the main focus area (usually 6B - local development in rural areas) under which LEADER/CLLD is programmed.

Programme-Specific Evaluation Question

Programme-specific evaluation questions are formulated for the purpose of the evaluation of a specific programme, in view of providing a deeper insight into the overall implementation of that programme or to reflect specific objectives of that programme. Contrary to them, "common" evaluation questions apply to all the programmes.

Programme-Specific Indicators

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. The set of common indicators, binding for all Member States, serves to measure achievements and changes at programme and European level. Since common indicators may not fully reflect all effects of programme activities, the Managing Authorities in the Member States are asked to complement the common indicator set by defining additional indicators to capture the full range of intended effects of a given programme, in particular for national priorities and site-specific measures. These additional indicators are called programme-specific indicators.

Qualitative indicator

A description, in the form of a concise, clear and stable statement, of an objective to achieve, or an impact obtained. The organisation of descriptors in the form of a structured grid may constitute the first step in the construction of an indicator. If several descriptors have been established beforehand, they can be used to construct an observation grid. By means of this grid a phenomenon or change can be observed and described in a qualitative and structured way. Evaluation cannot afford to exclude from its scope of analysis an important objective or impact simply because it is difficult to measure quantitatively when in fact it is considered to be important. In that case, it is preferable to collect qualitative data and to structure them by means of descriptors.

Recommendations

Proposals aimed at enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, added value and coherence of the programme/strategy; at redesigning the objectives and measures; and/or at the reallocation of resources. Recommendations should be linked to evidence-based conclusions.

Relevance

The extent to which an intervention's objectives are pertinent to needs, problems and issues. Questions of relevance are particularly important in ex ante evaluation because the focus is on the strategy chosen or its justification.

Reliability

Quality of the collection of evaluation data when the protocol used makes it possible to produce similar information during repeated observations in identical conditions. Reliability depends on compliance with the rules of sampling and tools used for the collection and recording of quantitative and qualitative information.

Result

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

Secondary contributions of LEADER/CLLD

Contributions of operations implemented under LEADER/CLLD to additional focus areas, other than the main focus area (usually FA 6B), under which LEADER/CLLD is programmed and contributes primarily. Secondary contribution could be predominant and additional. Predominant secondary contributions to the FA to which the operation contributes significantly. Additional secondary contributions to the FA to which the operation contributes but not significantly.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a formative process that is designed and conducted by those who implement an intervention or are part of it (e.g. management bodies, decision bodies, beneficiaries). It generates an inside view on the activities and focuses on the overall performance. Involved actors – with or without the help of an external moderator - analyse the way in which they do things and ask themselves how they contribute to the achievement of the agreed objectives and goals. The participatory nature of self-assessment induces learning effects among all those who are part of it.

Social Capital

Social capital can be defined as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups”.

Stakeholders

Stakeholder is any individual or entity impacted, addressed or otherwise concerned by an EU intervention.

Synergy

The fact that several public interventions (or several components of an intervention) together produce an impact which is greater than the sum of the impacts they would produce alone (e.g. an intervention which finances the extension of an airport which, in turn, helps to fill tourist facilities,

also financed by the intervention). Synergy generally refers to positive impacts. However, phenomena which reinforce negative effects, negative synergy or anti-synergy may also be referred to (e.g. an intervention subsidises the diversification of enterprises while a regional policy helps to strengthen the dominant activity).

Target Indicator

For each focus area chosen among the six rural development priorities, quantifiable target indicators are defined at Community level. Target indicators should be linked, as directly as possible, to rural development programmes interventions, minimising the effect of external factors. They should be indicators which can be simply and regularly monitored, minimising the data requirements for beneficiaries and administrations, as the values of these indicators will be monitored regularly throughout the lifetime of each rural development programmes. Wherever possible established indicators and methods should be used. For the most part, target indicators will be at the result level, with the exception of Priority 1, which is horizontal and whose results are captured through the outcomes of other priorities. For the focus areas under this priority, the target indicators will be established at output level.

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