



**Guidance Notes for application for funding
under Measure 4 of the XLOKK Local Development Strategy
“Development of Green Infrastructure”**

Call no. 4 – issued on the 12th April 2022

GAL XLOKK FOUNDATION

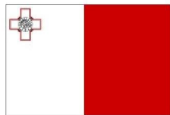
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Guidance notes are being updated following the Expression of Interest issued by the Funds and Programmes Division within the Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands, for additional budget under M19.2 and M19.4

*This measure falls under the **LEADER** Programme (Community Led Local Development) of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014 – 2020, which is part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.*



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

Part financed by the European Union

Co-financing Rate:

75% European Union; 25% Government of Malta



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

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

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

Definitions:

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

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

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

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Voluntary Organisations (VO): Eligible VOs shall be those that are fully enrolled with the VO Commissioner and are compliant in their annual returns, as required by Subsidiary Legislation 492.01 of the Voluntary Organisations Act.

1. Introduction

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

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with these Guidance Notes prior to filling in and preparing the Application Form. The Guidance Notes, Application Form and all annexes and other documentation are available at www.galxlokk.com under the sub-heading Documents¹.

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

2. Rationale for Intervention

Green infrastructure delivers essential ecosystem services which underpin human well-being and quality of life. The European Commission defines green infrastructure as a strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which are designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings².

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

This measure has therefore been designed to support projects that, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, facilitate the development and implementation of green infrastructure within the GXF territory through the creation of green areas that can support biodiversity in rural areas, particularly within the built zone (such as on derelict sites, within public buildings and gardens/parks) and enhancement of open spaces in village core areas, in the outskirts of the same villages, as well as to provide an interconnected network of green spaces between localities.

¹ <http://galxlokk.com/category/documents/>

² Building a green infrastructure for Europe. European Commission 2013

3. Scope and Objectives of the Measure

Specific Objectives:

The general aim of this measure is to improve the environmental landscape of the area. The purpose is to support the development of urban green infrastructure within the GXF territory through the development/creation of new green open spaces in rural areas and the installation of elements of green infrastructure (green belts and corridors, green roofs, vertical gardens etc.) within both built and rural areas.

The specific objective of the measure is, by end of the programming period, to improve the environment performance and quality of life of GXF communities through the development of green infrastructure in at least 13 projects leading to the greening of spaces within the territory. It is imperative to add that these projects have to be freely accessible to the general public.

The scope of action includes:

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

The following indicative list presents best estimates of the type of operations that are likely to be supported through this measure:

- The use of native vegetation and trees in the landscaping of open spaces for the creation of recreational spaces, whilst promoting informal education;
- The regeneration and/or embellishment of open spaces in village core areas and rural outskirts through the development of green infrastructure;
- The upgrading and embellishment, through the use of natural and eco-friendly materials, of open green spaces such as gardens, together with programmes for the promotion of benefits of biodiversity and the ecosystem services which it supports;
- The creation of green belts and green corridors within the territory, linking different localities, and providing a means of educating and interpreting the importance of green infrastructure;
- The creation of elements of green infrastructure including green roofs and green walls within the public buildings, such as schools;
- The careful restoration and embellishment of sites of cultural, historical and ecological importance, such as public gardens.

4. Eligible Actions

Support through this action shall be **limited to Capital Expenditure** undertaken by **Local Councils** and Voluntary Organisations compliant with Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. The operations of such entities must be in compliance with national rules and regulations, and regularly operating within the Xlokk territory.

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

Rural Localities within the Xlokk Action Group Foundation Territory		
Ħal-Qormi	Ħal-Luqa	Santa Luċija
Il-Gudja	Ħal-Kirkop	Mqabba
Il-Qrendi	Ħal-Safi	Iż-Żurrieq
Ħal-Għaxaq	Birzebbugia	Iż-Żejtun
Marsaxlokk	Marsaskala	Ħaż-Żabbar
Ix-Xgħajra	Il-Kalkara	

5. Eligibility Criteria

- Submitted application (including a Contracting Schedule and Disbursement Schedule) is fully completed and duly filled-in with details required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the application for eligibility and selection;
- The applicant (project leader) is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative) the beneficiary/applicant organisation. In case of a VO, *only the President/Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer of the organisation can act as project leader*;
- The proposed project will be implemented within the GXF territory;
- The applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of sufficient financial capacity required to finance the project and to fund the private financial component (*refer to section 28 of these guidance notes - application requirements check-list*);
- The proposed project contributes to the general and specific objectives of the measure;
- At application stage, the applicant is to include the certificate of compliance issued by the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations till the year ending 2020 (applies to Voluntary Organisations only);
- The project includes investment in environmental education, awareness, information and communication initiatives (maximum ceiling of up to 5% of the total project costs);
- The project is not on agricultural land and/or designated ecological areas such as Natura 2000 sites;
- The project area does not exceed 0.5 hectares (5000sq^m);
- The proposed project is compatible with the surrounding environment and respects the wider environment.

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

6. Description of the requirements and targets

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

project leads to the development of new or existing green infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the communities of the LAG's territory.

Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the rural development programme

The loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, ground water pollution and increased greenhouse gas emission are identified as key environmental problems in Malta. The management of habitats and features to increase local biodiversity whilst mitigating environmental pressures is a cross-cutting environmental and climate change objective of the RDP. The promotion biodiversity and improved forest management and rubble wall restoration are considered as being important in raising awareness of the impacts of climate change and how to enable adaptation.

The development of green infrastructure within the territory will also promote confidence in the territory's rural tourism product whilst improving the quality of life of the territory's communities. The improvement of the wider rural economy and quality of life is a key cross-cutting innovation objective of the RDP.

The environmental significance of actions implemented under this measure is further augmented in view of the requirement for inclusion of a project component that is dedicated towards education, awareness, information and communication on environmental issues in the context of the rural setting.

7. Eligible Investments

In the case of development of green infrastructure projects, costs incurred are only eligible if investment operations have been preceded, where applicable, by an assessment of the expected environmental impact (approved by the Environment and Resources Authority) in accordance with relevant legislations. The investment in green infrastructure must be in line with all relevant planning and development permits, including, where applicable, consultation on permits and/or guidelines issued by the authorities competent for the environment and resources.

In the case of intervention on trees, reference should be done to the subsidiary legislation 569.64 of the Environment and Resources Authority on "Trees and Woodlands Protection Regulation – Legal notice 200 of 2011.

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

Eligible investment supported under Measure 4 is as follows:

1. Construction or improvement of immovable property costs;*
2. General costs such as architects, irrigation/water engineers, project management costs and consultation fees, feasibility studies, the acquisition of patent rights and licences – ceiling up to 10% of the total eligible cost;
3. Establishing green infrastructure elements (such as green roofs and walls)/landscape/soil management plans;
4. Fencing and other works needed to facilitate conservation management, including protection of water and soil;
5. Restoration costs of ecological habitats and landscapes and features;

6. The costs of propagation material (seeds, seedlings, saplings etc.) used for structural changes, planting, under-planting, edges and borders, belts etc., and the related plant prevention, (e.g. poles, irrigation equipment, and any individual plant protection requirements as appropriate);
7. The costs of materials and/or services, labour used for the above mentioned investments for improving the environmental or public amenity value of green open areas;
8. The cost of amenities and facilities such as garden/street lighting, light furniture, other fittings and fixtures that are needed for the project, and that respect the environment and landscape quality of the project;
9. Removing of invasive trees in a sensible way;
10. Purchasing and planting of native flora species;
11. Investment in environmental educational, awareness, information and communication initiatives (this is an obligatory investment with a ceiling of up to 5% of the total eligible cost)

****Where applicable, only Projects covered by a valid Planning Authority permit and those which are in the process of a permit application are eligible under this Action. Projects should be having a Planning Authority number or DNO number. Projects with a tracking number will be rejected at application stage.***

8. Non-Eligible Investments under Measure 4

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

- Purchase of land and buildings;
- Currency exchange losses;
- Purchase of means of transportation;
- Purchase of machinery and real estate;
- Planting and purchasing of non-native species of trees/plants/shrubs
- Provisional installations that are not directly related to the investment (e.g. warehouses for keeping materials for the construction);
- Expenditures made before the launch of the call for application (the applicant should make reference to Article 60 of 1305/2013 of the EP. The applicant may at his own risk initiate the implementation of the project as from the date of submission of application);
- Income Tax or other operational costs of the entity applying for the project, including provisions for possible future losses or debts;
- Bank Interest;
- Inputs which are the subject of a contribution in kind;
- Building and/or restoration of rubble walls
- Administration fees (salaries, insurance obligations and running costs);
- Second-hand equipment;
- Value Added Tax (except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation). Grant assistance may be provided in respect of non-recoverable VAT. Written confirmation from the VAT Department that the project applicant is not-registered for VAT must be presented by the applicant.
- Statutory fines and penalties

9. Eligible applicants

The beneficiaries eligible for funding under Measure 4 are the following:

- ✓ **Local Councils** - (Local Councils applying for funds must be **full-paid members of the GXF**);
- ✓ **Enrolled Voluntary Organisations (VOs) in line with the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007** (Chapter 492 of the Laws of Malta), and that do not carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union.³ Voluntary organisations under the Second Register **cannot** apply for this scheme.
- ✓ All private, church, independent and state schools within the Xlokk territory.

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

IMP: Applicants who have already benefited under one of the calls as part of the same measure may still apply under this call on the basis that they have presented the last claim for payment to the Paying Agency. GXF will do the necessary checks with the Paying Agency and will not tolerate any form of abuse.

10. Aid Intensities

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

- 80% of the total eligible expenditure.
- The other 20% of the total eligible expenditure must be borne by the applicant.

The VAT element has to be borne by the applicant (except where it is non-recoverable under National VAT legislation). Grant assistance may be provided in respect of non-recoverable VAT. **Written confirmation from the VAT Department that the project applicant is not-registered for VAT must be presented by the applicant. The VAT Declaration Form (annex 1 of these guidance notes) should be duly filled by the applicant**

11) Financing – Budget

75% will be financed through the EAFRD whilst the remaining 25% will be financed through Malta funds. The maximum grant support for each project is **capped at €100,000**. The **indicative** remaining total allocated funds for this call is set at **€310,500.10 (includes savings)** of which 80% will be financed through the EAFRD whilst the remaining 20% will be financed by the Beneficiary. In the case of over-subscription of the call, the **GXF MAY** reserve the right to allocate additional funds to this measure following approval by the Managing Authority and ARPA.

12. The Application Process – General Provisions

- Interested applicants need to submit the completed latest application form for Measure 4 (4th Call).

³ These VO's must be compliant with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

- All applications must be completed in full, signed and dated by the Project Leader. In case of local councils, the application should be signed by both the mayor and executive secretary
- No parts of the application form are to be left blank – in cases where specific requested information in the application are not applicable to the applicant, the applicant must fill in the field with the note ‘Not applicable’.
- Although GXF representatives are available for meetings with interested applicants, it is the ultimate duty of the applicants to read thoroughly the guidance notes and application form. It is also the ultimate responsibility of the applicants to ensure that all documentation requested is correctly presented. Applicants must also ensure that the applicants themselves fall within the criteria of eligibility and that project proposed and any related investments are eligible for funding and that the application form and the requested supporting documentation **are presented at the GXF offices, 269, Main Street, Qormi, by hand within the deadline of the call.**
- It is not the duty of GXF to verify the above matters irrespective of any any meetings that may be held between GXF and the applicants.
- Applicants should submit an **original signed** project application form (1) in both PDF (.pdf) and WORD (.doc or .docx) format including also the supporting documentation. A copy of the application form including all supporting documentation attached to the original Application Form should also be submitted.
- A check-list of attachments is attached to the Application Form. The applicants must ensure that ALL the mandatory supporting documentation as per *Section 8* of the application form are submitted.
- For the application to be considered complete, all attachments marked compulsory are to be submitted with the Application Form. The GAL XLOKK Foundation will undertake a validity check following receipt of the application. Any required documentation not submitted with the application form shall be requested within not less than 5 working days from the date of a notification letter sent by GAL Xlokk. Only complete applications will be considered by the Project Selection Committee.
- The call for applications will open on Tuesday **12th April 2022** and shall remain open until the entire budgetary allocation under this Measure is allocated. The GXF will be adopting an **Open Block Calls Procedure**. This means that a batch of applications received within a respective time block will be assessed separately from applications received in subsequent batches. The call shall close either once the allocated budget has been committed or should the call be withdrawn through a notification by the GXF. The GXF may re-issue the call in a similar or different format. The GXF may also issue clarifications and amendments during the time period of the open call for applications without necessarily closing and re-opening the call. Such clarifications will be uploaded on our website: www.galxlokk.com
- The first Call for proposal will remain open until **Tuesday 17th May 2022, at noon**, subject to availability of funds. Applications received after this deadline **WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED for the first batch.**
- The deadline for the respective set of applications will be received as per below table:

2 nd set of applications	Tuesday 14 th June 2022, at noon
3 rd set of applications	Tuesday 12 th July 2022, at noon
4 th set of applications	Tuesday 9 th August 2022, at noon
5 th set of applications	Tuesday 13 th September 2022, at noon
6 th set of applications	Tuesday 11 th October 2022, at noon

- Applicants are encouraged not to leave to the last day to submit their application. In case of queries or clarifications required applicants may contact GAL Xlokk on the following:

Email: info@galxlokk.com

Tel: +356 2099 8008

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

13. Evaluation – Administrative Checks

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

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

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

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

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

14. Selection Process

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

15. Ranking of Projects and Selection Process

The PSC will proceed to award marks to each proposal based on the information submitted in the applications and provided through clarifications (where applicable). In order to qualify for selection, the proposal needs to obtain a total of at least 50% of the total marks of the general and measure-specific selection criteria. For those eligible projects going through the assessment stage, the PSC will seek clearance from the State Aid Monitoring Board (SAMB).

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

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

16. Unsuccessful Project Proposals

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

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

The applicants wishing to lodge an appeal must send a registered letter addressed to **"The Chairperson", Project Selection Appeals Board of GXF, 269, Main Street, Qormi, QRM 1107**, within 5 working days from receipt of the email/letter of notification (whichever the earliest) of result sent by the LAG. **The Appeals Board will not consider late appeals.** The letter should include a detailed of the reason/s the appeal is being made, supported by any relevant documentation/testimonials.

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

⁴ <http://galxlokk.com/category/news-2/> and <http://galxlokk.com/category/documents/>

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

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

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

17. Publication of Final Result

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

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

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

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

18. Procurement Procedures for Local Councils

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

19. Procurement Procedures for Voluntary organisations and Schools

In the case of natural persons and Voluntary Organisations, applicants are asked to abide by the latest circular issued by Managing Authority and Paying Agency on the 21st June 2021, MA PA EAFRD Circular 01/2021 found in the below link: <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Documents/Circulars/2021/MA%20PA%20EAFRD%20Circular%2001-2021.pdf>

At application stage, the applicant is being requested to submit a minimum of three (3) quotation for each line item. In case of infrastructural works, the applicant is asked to submit a Bill of Quantities (BOQ), whilst basing the quotations on the same architect's BOQ. This has to be endorsed and dated by a warranted architect appointed by the applicant.

Irrespective of the type of applicant (whether local council, VO or school), following the adjudication of the chosen supplier/s, the applicant should send a letter or email to the chosen and rejected suppliers upon issue of the project's award letter informing them of the organisation's decision.

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

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

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

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

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

20. Contracting with Beneficiaries

Contracting shall be undertaken by the GXF with the beneficiaries. In the case of entities, contracts are to be signed by the LAG's Chairperson (or any formally authorised delegate) and a legal representative of the beneficiary. In case where the signatory on behalf of the beneficiary is not a legal representative, a power of attorney must be presented showing delegation of signatories between the legal representative and the appointed signatory. The power of attorney is to be endorsed by a public notary.

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

21. Payment

- ✓ The possibility of a 50% advance payment of the total eligible cost of the project may be considered.
- ✓ The facility of interim payments will be provided by the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA). Interim payments (of up to 80% of the total eligible value of the project) following the submission of a request for reimbursement and financial documentation (including invoices and receipts).
- ✓ In case of infrastructural works a provisional certificate of works prepared by an

- engineer/architect must also be presented.
- ✓ The final payment of the remaining 20% of the total eligible cost of the project will be made following the completion of the works and submission of the request for reimbursement together with the necessary financial documentation (including invoices and receipts, and a provisional certificate of works prepared by a warranted architect).
 - ✓ The final payment will be issued once all the necessary on-site verifications and on-the-spot-check are carried out by GXF and ARPA and adherence to the contract is confirmed.
 - ✓ Claims are to be presented as outlined in ARPA's payment guidelines available at: <https://agriculture.gov.mt/en/arpa/Documents/guidelines/investmentMeasuresPaymentGuidelinesFinalEN-V3.0.pdf>
 - ✓ In case of irregularities, penalties and sanctions may be applied by ARPA in line with the above-mentioned guidelines.
 - ✓ Official certification by the architect appointed by the beneficiary is required for settlement of final payment (in case of infrastructural works).
 - ✓ **The project is to be completed by not later than twelve (12) months from contract signature or as defined by the GXF in the respective grant agreement.** The final claim for reimbursement of funds allocated to the project, including the project closure report must also be submitted within the deadline as defined in the grant agreement.

20. Extension to Contract Time-frames

Such request should be approved by the GXF. In case of local councils, the form to be used in such case is the '*Change Request Form*' and the request should be made before the actual expiry of the original time-frame. The form should also be sent to the Department of Local Government for the approval of the Permanent Secretary.

In case of voluntary organisations and natural persons a change request in the form of an email on info@galxlokk.com should suffice.

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

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

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

If the applicant wishes to change the specification of the investments, a written request

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

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

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

Failure to comply with the contract

Failure to meet the commitments stipulated in the contract shall result in sanctions applied to the amounts committed or paid. The Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency, Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID), the European Commission (EC), the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (DG OLAF) and/or the Managing Authority reserve the right to undertake further checks and controls.

22. Project Sustainability

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

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

23. Publicity

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

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

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

- d. As an example, materials used by the Beneficiary and major correspondence, including contracts signed with third parties must include any acknowledgement of EAFRD support.
- e. Any publicity material, such as advertisements, billboards and information leaflets about EAFRD co-financed projects must acknowledge this support.
- f. Publicity of individual projects must be incorporated into the project budget.
- g. Applicants are to be cautious when determining publicity actions for the project.
- h. Applicants should also ensure that the project benefits from any free publicity and that anything that will be proposed to be funded under the project is either obligatory or adds value to the results of the project, taking into account the value for money principle. In this regard, publicity measures of individual projects should take into account the nature of the project and must be relative to the size and objectives of the project.
- i. The Beneficiary should note that publicity may only be used to increase awareness of what EU funds are used for and to disseminate results. Publicity measures undertaken must be project specific.
- j. Publicity and information measures must not be used as a marketing tool to promote an organisation, its products, services or infrastructure. Where a project includes an element of marketing, this must be used to complement but not replace the project's obligatory information and publicity measures.
- k. Marketing efforts should be included as a separate activity in the project and as a separate budgetary allocation and justified accordingly. The Applicant may also make reference to the 'Visual Identity Guidelines 2014-2020' that may be downloaded from the following link: <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Documents/Publicity/EAFRD%20VIG%20V1.9.pdf>

24. Data Protection

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

25. Retention of Documents

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

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

26. Basic Terms and Conditions

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

- All projects are subject to management verifications, audits carried out by auditors (including by the Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID), the European Court of Auditors and the European Commission (EC) auditors), evaluations (programme evaluators) and inquiries by DG OLAF. Officials from the GXF, ARPA and MA and other horizontal stakeholders would also have rights of access to the project and all relevant documentation. Such officials could carry out spot checks (physical and documentary) to establish that sufficient progress is being made in line with the Grant Agreement and that the Beneficiary has put in place systems of management and control that ensure the efficient implementation of the project in line with the relevant Regulations and Procedures.
- If the project is selected for funding, the Applicant would be bound by the principles of transparency, good governance, sound financial management and the relevant national regulations.
- By submitting the Application, the Organisation is giving its automatic consent to publishing (including on the internet) the details of the Organisation and the project (including budget and implementation period) in line with the obligations in the relevant Council and Commission Regulations.
- The applicant should also be aware of the durability clause enshrined in Article 71 of Regulation 1303/2013, which states that an operation retains the contribution from the EAFRD only if that operation does not, within five years from the final payment of the competent authorities, undergo a substantial modification.
- The applicant is to declare whether an application for part or all of the proposed project has been submitted for assistance under any other Community Source including European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund (CF), etc. If in the affirmative the applicant is required to indicate all relevant details.
- The applicant organisation should note that if the project is accepted, the applicant will be automatically giving his/her consent to have all the documents and data related to the project, (including name of project leader and other persons relevant to the project, invoices, receipts and documents related to contracts etc..) made available to all the relevant stakeholders including third party evaluators and auditors involved in the EAFRD fund system. The LAG reminds the Applicant that it is the responsibility of the Applicant to inform any third parties (including contractors) that all data and information relating to the project will be shared with other stakeholders, local and European.
- The chosen entity must ensure that all activities are carried out in compliance with applicable national and community rules and any other mandatory requirements as laid down in the Rural Development Programme for Malta (2014-2020). Failure to do so will result in penalties with respect to the grant received plus interest accrued according to the law.
- Planning permit where relevant. In case where a Planning Authority (PA) permit is required, the valid PA permit and approved drawings or the application submitted to PA and related drawings have to be presented as part of the documentation with the application. **The GXF will reject any project if the PA permit is not presented at application stage or at least the application has a PA number or DNO number. Applications with a tracking number will be rejected.**
- Once the applicant endorses the contract with the LAG, the applicant will be automatically be giving its consent to the publication of data related to the payments that the ARPA will eventually be affecting. This will be in line with Regulation (EU) 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The regulation requires all Member States of the European Union to publish details of beneficiaries, who received payments under the CAP.

27. Selection criteria and Sub-criteria		
An evaluation of the proposals will be carried out in accordance with the selection criteria set out in the Selection Criteria grid below:		
SELECTION CRITERIA		Maximum POINTS
1. Relevance to the objective of the measure (max. 20 points)		
a	Evidence that the project contributes to the conservation of biodiversity	5 points
b	Evidence that the project contributes to the creation of green carbon sinks and makes use of specific species of conservation value	5 points
c	Evidence that the proposed investment contributes to the creation of recreational space for visitors	10 points
2. Link to the territory (max. 20 points)		
a	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention has a documented link to the natural history of the area	10 points
b	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention has a documented link to the socio-demographic development of the area	5 points
c	Evidence that the area proposed for intervention is linked to other sites of ecological value in the same area	5 points
3. Type of project (max. 15 points)		
a	The project is an integrated project in that it incorporates the achievement of more than one objective ⁵	5 points
b	The project is area-based and targets more than one element of green infrastructure within the same area	5 points
c	The project involves a cooperation between more than one local actor	5 points
4. Social impact on the Community (max. 15 points)		
a	The project's information and education components are targeted to children	5 points
b	The project's information and education components are targeted to youths	5 points
c	The project targets persons from an economically-disadvantaged background/status	5 points
5. Preparedness (max. 15 points)		
a	Evidence that the necessary consultation with stakeholders and regulatory entities has taken place by the main applicants	5 points
b	All PA / DNO permits (if any) and other relevant permits are in hand or in the application process	10 points
6. Sustainability of the Project (max. 15 points)		
a	Evidence of the project's sustainability following 5 years from its completion	5 points
b	Evidence that the project sustains the environment and climate	5 points
c	Evidence that the investment supports the policies related to gender equality and non-discrimination	5 points

⁵ Refer to Measure 4 - Section: Contribution to cross-cutting objectives of the rural development programme – Measure of the Xlokk LDS

TOTAL:	100 points
<p>To be considered for funding or to be placed on the reserve list, a project must pass all the eligibility criteria (refer to Section 4 of these Guidance Notes) and must also obtain 50 marks out of the total marks allocated to the selection criteria. Please note that in relation to the above, for every criterion there are sub-criteria which the Project Selection Committee will be using to mark the projects.</p>	

28. List of application requirements check-list		
1	Original signed project application form (1) together with one (1) copy of the signed project application forms. Both the original and copy of the application form should include the supporting documents. <i>In case of local councils, the application form should be signed by both the Mayor and Executive Secretary</i>	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
2	A soft copy of the application form saved both in PDF (.pdf) and WORD (.doc or .docx) format including also the supporting documentation	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
3	Copy of ID Card of Project Leader	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
4	Letter of Intent signed by the entity's official representatives or by the majority of the committee appointing the Project Leader	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
5	Title Deeds or Lease or other form of contract for Project Location (Contract) in cases of infrastructural interventions or any other interventions that are related to the building	<i>Applicable for Local Councils/VOs/private schools only</i>
6	Signed Owner's consent in the case of a lease/ management agreement/ guardianship or any other form of contract for the works to be carried out	<i>If applicable to Local Councils, VOs/private schools only</i>
7	Signed declaration from the owner of the property specifying the address of where the investments will be kept during the project for 5 years following the final payment.	<i>If applicable to Local Councils, VOs/private schools only</i>
8	Section 7G of the application form - Log/Timeline of activities (in case of investments that will result in delivery of specific services)	<i>Applicable for VOs and schools only</i>
9	Section 7H of the application duly filled	<i>Applicable for Local Councils only</i>
10	Sections 7i and 7K of the application duly filled	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
11	Copy of School Licence Certificate	<i>Applicable for Private schools only</i>
12	Copy of Voluntary Organisation (VO) Certificate issued by the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
13	A copy of the latest compliance certificate issued by the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
14	The latest signed VO statute as approved by the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
15	The latest Financial Accounts as submitted to the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations (minimum for year 2020)	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
16	Signed list of committee members (including their name & surname, role, ID number and address)	<i>Applicable for VOs only</i>
17	The latest balance sheet	<i>Applicable for Schools only</i>
18	Audited financial statements of year n-1. If n1 year audited accounts are not available, the applicant is to submit the management financial accounts. <i>The GXF retains the right to consult with the Director of Local</i>	<i>Applicable for Local Councils only</i>

	<i>Government to check that the co-financing as declared by the Local Council is available/likely to be met. This assessment by the Director of Local Government will be made on the basis of the information provided by the applicant.</i>	
19	The most recent site plans and approved drawings found in the PA website related to the proposed investment	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
20	Copy of application with PA and proposed drawings and site plans related to the proposed investment	<i>If applicable</i>
21	Correspondence with the PA that the enhancement of the proposed premises/site or the proposed use does not require a PA permit or a DNO.	<i>If applicable</i>
22	Copy of VAT Certificate	<i>If applicable</i>
23	Itemised comparable guaranteed quotations ⁶ or pro-forma invoices for all project costs which are not related to infrastructural investment (a minimum of 3 quotations , including VAT number of supplier and beneficiary, reference number, original signature (signature only required in case of RfQ or Financial Bid form), details of supplier, address of beneficiary, amount excluding VAT, VAT rate, total including VAT and quantities).	<i>As applicable</i>
24	Detailed, Signed and Dated Estimate by an architect in case of structural works (Bill of Quantities)	<i>If applicable</i>
25	In case of the submission of a minimum of 3 quotations or more, a signed and dated adjudication report stating the chosen supplier/s – to be signed by the project leader and another legal representative of the entity	<i>If applicable</i>
26	Original signed Bank, accountant or auditor's declaration confirming availability of own resources if the co-financing of the project will be met through own resources – (An original signed declaration stating that the applicant is financially sound to cover the 20% co-financing). Declaration should clearly refer to the project being implemented. <i>Declaration should be issued not earlier than 3 months from the deadline of the applicable cut-off date or not earlier than 3 months from the date of submission of application whichever is applicable</i>	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
27	When applying for the planting or removal of invasive trees, photographic evidence identifying the type of trees and its/their location (s) on the holding	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
28	A signed architect's Method statement which includes i) a list of native species typical of the ecosystem in the area, ii) a planting scheme and iii) a maintenance plan.	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
29	Clearance from ERA prior to removal of invasive alien tree species (dated not more than three months prior to the date on which the batch closes)	<i>If applicable</i>
30	Written approval from ERA on the proposed investment if private part is to be financed by a loan, a bank letter of intent or a bank sanction letter is to be provide involving green elements	<i>If applicable</i>
31	FSS / SSC Clearance Certificate from the Inland Revenue Department	<i>Compulsory for</i>

	confirming there are no pending dues or is otherwise honouring an agreement for settling any outstanding amounts <i>(the certificate should not be dated up to 3 months prior to the deadline of this batch/deadline)</i> - An email should be sent to certificates.cfr@gov.mt	<i>Local Councils and VOs</i>
32	All sections of the application form have been filled in	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
List of annexes		
33	Annex 1 – VAT Declaration Form	<i>Compulsory for all applicants</i>
34	Annex 2 – Bank’s letter of intent	<i>If applicable</i>
35	Annex 3 – Financial Bid Form	<i>Optional</i>

Note to the applicant:

Part or all of the information you provide will be held on a computer. This information will be used for the administration of applications and producing monitoring reports. The Foundation has the right to share information with government departments, agencies and implementing bodies to enable them to prevent fraudulent applications or for detecting crime and to co-ordinate processing of complementary applications.

The information on the Application Form along with any attached documents will be treated as confidential throughout and after the project appraisal process. If your project is selected for an award of grant, to meet EU requirements for transparency regarding the use of EAFRD assistance, the Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands, and GAL XLOKK Foundation (GXF) have the right to publish the name of the applicant, the amount of grant awarded and a brief summary of the project.

Annex 1 - VAT Declaration Form

Part I – Declaration by Beneficiary

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

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

Yes

No

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

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

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

Yes No Partial

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

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

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

I declare that the above-mentioned information is correct.

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

Part II – Declaration by VAT Division

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

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

Signature and stamp of VAT Department Representative	Name of VAT Department Representative	Date
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Annex 2 - Recommended text for Bank letter of intent

Our Ref:

Date

The Manager
GAL XLOKK Foundation
269, Main Street
Qormi. QRM 1107

Dear Sir

We are informed that _____ has applied for an EU funded call.

The Bank is interested and prepared to consider in terms of its credit policy, any application for financial support in connection with this project.

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

- i. a detailed assessment of the business and financial plans;
- ii. a viability study of the project; and
- iii. a situation analysis, at the time of the application

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

Yours faithfully,

Relationship Manager

ANNEX 3 – Financial Bid Form Template
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To be filled in by the supplier

RFQ (Ref no) - Quotation to:

Name of organisation/entity

Address

VAT number

Applicant Details - 1A

Name and Surname of representative	
ID number	
Company Name	
VAT NO	
Postal Address	
E-Mail Address	
Mobile Number	
Fixed Line Number	
Date	
Signature	

Financial Bid – 1B

(the table can be amended according to the number of items required)

Item No.	Item Description	Quantity	Unit Price Excluding VAT	VAT Rate	Total Price Including VAT
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
Any discount		Specify rate			
Total					

(GRAND TOTAL Amount in words)

Signature:

Name and Surname:



Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020

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



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