

GUIDANCE NOTES

Measure 3 – Marketing of the Territory

Common Agricultural Fund - Strategic Plan for Malta (2023-2027)

Version Call3c – issued May 2026

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Disclaimer

The GAL Xlokk Foundation reserves the right, in particular on the basis of the approval or direction by the European Commission, to amend from time to time certain provisions established by this guidance document.

Such amendments may become applicable and enforced retrospectively.

In case of any conflicts between these guidance notes and the text of the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (CAP SP) 2023-2027, the GAL XLOKK Local Development Strategy and other legislative text, the interpretation given by the relevant legislation will be given priority.

The GAL Xlokk Foundation reserves the right to request additional information not included in this Guidance Document, in order to proceed with checks and evaluation of the application throughout the process.

The Submission of Documentation

Applications must be submitted in soft copy. This can be done by emailing a zipped folder containing the application on info@galxlokk.com by not later than the submission date of the closing of each batch of this call.

Provision

This notification supersedes any previous guidance notes, website notifications or other media notifications issued on this intervention prior to the launch of this call. Other notifications can be issued on such platforms following the issue of this call.

Further details on the application process may be published in due course on the websites of the GAL Xlokk Foundation: www.galxlokk.com. For more information, GAL Xlokk Foundation can be contacted via email on: info@galxlokk.com or (+)356 2099 8008 during office hours.

Definitions:

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

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy - Strategic Plan is a plan drawn up by each Member State to contribute towards the reaching the aims of the Common Agricultural Policy. CAP Strategic Plans encourage the transition towards a smart, sustainable, competitive, resilient, and diversified agricultural sector, while ensuring long-term food security.

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 role of the Decision Committee includes the assessment and review of all applications received. The DC assesses and ranks applications.

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Evaluation: A periodic collection and analysis of evidence to form conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

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

Grant Award Letter: A letter sent by GXF to the selected applicants upon the completion of the selection process as to inform applicants of its outcome. The award letter can include certain conditions and actions expected on the part of the applicant.

LEADER: *Liason Entre Actions de Development de l'Economie Rurale*'. The LEADER programme refers to the implementation of the actions included in the Local Development strategies by the LAG to address specific local issues in line with the Common Agricultural policy 2023 - 2027.

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.

Monitoring: Regular examination of the resources, outputs and results of interventions.

Project Leader: Is a person who is authorized by the applicant to ensure a project is carried through and in line with commitments. The Project Leader can be contracted directly for matters related to an ongoing project and is expected to have responsibility for the execution of a project.

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

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

Results: The direct effects or changes that arise due to the project.

Voluntary Organizations (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 Organizations Act.

Introduction

These Guidance Notes are intended to assist Applicants in understanding the requirements for requesting and receiving funding support under **Measure 3 – Marketing of the Territory** of the Xlokk Local Development Strategy (LDS).

Applicants are advised to familiarize themselves with these Guidance Notes prior to completing an application. The Guidance Notes, Application Form and all Annexes and other documentation are available on www.galxlokk.com¹ during the application period.

Applicants are reminded to ensure that they refer to the latest guidance notes available on the Foundation's 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 version available at the time of opening of the batch will be considered for evaluation.**

Authorities

The **GAL Xlokk Foundation**, or Fondazzjoni GAL Xlokk (hereinafter referred to as "GAL Xlokk", the "Foundation", "Fondazzjoni GAL Xlokk" or "GXF"), was set up in 2008 to implement the LEADER programme in the South-East territory of Malta, as defined in the following section. The GAL Xlokk Foundation will administer funds under the Common Agricultural Policy - Strategic Plan for 2023-2027, focusing on the local development needs and priorities within the designated Xlokk region, ensuring effective and targeted use of resources to support rural development and community-led initiatives.

Other national authorities may be involved and referred to in the assessment of an application, or during project implementation.

Complementary and demarcation with other interventions

This strategy seeks to build upon the previous LEADER programs of 2007-2013 and 2014-2022. Hence it is important to consider the vision and strategic objectives that were established in the first and second LDS for the Xlokk region for that period.

Contribution towards the LDS needs

Over the years, Malta has witnessed a swift rise in both its population size and density, a trend that is also evident within the GAL Xlokk region. In fact, the population density for this region is higher than the average for Malta. As the number of foreign residents surged, the demographic make-up of this area began evolving into a more culturally diverse community. However, this transformation also led to challenges concerning social inclusion, stemming from barriers related to language and culture.

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

Furthermore, an opportunity exists to renovate specific structures and artifacts, thereby preserving the region's cultural essence. Equally important is the exploration of opportunities linked to social inclusivity. This can be achieved through a range of events that consider the diverse and evolving demographic composition of the localities within this region. Similarly, effective marketing initiatives could be introduced to attract more tourists to less frequented destinations. This would in turn contribute to both the education and tourism objectives which were highlighted within the public consultation meetings.

Aim, Scope & Objectives of this measure

The general aim of this measure is to strengthen the economic viability of the local community by helping participants reach a wider audience and promote what assets or products they already have through better marketing. This pillar could include efforts to increase a potential participant's reach through activities such as on-line marketing, exploring new markets, and attracting new customers or visitors. However, it is essential to underscore that this pillar includes also extends to non-digital marketing.

Rationale

While substantial effort is carried out by producers in producing a product, marketing skills and time effort is restricted. Additionally, the region's cultural and natural assets are in certain instances not adequately promoted and hence fail to reach the desired target audience. Through this measure, the LAG seeks to promote the assets or products already existent in the region, in a bid to enhance economic sustainability.

Contribution to cross-cutting objectives

This action ensures its contribution to CAP SP needs and the Partnership Agreement objectives. The Cross-Cutting Objectives that this action targets are:

- Digitisation
- Simplification
- Modernisation

Contribution towards Priority Objectives:

Actions supported under this sub-measure shall contribute to **Priority Objective 2: Marketing the territory.**

This measure supports projects that promote the market of existing assets and products. It also promotes the digitalisation of business processes with the ultimate target of expanding the promoter's reach. This measure is expected to have a relatively open scope, potential beneficiaries are encouraged to explore diverse and innovative approaches to leverage this marketing pillar/measure. The projects should allow communities to preserve knowledge for future generations through online resources and also allow communities to reach a wider audience through online resources. Projects that include smart farming technologies, allowing for instance, the optimisation of resource use, the reduction of waste, and the minimisation of the environmental footprint fall under this pillar.

Result indicators addressed by the intervention

At least six (6) projects leading to the improvement of the social and/r rural environment in the GAL Xlokk territory and the quality of life of the communities of the LAG territory.

Duration

This batch opened on **Wednesday, 26th November 2025**, and will close, subject to the availability of funds and/or notifications by the MA informing otherwise. **The total maximum duration of the project should be up to 12 months.**

Rolling- Calls

This measure will operate through rolling calls, with applications opening on a two-month basis until the allocated budget is fully utilised. The closing dates of each batch are as follows:

Closure 1	29th November 2025
Closure 2	16th January 2026
Closure 3	27th February 2026
Closure 5	27th March 2026
Closure 6	24th April 2026
Closure 7	26th June 2026
Closure 8	31st July 2026
Closure 9	28th August 2026
Closure 10	25th September 2026
Closure 11	30th October 2026
Closure 12	27th November 2026
Closure 13	18th December 2026

The call will reopen the following day if funds are still available. Once the allocated budget is fully exhausted, GXF will publish a notification on its website and Facebook page to inform the public that the measure will no longer reopen.

Budget

The indicative budget available for this intervention is **€270,000**
GXF reserves the right to amend the budget allocated.

Risks in Implementation and Mitigation Factors

Another risk associated with this measure is that of providing support to activities that could be easily transferable to other territories, that is, the proposed activities have a weak dependence on the territory and its people. This risk is being mitigated through the requirements for strong territorial attachment in the selection criteria.

Maximum Grant Value & Aid Intensity

The grant support for individual projects shall be capped at **a minimum of €10,000 and a maximum of €15,000**, whilst collaborative projects **will be capped at a minimum of €15,000 and a maximum of €45,000.**

The GAL Xlokk Foundation (GXF) reserves the right to reject an application, including, but not limited to, cases where funds are unavailable under the respective intervention. In such instances, GXF may consider the establishment of a reserve list of project proposals.

This beneficiary will be granted financial assistance amounting to up to 80% of the total eligible expenditure. The Co-financing element must be borne by the applicant.

The VAT element must 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.

Eligible Actions

The GAL Xlokk territory is made up of seventeen localities, therefore projects must be physically implemented in one of the rural localities within the GAL Xlokk Foundation Territory, as specified in the following table.

Xlokk Territory			
Birzebbugia	Għaxaq	Gudja	Kalkara
Kirkop	Luqa	Marsascala	Marsaxlokk
Mqabba	Qormi	Qrendi	Safi
Santa Luċija	Xagħra	Żabbar	Żejtun
Żurrieq			

Standard Eligibility Conditions

Type of Support

The form of support provided by this measure is a non-repayable grant support in line with any of the forms of financing outlined in Article 83 of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, and as may be announced in the Call for Project Proposals issued, and/or at the latest in the document setting out the conditions for support. Operations shall not be eligible for support where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for support is approved by the Local Action Group, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made.

Eligible Investments

The eligible costs to be reimbursed through this grant support relate to two types of investments:

- The exploration of new sales markets, particularly through online sources.
- Online marketing sales campaigns aimed at attracting new customers or visitors.

- The branding of a product and/or service within the territory aimed at attracting non-residents and tourists

These may be broken down into the following components:

- Overheads, which include the expenses incurred that are not directly attributable to a specific project or activity but without which a project cannot be implemented (refer to National Eligibility Rules).
- Direct project costs that are necessary for the implementation of operations shall be eligible for support. There is no capping on the expenditure in favour of professional and ancillary services as long as these are directly the implementation of the marketing and promotion project.
- Cost of tangible material, such as printing.

All costs shall be eligible if incurred within the project duration.

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

Non-Eligible Costs:

The following is an indicative list of non-eligible investment under Measure 3:

- The purchase of machinery and real estate
- Interest on debt
- Value added tax, except in specific circumstances as outlined in Article 64(1) (c) of the Common Provision Regulation (as per National Eligibility Rules Section
- Value-added tax in the case

In addition, calls for applications and respective guidelines may contain additional provisions relating to methods of procurement of the works, rates of items and services, types of vegetation and/or trees, and other requirements, as may be applicable. The subsidiary Legislation 549.64 of the Environment and Resources Authority on “Trees and Woodlands Protection Regulations – Legal Notice 200 of 2011” is one such example.

Eligible Applicants

The beneficiaries eligible for funding under Measure 1 Improving of the Environment of the Territory are:

- Local Councils
- Regional Councils
- VOs ² (regularly registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations, in line with the Voluntary Organizations Act 2007, and regularly operating within the Xlokk territory).
- SMEs
- Natural Persons being the main administrator of the site

² VOs must be compliant with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations.

- **Entities that carry out an economic activity within the meaning of Article 107 TFEU will be subject to State aid rules as outlined in Section 8 below.**
- **Prospective applicants with an outstanding recovery order with the Paying Agency cannot be considered for support under this intervention. An outstanding recovery order refers to debt held with ARPA that is either outstanding or where a settlement agreement is not in place.**
- **In the case of Local Councils, the Permanent Secretary hereby acknowledges that the said project application can be submitted to the LAG. Accordingly, the respective application may now be duly processed by the LAG.**
- **Parishes must apply as organisations. Clergy may only act as representatives or project leaders, never as applicants or beneficiaries. Where a Parish has its own VO number, it must apply using that number. Where it does not, the Parish must apply under the Curia's VO number, supported by formal Curia authorisation, in line with MA Circular 01/2024.**

Eligibility Criteria

The following general eligibility criteria shall apply for the evaluation of proposals for actions to be supported under this measure:

- The applicant is able to demonstrate that he/she forms part of (or is the legal representative of) the beneficiary/applicant organisation.
- Submitted application is fully completed and duly filled-in³
- 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.
- The proposed project contributed to the general and specific objectives of the measure;
- The applicant retains full ownership of the facilities proposed for the project.
- At the application stage, voluntary organisations must include a certificate of compliance issued by the Commissioner for Voluntary Organizations, valid up to the end of the year
- The project proposal contains evidence of the site that is to be created and/or developed as a result of the investment.
- The proposed project contributes to at least one indicator target.
- The project proposal contains evidence of the social/ cultural/ historical link of the activity to the Xlokk territory, or any of its localities.

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

³ In terms of details as required by the Decision Committee to evaluate the project for eligibility and selection accordingly.

The Project Proposal

It is strongly advisable that prior to the preparation and submission of the application, prospective applicants carefully read these Guidance Notes.

More information on each section of the application can be found in the following section.

Project Details

Filling out Part A - Administrative Forms

Project Title: Name your project in a way that it can be easily understood and captures the gist of your project (max 10 words)

Project Duration: Insert the number of months required to complete the proposed project. The maximum project duration is **12 months** and thus applicants are advised to be realistic in their project in view of the timing constraints⁴. The project duration in months will be calculated from the date of the signing of the grant agreement.

Applicant's Information: To include details of project leader - address, mobile number, email address and position within the entity.

Project Leader: To include details of applicant - address, mobile number, email address and position within the entity.

Details of Partnership: To include details of partnership. (if applicable)

Nature of Activity / Business: List the nature of the business.

VAT Declaration: The applicant should indicate whether the project gives rise to sales. If the project is directly related to sales on which VAT is charged the applicant can recover the VAT element from the VAT department. If the sales are zero-rated (exempt with credit) the applicant will cover the VAT from the LEADER funds. Please read the declaration carefully and tick ☒ accordingly. The declaration will become legally binding once the project is approved and the applicant has signed the Grant Agreement.

Source of funding - The applicant should indicate whether other sources of funding were considered. Please read the declaration carefully and tick ☒ accordingly. The declaration will become legally binding once the project is approved and the applicant has signed the Grant Agreement.

Type of Expenditure: The applicant should indicate under which type of investment the application is being submitted.

Project Location: Details where the project will be located should be provided.

⁴ This recommendation is being made to minimize the frequency of extensions being granted

Project Cost: The application should indicate the project estimate cost, backed up by quotes or BOQ. The grant support for individual projects shall be of €30,518.

Line Items and project costs. (Annex 1)

In this section, the applicant needs to insert the action which will be included as part of the project plan. Awareness campaigns should include activities that go beyond the regulatory obligations of the EAFRD program, e.g., plaques and stickers should not be listed here.

An indirect cost of 7% will be applied on the total eligible costs that will cover any overheads incurred by the Beneficiary.

All actions need to include the amount Excl. and Inc. VAT.

Line item	Type of Investment	Component
<i>Overheads (7%)</i>	Operational support for project delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative costs, utilities, and indirect expenses necessary for project delivery
<i>Direct project costs</i>	Costs that are necessary for the implementation of operations.	
<i>Professional Fees</i>	There are no capping on professional and acillary fees as long as these are directly related to the implementation of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound engineers Videographers Editors Others
<i>Cost of tangible material</i>	Cost related to promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing
<i>Dissemination and Animation Costs</i>	Cost related on how the project will be disseminated and/or promoted to the community	<i>*(See point 3)</i>

*Items listed in Annex 1

Technical Description

Please note that all sections within the Technical Description directly contribute to the ranking criteria.

1. Project Description – (15 marks) :

The Key Investment Plan is an essential part of the application form that must be completed in full for the application to be considered eligible. Applicants should clearly describe their proposed restoration project, outlining its objectives, components, and the expected impact on the community. This includes explaining how the investment will contribute to the preservation and rehabilitation of heritage assets, support environmental improvements through sustainable restoration practices, and deliver tangible benefits to the wider community. Specifically, investments may focus on restoration projects that protect heritage assets and natural environments, as well as infrastructure initiatives that enhance the community through culture, arts, and sports facilities. This approach ensures both preservation and social development.

The information provided will directly influence the project's ranking, so clarity, relevance, and completeness are essential.

The Key Investment Plan forms an integral part of the Application Form, and all sections must be completed by the Applicant for such applications to be eligible under this restoration intervention (note that this section contributes directly to the ranking criteria as listed in the application).

2. Cross-Cutting Objectives (10 marks) : The Applicant must state and tick whether the project will target one of the objectives and include in what way it will be targeted.

3. *Dissemination & Animation of Activities (10 marks)⁵: A description is required on how the project will be disseminated and/or promoted to the community

4. Innovation / Originality (7 marks): The applicant will have to mention how they will incorporate the unique characteristics of the rural area by tailoring solutions to local needs and leveraging regional resources and context through the project proposed

5. Partnership (7 marks) (if applicable)

The applicant will have to demonstrate how the project, through strategic partnerships, contribute to the success, sustainability, and long-term impact of the project, whilst reaching a wider target audience.

6. Preserving the Uniqueness of Individual Localities (5 marks): The applicant will have to mention how the project will prioritize the preservation of local cultural,

⁵ <https://fondi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Communication-and-Visibility-Requirements-Malta.pdf>

environmental, and socio-economic characteristics to enhance rural areas' appeal to tourists and support local economies.

7. Preparedness– (5 marks) The applicant must showcase a clear marketing plan demonstrating how the proposed project will be promoted, highlighting the strategies to enhance visibility, the quality of branding and communication tools to be used, and the expected long-term benefits in attracting audiences, strengthening community engagement, and positioning the territory as a valued destination.

8. Attracting new customers and visitors to exciting markets – (10 marks) The applicant must clearly demonstrate how the proposed project will attract new customers and visitors to exciting markets

9. Social Inclusion – (7 marks) The applicant must clearly demonstrate how the proposed project ensures inclusivity by providing equal opportunities for participation and benefit across all community groups.

10. Marking of assets, localities and territory - (7 marks): Applicants must clearly define and showcase how the project promotes the assets, localities, and territory, demonstrating their value, visibility, and contribution to wider community engagement and regional development.

11. Risks Associated – (7 marks)

Applicants must define the Risk Associated with the implementation and timeline of the project as proposed, whilst providing clear reasoning, supported by practical mitigation plans and how they will be addressed.

13 Clarity and Sequence (10 marks): To assess clarity, evaluate if the central ideas and objectives are clearly stated and easy to understand. Additionally, ensure that technical terms and concepts are appropriately explained for the intended audience.

Supporting Documents

A checklist of required documents is provided with the Application Form. Applicants will receive additional instructions during the evaluation process regarding any further clarifications or documents that may be needed.

Description	Yes	No	N/A
Documents A soft copy of the application form along with the relevant supporting documents (below) need to be sent in one zipped folder to info@galxlokk.com - A soft copy of the signed application form both in PDF needs to be submitted. - Soft copies of all annexes, documents and supporting documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<p>- Owner's consent (where applicable, for leased premises) or a letter of intent from Local Council(s) or entity of ownership)</p> <p>(applicable to all)</p>			
<p>In Case of Loan</p> <p>Bank sanction letter if a bank loan is being utilized.</p> <p>(If applicable)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Project estimates ⁶</p> <p>- In the case of works such as construction, An Estimate of Works dated within the last 3 months.</p> <p>- In the case of services or supplies, one signed quotation, dated no earlier than three months before the respective cut-off date (in line with the issued Guidelines), for services and/or supplies not included in the Estimate of Works.</p> <p>Quotations presented must include the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Name and address of the supplier/contractor •Name and address of the beneficiary •VAT number of the supplier/contractor •Date •A clear description of the works/services/supplies to be provided, with the main specifications and quantities of the items, price per item and net amount •A breakdown of the cost per item, indicating the VAT separately. •Quotations with amendments/corrections in pen, pencil or correctional fluid/eraser should carry an accompanying signature. •Quotations from a website are to clearly include the specifications and price, and indicate the web address and date of screenshot. <p>The applicant must follow the procurement process for reimbursement by ARPA if the project is awarded.</p> <p>(applicable for all)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁶ Such documents are required at the application stage. Upon approval of the application, the beneficiary is then required to follow the Public Procurement Policy.

Declaration

The applicant is requested to review the statements in the declaration section and confirm their commitment to abide by the stipulated declarations. If any information is found to be false or intentionally misleading, GXF may withdraw any awarded EU funds and recover any disbursed funds from the applicant organization. These obligations will become binding upon the signing of the Grant Agreement if the application is approved for co-financing. Failure to accept all these declarations will result in the application not being submitted, and any such submission will be considered null and void.

The Application Process General Provisions

Interested applicants need to submit the completed application form. It is strongly advisable that prior to the preparation and submission of the application, prospective applicants read these guidance notes.

- All applications must be fully completed by the Project Leader, with no sections left blank. If any specific requested information is not applicable to the applicant, the field must be filled with the note **"Not applicable."**
 - While GXF representatives are available for meetings with interested applicants, it remains the applicant's responsibility to thoroughly read the guidance notes and application form.
 - Applicants are also responsible for ensuring that all requested documentation is correctly presented. They must ensure that both the application form and the required supporting documentation are submitted.
 - It is not the duty of GXF to verify the above matters irrespective of any meetings that may be held between GXF and the applicants.
 - The Call for Applications will open on Monday 15th of September 2025 and remain open until the entire budget allocation for this Measure is exhausted. GXF will use an Open Block Call Procedure, meaning that applications received within each time block will be assessed separately from those received in subsequent blocks. The call will close either when the budget has been fully committed or if GXF issues a notification withdrawing the call. GXF may reissue the call in a similar or different format and may provide clarifications and amendments during the open call period without closing and reopening the call. Such updates will be posted on our website: [**www.galxlukk.com**](http://www.galxlukk.com).
- A. A receipt shall be issued by the receiving officer upon submission of a completely filled-in application form. 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.

Assessment and Selection

Evaluation - Administrative Checks

GXF will undertake a validity check of all applications that are received.

The GXF will carry out administrative checks on submitted applications. The submitted application form must be filled in correctly. In the event that an application is submitted with incomplete documentation or information, a notification letter will be issued to the applicant, granting a period of five **(5) working days** from the date of the letter to submit the missing documentation and/or information. Should the applicant be unable to provide the required materials within this time frame, they may formally request an extension, accompanied by a valid justification for the delay. The DC will be required to determine whether to approve the extension request.

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

The GXF 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 the quotation to be submitted by the applicant, the Decision Committee reserves the right to ask for further clarifications or necessary adjustments even after the applicant submits the missing documentation/clarifications.

The Decision 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. 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.

Assessment and Selection of Applications

The Decision Committee is responsible for ranking and selecting applications for support. The DC may request the services of a **technical expert** to assist with the evaluation process. The DC also reserves the right to **request additional information or further clarifications** on the project as part of the selection process.

Applications shall be assessed and ranked based on **selection criteria** relevant to the intervention.

The Decision Committee will award marks according to the established criteria and will rank projects based on the marks obtained. To qualify for selection, proposals must obtain at least **50% of the total marks** for both general and intervention-specific selection criteria. Certain selection criteria may also require a **mandatory 'pass mark'** within the respective criterion.

The selection of projects may be limited by the **available budget**, in which case grants will be offered to the **highest-ranking projects**. Projects that meet the criteria but cannot be funded immediately may be placed on a **reserve list**.

If a project gives rise to **State Aid**, the **State Aid Monitoring Board (SAMB)** will be formally **notified** and consulted to ensure full compliance with **State Aid regulations**.

Unsuccessful Applicants

GXF will inform all applicants about the outcome of the selection process. 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 and an email addressed to

"The Chairperson", Project Selection Appeals Board of GXF, 269, Main Street, Qormi, QRM 1107, within 5 working days from when the applicant receives the notification letter.

The Appeals Board will not consider late appeals. The letter should include detailed reason/s of why the appeal is being made, supported by any relevant documentation/testimonials.

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

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

Grant Agreement

Applicants whose proposals for investments have been selected in accordance with the procedure described above, in terms of being eligible and having obtained the necessary scoring for selection, and could be allocated the requisite budget for funding, shall be invited to agree with GXF by signing the Grant Agreement. More details on the generic provisions applicable in the Grant Agreement and the contractual obligations of the Beneficiary are provided in the subsequent sections. Selected applicants who do not come forward to sign the grant agreement within the stipulated time frames will have the award withdrawn.

Changes

Change requests should be approved by the GXF. Any request should be made before the actual expiry of the original time frame. 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. Applicants are being advised that changes related to extensions are being restricted⁷.

A change request in the form of an email on info@galxlokk.com should suffice.

If a request for changes to the contract is submitted after these changes have actually taken place (ex-post), the expenditure related to these changes may be subject to applicable penalties. The written request for changes must indicate the changes required, the necessary justification and relevant supporting documentation.

The Change Request Form can be downloaded from the GAL Xlokk Foundation website from the following link: [Important Documents – Galxlokk](#)

Contractual Obligations

Upon signing the Grant Agreement, the Beneficiary becomes legally bound by certain provisions. The following sections provide information on some aspects of the contractual obligations of the Beneficiary.

⁷ Applicants need to be responsible when considering the project duration.

The Agriculture and Rural Paying Agency (ARPA) may, from time to time, issue further information and guidance.

Retention of Documents

"It is recommended that the Beneficiary (BN) retains all documentation related to the implementation of the project in a safely stored project file. While the obligation to maintain an adequate audit trail lies with the Local Action Group (LAG), maintaining such records at the BN level can support the LAG in facilitating audits and the ex-post evaluation of the program. All documents should ideally be retained for at least five (5) years following the end of the programming period."

Durability of investment

The following durability periods shall apply depending on the **total grant value** of the investment:

- **For investments with a grant value of up to €15,000**, the durability period shall extend to **one (1) year** from the date of the **final payment** to the beneficiary.
- **For investments with a grant value between €15,000 and €200,000**, the durability period shall extend to **three (3) years** from the date of the **final payment** to the beneficiary.
- **For investments with a grant value exceeding €200,000**, the durability period shall extend to **five (5) years** from the date of the **final payment** to the beneficiary.

The durability period refers to the time during which the beneficiary must ensure that the investment is **maintained, operational, and compliant with the objectives and conditions outlined in the grant agreement**.

Procurement⁸

Beneficiaries should note that grants awarded for actions under this sub-measure are public funds. In this regard, all beneficiaries should ensure that any procurement undertaken for cost items to be financed through this sub-measure is carried out in line with the principles of sound financial management, good governance, transparency, and equality together with the provisions of the Manual of Procedures issued by the relevant authorities and with the provisions of the relevant EU and/or National Legislation.

Checks in relation to public procurement will verify that Union public procurement rules and related National rules are complied with and that the basic principles of transparency, objectivity, non-discrimination, and appropriate disclosure have been respected throughout the entire process.

In cases of non-compliance with the rules of public procurement, the financial

⁸ All Beneficiaries of the LEADER programme whose Grant Agreements include costs claimed as actual costs incurred and paid (i.e. not as simplified cost options) must follow the procedures outlined in Circular 001/2023 – Procurement Procedures to be applied by VOs and NGOs available <https://fondi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Circular-001-2023.pdf> .

corrections towards the service provider beneficiary will be determined by the Paying Agency on the basis of the Commission Decision of 14.5.2019 laying down the guidelines for determining financial corrections C(2019)3452 final.

Controls and Penalties

Beneficiaries must note that by signing the Grant Agreement they are agreeing to undertake an obligation for the relevant checks and controls by the respective Authorities including the following:

- **The Paying Agency (PA) – Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA), Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA),**
- **The Certifying Body (CB) – Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID), Office of the Prime Minister (OPM),**
- **The National Audit Office (NAO) in view of the fact that public funds are being utilized for the implementation of the investment,**
- **The Audit Services of the European Commission (EC) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in view of the fact the investment is benefiting from European Union (EU) funds,**
- **The VAT Department to ensure that VAT Regulations are respected.**

Administrative checks on support applications

Administrative checks on applications for support shall ensure the compliance of the operation with applicable obligations established by Union or national law or by the rural development programme, including those of public procurement, State aid and other obligatory standards and requirements, where applicable. The checks shall, in particular, include verification of:

- The eligibility of the beneficiary.
- The eligibility criteria, commitments, and other obligations of the operation for which support is requested.
- Compliance with the selection criteria.
- The eligibility of the costs of the operation, including compliance with the category of costs or calculation method to be used when the operation or part of it falls under Article 53(1)(b), (c) and (d) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060.⁹
- For costs referred to in Article 53(1)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060, excluding contributions in kind and depreciation, a verification of the reasonableness of the costs submitted. The costs shall be evaluated using a suitable evaluation system, such as reference costs, a comparison of different offers or an evaluation committee¹⁰

⁹ Simplified costs option

¹⁰ Article 48(2) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 808/2014

Administrative checks on payment claims by the paying agency (ARPA)

Once a Beneficiary's project proposal is selected and awarded a grant, the beneficiary will be invited to enter into a Grant Agreement with GAL Xlokk Foundation (GXF). Following the signature of the Grant Agreement and subject to the eligibility rules of the specific intervention, a Beneficiary may start to submit payment claims to the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (the Agency) for processing, verification and ultimately payment authorization.

***Kindly note that the ARPA Payment Guidelines can be accessed through:
<https://agrikultura.gov.mt/en/arpa/Pages/guidelines.aspx>***

Payments

- A. The facility of interim payments will be provided by the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA).
- B. 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).
- C. 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).
- D. The final payment will be issued once all the necessary on-site verification's and on the-spot-check are carried out by GXF and ARPA and adherence to the contract is confirmed.
- E. In case of irregularities, penalties and sanctions may be applied by ARPA in line with the above-mentioned guidelines.
- F. Official certification by the architect appointed by the beneficiary is required for settlement of final payment (in case of infrastructural works).

Compliance with Community Policy

General Principles

It is the responsibility of the Beneficiary to ensure compliance with Community Policy, namely:

- a. Public Procurement
- b. Equal Opportunities
- c. Sustainable development

Procurement

Beneficiaries should note that grants awarded for actions under this measure are public funds. In this regard, all beneficiaries should ensure that any procurement undertaken for cost items to be financed through this measure is carried out in line with the principles of sound financial management, good governance, transparency, and equality together with the provisions of the Manual of Procedures issued by the relevant authorities. In cases of non-compliance with the rules of public procurement, the financial corrections towards the service provider beneficiary will be determined by the Paying Agency on the basis of the Commission Decision of 14th May 2019 laying down the guidelines for determining financial corrections (2019)3452 final. Eligible Procurement Procedures: Local Councils and Regional Councils are to follow the Public Procurement Regulations as applicable (both for quotations and/or tenders). NGOs and Private undertakings are to follow the procurement procedures as outlined in MA

Circular :001/2023:<https://fondi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Circular-001-2023.pdf>.

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 from:

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

At the application stage, applicants are not required to submit quotations for structural works - a bill of quantities prepared by a warranted architect will suffice. On the other hand at the application, one quotation is required for all non-infrastructure components for which funding is being requested.

Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination

Beneficiaries are required to take a pro-active approach to Equal Opportunities and must ensure that at all stages of the implementation of the action/s consideration is given to Equal Opportunities. Equal Opportunities and non-discrimination are not meant to just address gender discrimination but have a wider scope and include race, ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

Sustainable Development

Beneficiaries should include Sustainable Development, wherever possible in their action/s and must ensure that the operation is structured in such a manner that concrete positive actions towards better sustainability and mainstreaming feature throughout. It is important that environmental matters should also be taken into consideration at all stages of the design, development and implementation of the action and the action should be structured to avoid any unnecessary related environmental damage.

Publicity

The beneficiaries must abide by the publicity obligations as outlined by the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/129, as well as any Publicity/Visibility Guidelines that may be provided by the Ministry responsible for EU Funds, and which may be contacted on the email: fondi.eu@gov.mt.

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:

- Making potential participants aware of the opportunities afforded by it;
- Making the general public aware of the role of the Community in relation to the project;
- Ensure transparency of the assistance concerned;
- As an example, materials used by the Beneficiary and major correspondence, including tenders and contracts signed with third parties must include any acknowledgement of EAFRD support;
- Any publicity material, such as advertisements, billboards and information leaflets about EAFRD co-financed projects must acknowledge this support¹² ;
- Applicants are to be cautious when determining publicity actions for the project;
- 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; Beneficiary is obliged to display at a location clearly visible to the public at least one poster of a minimum size A3 or equivalent electronic display with information about the operation highlighting the support from the Union.
- 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;
- 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; and,
- Marketing efforts may be included as a separate activity in the project and as a separate budgetary allocation and justified accordingly.
- The Beneficiary should always refer to the 'Visual Identity Guidelines' that may be downloaded from the below link: <https://fondi.eu/visual-identity-guidelines-2021-2027/>

Data Policy

By submitting the application, the applicant is giving his/her consent to have personal and project details published in line with the obligations in the relevant EU Regulations and other requests by relevant bodies.

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

Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination

From time to time, the GXF, Managing Authority and/or the Paying Agency, as well as other National and/or EU entities as may be identified, may conduct economic, environmental, or other evaluation of the intervention which may involve the beneficiary in surveys/interviews of various types. GAL Xlokk Foundation officials or consultants/evaluators may contact beneficiaries as necessary. In applying for support under this intervention the beneficiary is deemed automatically as agreeing to cooperate with or take part in such studies, which are important for reviewing the effectiveness of the intervention as well as evidencing implementation of projects. GXF may also request cooperation from beneficiaries vis-à-vis promotion of the CAP -SP, including use of pictures/videos taken from projects supported through this intervention.

Contact Details

For more information regarding the Measure, kindly contact the GAL XLOKK Foundation.

Address: 269, Main Street, Qormi. QRM 1107

Telephone number: +356 2099 8008

Email: info@galxlokk.com

Website: www.galxlokk.com