

ARIA Fund LAG (A-LAG) MEETING

15th May 2024

13:00 – 15:00

South Ayrshire Council County Buildings, Troon Room

Attendees

Non- Public Sector	Attended	Public Sector	Attended
Jean Brown (JB)	X	Eddie Bulik (EB)	X
Kevin Brown (KB)	X	Rosemary Ramsay (RR)	
Barbara Conner (BC)		Melissa McCulloch (MM)	
Chris Campbell (CC)	X	Colin McKee (CM)	X
Mhairi Dawson (MD)	X		
Claire Donaldson (CD)			
Ally Henry (AH)	X		
Jim Watson (JW)	X		
		Emma Bernard (EB)	
Total No. LAG Members	12	Sarah Smillie (SS)	
Minimum Quorum (50%)	6	Jamie Tait (JT)	

LAG Staff	Attended
Jennifer Macdonald (JM)	X

Apologies

Barbara Connor (BC)
Rosemary Ramsay (RR)
Milissa McCulloch (MMc)

Acronyms

AB Accountable Body
BG Business Gateway
CE Community Enterprise
CIA Communities In Action
CLLD Community Led Local Development
CLT Community Led Tourism
EOI Expression of Interest
FTE Full Time Equivalent
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
MSG Management Support Group
ROI Register of Interests
SG Scottish Government
SME Small and Medium Enterprise

Welcome JW welcomed everyone to the meeting.	Actions
Quorum	

<p>The meeting had 8 LAG Members so was quorate with at least 50% of the 13 standing LAG Members. This comprised 6 non-public sector and 2 public sector, fulfilling the minimum 51%:49% non-public: public requirement.</p> <p>Register of Interests It was mentioned by one LAG member that ROI forms should be updated to ensure 24/25 year is up to date.</p> <p>Conflicts of Interest No conflicts of interest for agenda items were noted.</p> <p>Minutes of Last Meeting The minutes of 7th of February meeting had previously been approved and signed. This was confirmed before meeting progressed.</p> <p>JM updated LAG on news / activities since her contract began in April:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLLD Network meeting highlighted lack of clarity around 24/25 funding. No allocations had been awarded, despite suggested April deadline. Discussion was had around potentially contacting local MPs and MSPs to highlight LAG concerns. The point was made around how challenging annual funding was generally, but specifically when delays make decision making difficult. • Some LAG groups have opened for EOI's despite lack of funding clarity. • There is now a proposition for a national CLLD network to coordinate wider publicity and support for the network. There is no longer an AB group meeting so this would be incorporated into the network proposition. • A tender has gone out from SG regarding a proposed evaluation of the CLLD programme along with other rural programmes. • Internal Audit was completed to high success, report has already been circulated. • End of year report has been submitted to SG. • Guidance Notes are under review, with support from AH. LAG members will receive updated copies for approval in the coming month. <p>Questions answered from MSG meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with wider CLLD network indicated external M&E is not mandatory. • There is currently no specific guidance from SG on fund eligibility for businesses. Some CLLD areas limit to micro businesses, most approve on a case-by-case basis. • No SG staff were present at the CLLD staff meeting. Discussions were had around getting senior staff members to attend the meetings but no clarity on how to assure this was concluded. <p>Staffing JM reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE has been contracted until 01-07-24 allowing JM to act as temporary Fund Coordinator. • Recruitment process is due to have started through SAC (JT) for a 9-month Fund Coordinator and Project Officer. • Suggestion made that Job Description should be approved with LAG before position is advertised. • LAG member highlighted that staffing issues cause a medium risk to ARIA's ability to allocate the grant total. 	<p>JM to update ROI list.</p> <p>JM to circulate CLLD network paper.</p> <p>JM to contact BG to enquire about average business employee figures in Ayrshire.</p> <p>JW to check with JT about progress of recruitment.</p>
<p>CLV Overview / Review of Fund Priorities CLV JM suggested due to the lack of clarity from SG (no guidance notes have yet been received) on allocation and staffing challenges that the CLV should remain similar to the 23/24 year. JW noted</p>	

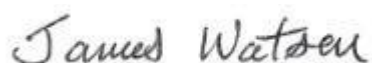
<p>no known update in priorities from SG. Working from details of 5% of CLLD budget being allocated during April / May the CLV could represent at least this known allocation. This was voted in favour unanimously.</p> <p>Review of Fund Priorities Discussion regarding the success of 23/24's CLT project led to the suggestion of incorporating CLT within the 24/25 ARIA priorities. This was voted in favour unanimously.</p> <p>CAM Fund KB lead a review of the CAM fund, highlighting the need to encourage previous awardees to apply for further funding in 24/25, as well as a continuation of the fund for new applicants. Discussion about splitting the CAM fund into two layers of application (new and previous applicants) led to the decision for previous applicants to be encouraged to apply to the main fund, for additional support instead. During 23/24 the fund was capped at £5k per applicant however two applicants with listed buildings were individually approved at a higher rate. Suggestion to update the guidance to include survey reports up to £3k for non-listed buildings and £5k for listed buildings was approved unanimously by the group.</p> <p>Main Fund JM reported the significant cross over in 23/24 between the main fund and CIA fund – suggesting the two should be amalgamated for 24/25, to support staffing capacity issues. Voted for, unanimously by LAG.</p> <p>The 23/24 video fund was discussed highlighting the success of the fund for awardees but how it did not achieve the LAG's aims. The Fund highlighted that training in video skills are needed but the group agreed that 24/25 would not be the year to run this style of fund again. The decision was made however to add a voluntary 2/3 minute video to the main fund application. Giving groups the chance to bring their application to life and show the LAG "who they are". These videos should be loaded to a YouTube channel for ease of viewing by the LAG.</p> <p>The eligibility of SME businesses for the fund was then considered. There is currently no specific guidance on this from SG and research into other LAG regions indicate variance between regions. In order to keep the fund open to third sector organisation with multiple staff the decision was made to keep eligibility open to organisations with 49 FTE or less employees. However, the following wording will be incorporated into the guidance - "micro business applications will be prioritised by the fund but SME applications will be considered, on a case-by-case basis". Discussion continued around eligibility and restricted / unrestricted finances however no changes to guidance will be made at this time, with the LAG considering each application at allocation, rather than creating a specific turnover eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Advertising Previous budget had been put aside for advertising – this was noted as less to do with ARIA fund advertising and more towards promotion of CLLD as a whole. The decision was made to concentrate on word of mouth and local authority promotion for this year's fund. Therefore no advertising budget will be necessary.</p>	<p>JM to update CLV from 23/24</p> <p>JM to include CLT in CLV update and fund guidance notes.</p> <p>JM to update CAM fund guidance with new budget totals.</p> <p>JM to add video information to main fund guidance</p>
<p>Monitoring and Evaluation JM reiterated that there is no mandatory external M&E requirement from SG. Discussion around the value previous external M&E work had provided suggested that annual external evaluations were not good value. The suggestion for internal audit and end of year reports annually with overreaching three yearly external M&E reports was voted for unanimously.</p> <p>The idea that an A4 "sales brochure" review of 23/24 fund could be useful for applicants and to promote the fund was suggested.</p>	<p>JM to create 23/24 "sales brochure"</p>

<p>Long Term Plans Given current staffing capacity issues the decision was made to postpone immediate work on potential new governance models for the ARIA fund. LAG members will continue to research and monitor other LAG’s progress – specifically Angus, which seems the most comparable model. Suggestion of a LAG visit to this region to better understand how they are transitioning proposed for later in 2024.</p>	
<p>Any other business No other business was noted until a LAG member highlighted that SG allocations had been released by email. At this point a very loose timetable for EOI’s and applications was suggested by JM. It was suggested that, if necessary, an additional LAG meeting could be called at the end of June. However updated guidance notes and a potential timeline for the 24/25 fund would be sent around digitally first. If significant changes are considered necessary, an online Teams LAG meeting will be called for late June. If not and a quorum is met by email, on the dates and guidance note updates, then the next meeting will be in September 2024</p>	<p>JM to send out key date timetable for approval.</p> <p>JM to send out updated guidelines for approval.</p>

Actions

New

- JM to update ROI list.
- JM to circulate CLLD network paper.
- JM to contact BG to enquire about average business employee figures in Ayrshire.
- JW to check with JT about progress of recruitment.
- JM to update CLV from 23/24
- JM to include CLT in CLV update and fund guidance notes.
- JM to update CAM fund guidance with new budget totals.
- JM to add video fund to main fund guidance.
- JM to create 23/24 “sales brochure”.
- JM to send out key date timetable for approval.
- JM to send out updated guidelines for approval.



Jim Watson

ARIA LAG Chair

27th May 24