

## **16 Technical assistance operations**

### **16.1 Description of the activities financed by technical assistance**

1. Defra as the Managing Authority for the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013 (RDPE) will utilise a proportion of RDPE funding for Technical Assistance activities, in accordance with Articles 66(2) and 68 of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.
2. Most Technical Assistance funding will support activities relating to monitoring and evaluation, and the National Rural Network. In particular Technical Assistance will be used to contribute to costs associated with the Mid Term Evaluation of the RDPE and also the Ex Post evaluation of the England Rural Development Programme 2000-2006. Technical Assistance funding will also support the RDPE Rural network, and a proportion of costs related to the UK Rural Network. The UK Rural Network will also receive Technical Assistance funding from the Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland Programmes.
3. The tables in Chapter 6 and 7 contain the funding we plan to direct towards Technical Assistance activity. As resources will be focussed on support for beneficiaries as far as possible, so the amount devoted to Technical Assistance will be considerably lower than the 4% of EAFRD allocation allowed under the Regulations.

### **16.2 The National Rural Network**

#### **16.2.1 The UK National Rural Network**

4. Within the UK, each region has its own Rural Development Programme. Each region will therefore establish its own rural network. The UK will establish a National Rural Network in accordance with Article 66(3) of the Council Regulation No 1698/2005. The UK Rural Network will link the Rural Networks developed for the Rural Development Programmes for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The UK network will provide an interface with the EU Commission and the European Rural Network. It will not be established as a separate programme as provided for in Article 66(3) of 1698/05.
5. The key tasks of the UK network will be to:
  - provide the UK point of contact for the Commission and the European Rural Network
  - provide an electronic link between the websites of the four regional rural networks
  - provide data and information to the Commission and the European Rural Network as required
  - build capacity to facilitate events and activities for intra-UK cooperation

- ensure that knowledge and experience is spread equally among each of the UK regions.

#### **16.2.1.1 Organisations and administrations participating in the RDPE Rural Network**

6. Defra, the Managing Authority for the Programme, will establish a Rural Development Network to support implementation and evaluation of the RDPE (the RDPE Network).

#### **16.2.1.2 Procedure and timetable for establishing the RDPE Rural Network**

7. Detailed plans are in preparation for the implementation of the RDPE Network. The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC)<sup>1</sup> will operate the RDPE Network. The CRC is a Defra-funded Non Departmental Public Body, established in 2006, with a remit to be the expert adviser on, and advocate for, rural communities. The business of the RDPE Network is in keeping with Defra's aims in establishing the CRC. An action plan detailing the Network's activities will be completed in the autumn of 2008. Thereafter the detail of the RDPE Network's structure will be established and the Network's operation will begin.

#### **16.2.1.3 Main categories of activity to be undertaken by the RDPE Rural Network**

8. The RDPE Network will support implementation and evaluation of the rural development policy in England by facilitating and coordinating:

- the identification and analysis of good transferable practices and the provision of information about them;
- the organisation of exchanges of experience and know-how, including on administrative topics and procedures;
- preparation of training programmes for Local Action Groups;

9. The network will also provide technical assistance for inter-territorial and trans-national Cooperation.

10. The following principles will apply to the RDPE Network:

- it will build, to the extent appropriate, on existing structures, for example, Regional Rural Affairs Forums and informal networks already in existence, in order to maximise the benefits of existing structures and experience;
- it will be as close to local beneficiaries as possible;
- training courses, seminars and national networking meetings will be used to supplement the website by providing opportunities for knowledge transfer and skills building among Rural Development Programme practitioners;
- the RDPE Network will work with the Programme's delivery bodies to embed integrated, sustainable development and link the environmental, economic and social objectives and activities under the Programme.

#### **16.2.1.4 Amount reserved for establishing and operating the RDPE Network and England's contribution to the UK National Rural Network.**

11. Defra proposes that the no more than 20% of the Technical Assistance funding allocated for network operations is used for running costs. Defra will ensure that the amount allocated for running costs does not increase unduly over time.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/>

**Table 16-1 - Indicative allocation of the amount reserved for establishing and operating the RDPE and UK Networks in EUR, total period**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Public expenditure</b>	<b>Private Expenditure</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
511 Technical assistance Amount for the national rural network:	1,751,824	0	1,751,824
- (a) running costs	350,365	0	350,365
- (b) action plan	1,401,459	0	1,401,459
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>1,751,824</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,751,824</b>