PWG Practical Experience Examples (Innovating in/by the Local Action Group)

The examples presented in this document illustrate some of the practical experience of EU LAGs re` innovative practices and projects in LEADER.

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Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Cooperation between small businesses (Denmark)	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)		*Innovating in the LAG Fostering local innovation by LAGs*
LAG name / Country	LAG Djursland/Denmark	
Contact person	Helle Breindahl	
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Short summary of the initiative related to LEADER innovation:	This project was designed, initiated and run by LAG Djursland. It focused on brokering connections between small businesses that might benefit from knowing each other, cooperating or doing business together. The project was designed to work across traditional 'sector' lines right across the LAG territory. The project paired up very different businesses in network groups, one to one pairs etc. The project focused on small businesses in four main groups: retail, food, communication and IT. Four different models of how to do cooperation between small businesses were developed. These include practical cooperation e.g. employee sharing, networking or pairing groups, developing cooperation and dealing with common challenges. These may be found at https://issuu.com/geftatryk/docs/udvikling_gennem_relationer where they are described in Danish.	
	In the local retail sector shop owners had expressed their desire for the LAG to do something about the decreasing overall business in retail, largely due to internet shopping and consumers increasingly doing most of their shopping in larger cities. In an effort to meet this need the LAG developed a project plan. The project involved recruiting and working with a skilled project manager, who also had retail and coaching experience, this was the main project resource provided. The LAG also provided business development workshops e.g. on social media strategies.	
	Through the project it was discovered that one of the most important contributions it produced was actually not just the possible cooperation opportunities, but the individual sessions the small businesses undertook with the project manager. Actually, spending dedicated time working on their own business development - their vision, their time, their finances and perhaps even their personal lives - made business owners much more aware of where to focus their energy in their business. One example of a cooperation relationship formed as a result of the project was between a local cookie-bakery and a copywriter. The copywriter had a passion for local food and needed access to local producers; the bakery had all these connections, but needed help in developing a written identity for their products. The two were introduced to one another and immediately started bouncing ideas off each other and a close working relationship was established which remains to this day.	

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	A further example is that of a network group created for retail shops that also had an online shop. These businesses all faced very similar challenges but also had implemented very different solutions. As they were not in competition with each other by working in this network group they could exchange ideas and experience and learn from each others` successes and mistakes. During the project, a total of 4 FTE jobs were created in total in the participating businesses (approx. 25 businesses were involved). Funding : Total budget: 60 000 EUR / LAG funding: 20 000 EUR
Possible relevance to other LAGs / transferable experiences or elements	Creating and using the connections that the LAG already has and responding to the needs the LAG sees in the area in new and innovative ways. By looking at the local problem a LAG can tailor a project to respond to that specific challenge. Taking a different approach to developing small business – focusing on the people and their resources instead of just looking at numbers.

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Thematic workshop to foster specific projects (Denmark)	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)	1. Innovating in the LAG	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 2, if relevant)		
LAG name / Country	LAG Djursland, Denmark	
Contact person	Helle Breindahl	
Email	koordinator@lag-djursland.dk	
Short summary of the issue/initiative/example related to LEADER innovation:	In the beginning of May 2017 LAG Djursland took a look at the projects funded from 2015 to early 2017 and how they performed in relation to the Local Development Strategy (LDS). Overall, all the objectives in the strategy were supported by the projects funded and the applications matched the objectives in the LDS. However, one specific measure "cooperation across and between villages" was severely under applied. In fact, no projects had thus far applied with this specific objective as their main focus. Therefore, the LAG Board decided to host a thematic evening on cooperation between villages. Invitations and programme was sent to both municipalities to share, sent directly via newsletter to all LAG-members, posted on Facebook etc. More than 60 people (full capacity) joined the thematic evening on August 31st 2017 to learn more about cooperation between villages.	

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Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Thematic workshop to foster specific projects (Denmark)
	The evening was structured in two parts. The first contained three brief presentations, one knowledge based and two local best practice examples. The second part was a workshop, where the manager facilitated a process that included all participants and encouraged them to come up with a potential cooperation project. The attendees were assigned seats according to geography and common interests expressed when they signed up for the event. The facilitation model was a simple what, why, how and who model: **What?** – the participants were asked to first brainstorm ideas for a possible cooperation project involving at least their areas. What could we potentially do together at this table? Every idea got its own post-it. Then they were asked to select one option and move forward with that. **Why?** – they were asked to answer the question of why they would want to cooperate on this, why does it make sense? Every reason got its own post-it. **How?** – how exactly are we going to cooperate on this? What are the specific steps we need to take. Again, every action on a separate post-it. **Who?** – finally the participants were challenged to put down names on who does what. They were not allowed to name anyone outside the table. Again, every person on a separate post-it. In the end of the workshop all six groups presented their project plan (a flipchart with organized post-its) and several went home and continued developing the project idea. The evaluation of the event showed great interest in the topic and encouraged that the LAG host similar events in the future. Overall, people were very happy with the structure and content of the event, and felt that it had been an evening well spent. The LAG board was also very pleased with the event and the feeling of contributing more to the local community than just funding. We have received several questions about the facilitation model used, and have already received the first application as a result of this evening. (However, this project did not qualify for funding and is working on reapplication).
Possible relevance to other LAGs / transferable experiences or elements	This is something every LAG can do. It is relatively simple to organize and not too expensive to carry out. It mainly takes a portion of the manager's time, but this is time well spent. The total cost of this event was approximately 1500 EUR. We are more than willing to share experiences on how we did it, specific process used and key points on how to make it a success.

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	**Innovation in the LAG governance: implementation and animation (the Netherlands)**	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)	1. Innovating in the LAG	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 2, if relevant)		
LAG name / Country	LAG De Kracht van Salland – The Netherlands	
Contact person	Mireille Groot Koerkamp	
Email	mireille@dekrachtvansalland.nl www.dekrachtvansalland.nl	
Short summary of the issue/initiative/example related to LEADER innovation:	**Why do we need innovation?** We do not need copies from the past, but solutions for the future. You cannot predict the future, you only see a little bit of the future. Just try new ways, just move, step by step. How do we, as a LAG, stimulate innovation in the implementation and animation? **By stimulating innovative projects** As a LAG, you cannot create innovative projects. Our job is to facilitate innovation. We try to do that by connecting people, creating a network. Most important, by helping people with innovative ideas. Listen to what they need, be helpful, open, honest, practical, creative, quick and flexible. Be modest. Do not interfere too much, only what is needed, go with the flow. We try to help, sometimes with Leader budget, sometimes we try to find other funding elsewhere (public or private). There is more than Leader. Our LAG does more than the delivery of Leader. Sometimes they do not need money at all. Listen and see what you can do. Make it as easy as possible in this `bureaucrazy` world. Prevent them from failures and problems. Support them when there are difficulties. Be there. Otherwise the innovators run away! Communicate with MA and PA. Be brave and clear. Allowing innovation by allowing failure. Don't be afraid. Do not chose the safest way to reduce risk. Make choices and explain why. **By organizing a growing network** As a LAG we try to create a network, a "movement", an common feeling of urgency. Create an open network where people meet, learn, inspire and help each other. Communicate not in "we" and "them". There is only "we". We all are inhabitants of Salland. Work in small groups. Not only talking heads, but also work with your hands and heart. With creative and visual techniques (world café, open space, prototyping, systemic work…).	

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Innovation in the LAG governance: implementation and animation (the Netherlands)
6	**Try to involve everyone in the network. Take that very serious: everyone.** Not the usual partners, stakeholders, the Leader in-crowd (on the level organisations, representatives, professionals), but on the bottom level of inhabitants. Your neighbour, hairdresser, a farmer, his wife and their son, the teacher and the kids, the local shop owner. Everyone is invited. Try to reach everyone. That is difficult (young people, isolated persons, …). It is a never-ending story. It can always be better. Try to connect new people, new organisations, new networks. Find interesting new topics / projects and mix the whole thing. We organize network meetings (Salland Cafés) since 2013, 4 times a year, with 50 to 100 persons each time. Our network consists at the moment of 700 active inhabitants. It is growing. Do not plan too much ahead, but be flexible, wait and feel what is needed at the moment. Have fun and let the movement be contagious. You don't want to miss it! There is a growing community feeling. **By preparing the LDS with 500 inhabitants** We practiced "Theory U" in Salland to prepare our Local Development Strategy. Don't go straight from A (former programme) to B (new programme). Than you will have a copy from the past, but you need a solution for the future. At first you let go your ideas and opinions about the possible new programme. The only thing you do is listening, listening, listening…. With a group of 20 people we interviewed 50 people who did not know anything about Leader, but who knew what is going on in our region: a policeman, a hairdresser, a priest, young people who organize festivals, a real estate agent, … Than we organized big events and everyone was invited. We did all kinds of workshops: we were not only working with our heads (talking), but also with our hearts and hands (creative, visual). These workshops created a common sense about: What is happening here? What is needed here? In the "bottom of the U" everyone asked themselves: What does this situation ask from me, personally? How can I contribute? From that point, all kinds of ideas emerged. We made prototypes, we build those ideas with our hands (3D brainstorming). In the end everyone asked us: Can you please go on and organize meetings where we can meet each other? So, we started to organize network meeting, "Salland Cafés". In the Salland Cafés we share ideas, inspiration, good practices, help each other, connect each other. The result of this U process was: we wrote our Local Development Strategy with input and support of 500 inhabitants. New ideas emerged and new projects were implemented. Many Salland Cafés are organized. About 700 inhabitants are involved.

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Project owner network – LAG as local cooperation midwife (Denmark)	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)		Strengthening LEADER's rural innovation connections
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner- Led Working Group (topic 2, if relevant)		Enabling innovation in the delivery chain
LAG name / Country	LAG Midt-Nordvestsjaelland / Denmark	
Contact person	Nynne Larsby Friis	
Email	nlf@lag-midtnordvestsjaelland.dk	
Short summary of the initiative related to LEADER innovation:	This project is a LAG-run network for all projects (40-50) that have received funding from the LAG, over 40 projects in total. The network consists of LAG facilitated meetings two or three times a year, where people meet, talk about their projects, upcoming ideas and receive information on what is currently going on in the LAG. This allows them to exchange to discover synergies, cooperation opportunities and learn from each other in a very informal way. A large part of the success of the network is attributed to what goes on between meetings, where the LAG- manager serves as a "midwife" nurturing local cooperation. Having knowledge of all the different projects funded allows the LAG-manager to spot possible synergies and put the right people in contact. This bridges the gap between people and provides an "in" strengthening the connection to another project, because of the common connection to the LAG.

One specific example of how this works is the pairing of a vodka distillery and a local castle with a Michelin star restaurant. The vodka distillery makes vodka from potatoes that are odd-sized, slightly cut or otherwise unfit for the Danish standards of human consumption. Locally brewed or distilled alcohol products have become very popular in Denmark, but mostly to male consumers and primarily beer, whiskey and gin. The owner of the vodka distillery wants to sell the product mainly to female consumers, who primarily buy liqueurs and sweeter forms of alcohol. Selling vodka primarily to women could therefore prove difficult. The distillery therefore wants to pursue cooperation with another local producer of fruit syrups, so they can market the product as a locally produced, high quality "cocktail package" rather than merely plain vodka. Consumers were thought more likely to pay a higher price for a product that not only sells quality, but also convenience and a local story and identity.

As a result of the network, the LAG set up the Vodka distillery with another project owner, a local castle, who had received LAG funding for a completely different project about cultural activities. However, Dragsholm castle also runs two restaurants, one of them with a Michelin star. They receive a lot of requests about cooperation, but they do not have the resources to engage in all of them. | |

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	**Project owner network – LAG as local cooperation midwife (Denmark)**
	The distillery had therefore quickly deemed the castle out of their league in terms of cooperating – being a small, brand new company themselves. A few quick calls from the local LAG manager changed all of this, and a few weeks later, the head chef of the Michelin star restaurant visited the distillery, bringing along some homemade syrups. Cooperation between the two is now in progress. Although the LAG does not track all such substantive connections established as a result of the initiative they estimate that at least five are in place so far.
Possible relevance to other LAGs / transferable experiences or elements	The approach in this LAG run network is very hands on and thus easy to apply. The LAG not only acts as a means of funding, but as a local body, that can facilitate network, cooperation and synergies that otherwise probably wouldn't have been initiated or as successful. LAG Midt- Nordvestsjaelland covers five municipalities and thus provide their project owners with access to a much larger local network than they would usually find. Being LAG-funded gives all the projects a common ground and similar interest. Synergies are more prone to arise, than if they did not have this programme in common. Linking projects funded under a common strategy to strengthen their results and sustainability is a key element of the added value which the LEADER method delivers.

The only cost associated with this is LAG staff time and circa €200 for catering, etc. per meeting. |

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	**Social innovation (Finland)**	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)	*Fostering local innovation*	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner- Led Working Group (topic 2, if relevant)	-	
LAG name / Country	LAG Pohjoinsin Lappi, Lapland, Finland	
Contact person	Hanna Leena Talvensaari	
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Short summary of the initiative related to LEADER innovation:	Pohjoinsin Lappi LAG in Lapland is the largest and northernmost LAG in the EU, it has an enormous and very dispersed rural area almost twice the size of Belgium with only seven municipalities, 90 villages and 33,000 people in an area which stretches 700 km across.	

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Social innovation (Finland)
	The LAG was approached by one of these municipalities and asked if they could help to solve the problem of how to offer services to the population (like social services, healthcare, cleaning etc.) in remote villages. The central problem which needed to be addressed was the long distances and the high associated delivery costs for the municipality, a central issue and strategic priority for the LAG. In these areas, it is quite difficult to run private businesses because of the sparse population, with a population density of 0.6 persons /sq Km there is just not enough critical mass of clients. In the villages, there are many unemployed people and those who are underemployed and want to secure supplementary incomes or a part time job. They don't necessarily want to establish their own full-time business - they just want to work near home.

The LAG has created a social innovation model, through which people can get jobs in their home villages by providing social services for senior citizens and families with small children.   The operation is organized in the form of a local co-operative. This brings together and unifies the customers who need services, the municipality whose task it is to offer services, the professionals and the workers, the people who want to work in their home villages in a new service model. The co-operative takes care of all official regulations and requirements such as licenses, quality control, taxes, salary etc. The cooperative employs one full time employee running the organization, forwarding orders for services to workers, cooperating with the municipality and professionals etc. there are a total of 26 part-time workers delivering these services in 11 remote villages. The LAG created this model within their own project *"services for villages"*. The project was planned and implemented in very close cooperation with the municipality and the villages. Now there are a few other areas planning this type of co-operative approach within projects funded by LEADER or other funds.   This solution needed the impetus of someone to implement the experiment, to gather different people together to solve the problem. |
| Possible relevance to other LAGs / transferable experiences or elements | The model could be transferred to other rural areas which are facing similar challenges and need not be restricted to the provision of public services. The main transferable element in this project is the effect of the LAG's focusing on solving a problem in collaboration with other stakeholders and using their knowledge and understanding of the specific challenges in their local areas. |

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Crowdfunding – an innovative approach to distributing LEADER funds (UK-Scotland)	
Relevant topic on Innovation Practitioner-Led Working Group (topic 1)		1. *Innovating in the LAG*
LAG name / Country	Ayrshire Local Action Group, Scotland, UK	

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Crowdfunding – an innovative approach to distributing LEADER funds (UK-Scotland)
Contact person	Sarah Hyslop
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Short summary of the initiative related to LEADER innovation:	The Local Action Group are currently piloting a new and innovative funding distribution method for LEADER funds called 'Crowdfund Ayrshire'. This initiative was inspired as a result of findings from the evaluation of the 2007-2013 LEADER programme and in recognizing quite often that it was the 'usual suspects' that were applying for funding i.e. those who were proficient in applying for external funding, writing applications, project ready etc. we wanted to adopt a new and innovative concept to target the 'cold spots' not receiving funding/accessing LEADER. We looked at various options including increasing on-the-ground animation, marketing and promotion, running funding workshops however we felt in order to work with the concept of our LAG improving the LEADER approach and providing a new product/service we are leading by example and maintaining our vision to provide the investment to inspire, build confidence and strengthen local communities and business, generating new opportunities to support resilience and wellbeing across Ayrshire. Another important factor in deciding to undertake this initiative was BREXIT and the changes, challenges and uncertainty that this brings to rural development funding in Scotland. By creating a funding platform like Crowdfund Ayrshire that can be established and maintained beyond the UK leaving Europe, leaves a lasting legacy of LEADER and provides a channel for rural funding sources throughout this period of transition. Through the development, consultation and launch of this trial funding platform, Crowdfund Ayrshire provides a fresh, unique and targeted approach to raising funding whilst adding value to the LEADER offer i.e. applicants need not be seeking LEADER match-funding but crowdfunding from their own network to do great things. A further benefit of designing and launching this on-line funding method is that it is an effective stage for rural project promoters to share what they want to do across a global audience and not only 'local fundraising', so in turn will raise the profile of rural Ayrshire and showcase the range of projects that can/will be delivered. In addition, it is a great way to build an on-line community of project promoters, crowdfund 'cheerleaders/supporters', networking etc. One of the most important elements of this pilot is that the LAG has ring-fenced a dedicated 'pledge pot' of 250,000 GBP to support projects from applicants including charities, social enterprises, SMEs, public bodies, businesses and the LAG itself. The LEADER delivery team is able to provide a range of face-to-face and on-line support for applicants who wish to raise funds through the crowd. The LAG will watch how projects are progressing in raising the 50% funding target and once the project has raised 50% the LAG may decide to pledge the balance (up to 50%) so the project has raised all the money they need! It is anticipated that over 50 local projects will receive support through this method. The Crowdfund initiative has now been set up and is due to formally launch in the New Year. 2017 has been the development stage including creating processes, approving governance/decision-making process, training the trainers,

Brief 'title' of innovation issue/initiative/example (if relevant)	Crowdfunding – an innovative approach to distributing LEADER funds (UK-Scotland)
	provision of project applicant coaching, running 'how to' workshops, dedicated animation activity and holding a 'soft launch' – we hope to have all the Crowdfund Ayrshire funds committed during 2018. This is a new opportunity not just for accessing LEADER funds but supports applicants to gather evidence of market need – test an idea and get validation of their project concept. It is an ideal method for attracting smaller-scale projects (1,000GBP – 5,000GBP) that haven't applied to LEADER before or want to look at alternative methods of fundraising. For the longer-term legacy, we are providing a portal post-LEADER for rural communities – sustained approach to CLLD funding. This is very much an early adopter role the LAG is playing and are happy to take the considered risk to try this initiative, if it works great, if it doesn't take off, the LAG will review why and learn lessons from this. There's some concern that it may not be accessible for all due to connectivity issues in some of our remote rural areas, however the delivery team will work locally with applicants to provide whatever support is necessary to ensure they can participate should they wish. The success of a crowdfund campaign is down to the applicant to drive interest, donors and updates so it is resource intensive for anyone looking to raise funds through the crowd, it also relies heavily on their network/community i.e. members, residents, contacts etc. If the applicant is not well connected or has the capacity to generate an on-line following it is much less likely to succeed. There is a requirement to manage expectation to minimize risk of failing to raise funding.
Possible relevance to other LAGs / transferable experiences or elements	There are many models of crowdfunding and rewards-based crowdfunding and it's a very flexible and adaptable model for LAGs to utilise. It provides an opportunity to deliver more than just LEADER funding, a great way to deliver multi-funds. The concept connects communities including geographical and of interest and can see what others are achieving locally, nationally and globally. Great platform for ideas exchange and cooperation opportunities and raising the profile of your LAG territory.