

# Added Value of Networking



## Good Practice in Communications

Basic information	
NRN:	Rural Network for Northern Ireland
Theme:	Good practice - Northern Ireland RDP Communications Working Group
Coordinator:	Aileen Donnelly (Communications Officer)
Partners:	Managing Authority and Local Action Groups
Beneficiaries:	n.a.
Resources:	n.a.
Period:	October 2011 to current
Main element of networking:	<b>Collection, analysis and dissemination of good practice, success stories and relevant experience</b>
Other elements of networking:	Capacity building and training

### Background

Promotion and communication of the Rural Development Programme is of strategic importance to its implementation. It is essential that the significant EAFRD co-finance to member states is acknowledged and publicised. It is important that beneficiaries understand that the Programme exists to support development in rural areas and that the good news stories and success in these areas are communicated to the wider public.

In Northern Ireland the RDP Communications Working Group was established by the NSU to allow Local Action Groups to consider Programme communications, take stock of current practice and implement methodologies which would support good Programme communication both internally and to external audiences. Its aims included improvement of Programme communication both internally across all Axis of the Programme and externally to the wider public and stakeholders; identification opportunities for project promotion at local Council Cluster, regional, UK and European levels; encourage the adoption of good practices at Local Action Group level; improve the overall image of the Programme and ensure messages that are relayed are accurate, sufficient, consistent and appropriate.

The Managing Authority Chair all meetings, NSU provides secretariat functions and membership is drawn from each of the 7 Northern Ireland Local Action Groups.



# Added Value of Networking



## Main activities

A work plan was devised at the outset with the aims listed above. Since October 2011 the group has met an average of once per month. As the issue of programme communications is broad and multi-faceted the initial focus was to increase the level of programme / project publicity in the local media.

### Media Training

To achieve this a Press Officer from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and a member of the NSU team developed a Media Training guide which was then delivered to LAG staff.

### Project Database

The Rural Network for Northern Ireland placed an increased focus on updating the online Northern Ireland RDP projects database. In consultation with the CWG the NSU designed a Project Publicity Template which each LAG is required to complete post letter of offer.

## Main results/benefits

### Media Training

In total 26 LAG staff attended individual publicity support/training sessions in each Axis 3 Cluster with the result that LAGs now devise and issue project publicity on many of the projects funded in their areas. NSU also holds regular meetings with DARD Press Office staff to consider projects which could be given a higher level profile.

### Online Project Database

The project database and the project template system is now operational and online, boasting 320 Axis 3 projects on the RNNI Projects Database. A related image library is now also operational on Flickr.

### Increased attendance and visibility at Agricultural Shows

4 RDP Axis 3 funded projects exhibited at the Show in June; 13 RDP Axis 3 funded projects were at the main NI Agricultural Show in May; a further 10 RDP funded businesses and 5 display cabinet exhibits were at the National Ploughing Championships in the Republic of Ireland in September.

**Media Monitoring system has now been implemented.** This enables monitoring and evaluation of NIRDP media coverage. The MA (DARD) Press Clippings now include RDP 'searchwords'. These are collected monthly and distributed to CWG members.

## Success factors

The formation of the group has shown an intention by the MA to target and develop good programme communications. The group has been hugely useful to the MA, the LAGs and the NSU in that contacts were formed and have developed throughout the lifetime of the group.



# Added Value of Networking



Specific successes have been – the structured manner in which projects / businesses have been organised to attend agricultural shows; increased programme publicity in local and national media; increase in projects submitted to the NSU which are now uploaded onto the RDP projects database on the NSU website.

## Added value of networking

The regular meetings of the NSU, MA and LAGs continue to be an excellent Networking forum where all aspects of programme communications are discussed in an open and dedicated forum.

The agri shows at which projects exhibited have also been important activities at which project promoters can network and form relationships with other businesses in the sector as well as showcase their own wares.

## Contribution of the NSU

The NSU provides the crucial secretariat role in the Communications Working Group and also provides advice and support on all elements of programme communications. Rural Network for Northern Ireland provides website, facebook, ezine and monthly bulletin communications outputs again reinforcing good programme communications.

## Contribution of the partners

The Managing Authority has at all times encouraged the activities of the group and the Department Press Office is in attendance at all group meetings. The LAGs attend all meetings and have each begun communications procedures in line with the work of the Communications Working Group.

## Additional information

[www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk](http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk)

## Pictures

n.a.

## Last Update

March 2013



**ENRD** *Connecting Rural Europe*

<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>