



Tender for Research Services

Local Development Companies Network is seeking to commission suitably qualified individuals or companies to conduct research into the impact of poverty on individuals and families in Ireland, and the role and value of Local Development Companies (LDCs) in addressing poverty. The research will be directly informed by the experience and insights of LDCs, which will be complemented by secondary materials including policy documents, socioeconomic data, and existing research performed by civil society organisations, think tanks, the academic community, state agencies, etc. The research should yield strong policy recommendations relating to poverty reduction in Ireland, with a particular focus on the future role of LDCs within this landscape.

About LDCN

Local Development Companies Network (LDCN) is the national representative body for Local Development Companies (LDCs) in Ireland. LDCs are not-for-profit, community-based organisations that deliver a wide range of mainly Government-funded programmes aimed at tackling poverty, promoting social inclusion, and supporting community and economic development in urban and rural areas. Through the delivery of programmes such as LEADER, SICAP, Tús, CE, and ARISE, LDCs are typically the first point of contact for individuals, community groups and social enterprises. LDCs are key providers of community-based services and supports and the integrated nature of LDC services – which span employment education, integration, health, environment, and enterprise – allows them to deliver a model of holistic, wraparound support that is generally not possible through other channels of provision. LDCs deliver in the region of 400 projects and programmes, supported by and in partnership with a range of Government Departments and state agencies, the EU, educational institutions, private, not-for-profit and philanthropic partners, and others.

LDCN facilitates the exchange of learnings and good practice among LDCs, supports the development of policy positions that are grounded in evidence and in the frontline experience of LDCs, and works towards the creation of an enabling policy environment for LDCs.

The core values of LDCN are:

- Stewardship - integrity, transparency, trust and communication. A model for good governance, to pursue membership-driven processes of decision-making, and to act as a trusted partner.
- Community Led empowering the voice of communities, and engaging communities of place and of interest in processes of community development. The Network strives to bring forward, through its members, the needs of communities in its work, and to enable effective engagement by its members.
- Equality/Equity - dignity, fairness, diversity, and inclusion; recognising that not everyone is starting from the same point in life.
- The Network strives to advance equality/equity and promote diversity through its policy work and in its practice.

Research Brief

The research will examine the impact of poverty on individuals and families in Ireland, as informed by the experience of Local Development Companies (LDCs), and the role and value of the Local Development Company approach.

1. Background and Rationale

Poverty continues to exert profound and multidimensional effects on individuals, families, and communities across Ireland. Evidence emerging from Local Development Companies (LDCs) suggests that poverty is increasing among vulnerable groups, accompanied by a growing sense of alienation from the state and public systems.

Despite national strategies and targeted interventions, LDCs consistently report persistent disadvantage, social exclusion, and declining social cohesion in many communities.

LDCs, operating nationwide across both urban and rural areas, deliver programmes such as SICAP, LEADER, Empowering Communities, and a wide range of family, employment, and wellbeing supports. Their daily engagement with individuals and households provides a unique vantage point on:

- How poverty manifests in diverse local contexts
- How individuals and families experience its impacts
- Where current policy frameworks fall short
- What forms of support are most effective

This study is commissioned to address the central research question:

What does evidence from LDCN member companies reveal about the impacts of poverty on individuals, families, and communities in Ireland, the resulting policy implications, and the contributory value of the Local Development Company model now and into the future?

This study explores the evidence contained within LDCs on service users' lived experience of poverty as its primary evidence base, ensuring that the majority of research time is devoted to understanding the real-world impacts of poverty on people's lives.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to generate a robust, evidence-based analysis that:

- Identifies how poverty affects individuals and families, drawing on lived experience and practice-based insights from LDCN member companies
- Examines the implications of these findings for national and local policy, with a strong focus on actionable recommendations
- Assesses, as a secondary element, the added value and future potential of the Local Development Company model within Ireland's broader anti-poverty framework

The study is intended to inform policymakers, government departments, local authorities, and community development stakeholders.

3. Proposed Methodological Framework

The methodological design ensures that frontline qualitative evidence forms the core of the study, supported by contextual desk research and contemporary theoretical perspectives.

Phase 1 — Desk-Based Review: Poverty in Ireland (2026 Baseline)

Objective: Establish an authoritative, up-to-date evidence base.

This phase will include a structured review of:

- CSO poverty and deprivation statistics
- Sample of local area needs analysis as undertaken by LDC's
- Government of Ireland social inclusion strategies
- EU-SILC data
- OECD and EU comparative analyses
- Publications from Social Justice Ireland, ESRI, and other research bodies e.g. NESC
- Recent academic literature on multidimensional poverty and social exclusion

Outputs:

- A concise synthesis of the scale, distribution, and drivers of poverty in Ireland
- Identification of key trends, including rising poverty levels, the growth of the working, rural and urban disadvantage, and housing-related deprivation

Phase 2 — Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Objective: Provide a clear analytical lens for interpreting evidence.

The study will draw on contemporary frameworks including:

- Multidimensional poverty
- Social exclusion theory

- Place-based approaches
- The capability approach

Outputs:

- A conceptual framework defining how poverty and its impacts will be understood throughout the study

Phase 3 — Evidence from LDCs (Core Empirical Component)

Objective: Capture frontline insights into how poverty affects individuals, families, and communities. This phase represents the majority of research time and analytical focus.

3.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews/ focus groups will be conducted with staff across a sample of LDCN member companies reflecting rural and urban operational landscapes, including:

- Senior managers
- SICAP managers
- Community development officers
- Employment, family, and wellbeing support workers

Key themes will include:

- How poverty presents in local communities
- Impacts on individuals and families (access to services, employment, wellbeing, social cohesion, housing)
- Community-level impacts (cohesion, service gaps, exclusion)
- Emerging needs and pressures
- Perceived gaps in policy and provision

3.2 Documentary Analysis

Review of:

- LDCN reports
- Research produced by individual LDCs
- SICAP annual reports and case studies
- Local needs assessments
- Programme evaluations

Outputs:

- Evidence base grounded in lived experience and organisational practice

Phase 4 — Analysis: Impacts and Policy Implications at local and national level

Objective: Integrate national evidence with LDC insights to produce policy-relevant analysis.

The analysis will address:

- Economic, social, and wellbeing impacts of poverty on individuals and families
- Community-level impacts and local variations
- Gaps between official poverty measures and lived experience
- Policy gaps and areas requiring reform
- The contributory value of the Local Development Company model, including:
 - Local presence and trust
 - Integrated service delivery
 - Ability to reach underserved groups
 - Responsiveness to emerging needs

Phase 5 — Synthesis and Recommendations

Objective: Produce clear, actionable findings for policymakers.

Outputs:

- A synthesis of key findings
- Evidence-based policy recommendations
- Considerations for strengthening Ireland's anti-poverty approach
- Reflections on the future role of LDCs within this landscape

4. Deliverables

1. Final Report

- Literature and data review
- Methodology
- Findings
- Policy analysis
- Recommendations

2. Executive Summary

- High-level findings for decision-makers

5. Indicative Timeline Report completed and published – 31st October

6. Expertise Required

The research team should demonstrate expertise in:

- Poverty analysis and social policy
- Qualitative research methods
- Community development and area-based approaches

- Policy evaluation and synthesis
- Working with frontline organisations

7. Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere to best practice in research ethics, including:

- Sensitivity to the experiences of vulnerable groups and individuals
- Informed consent
- Plain language statement for research participants
- Adherence to GDPR and other relevant data protection codes (including anonymisation where appropriate).

Project Governance

This project will be supported by a Project Group convened for this specific purpose. This Project Group will engage closely with the LDCN Research and Policy Sub Committee. The Project Group will play a proactive, engaging, and supportive role throughout the course of the project. Its functions will include but are not limited to regular communication with the consultant, collaborating on the report structure and agreeing parameters and regular dialogue to support collaborative research.

Timeline

Closing date for tender applications: **10th April 2026**

Timeline and Key milestones

- Contract issued: Week commencing 27th April
- Kick-off meeting with Project Group: Week commencing 4th May
- First draft issued by Researcher/Research Team to Project Group: Week commencing 24th August
- Presentation of preliminary findings at Council and Conference September (both dates TBC)
- Completion: 31st October

Fee Proposal

Total Budget: Fee proposal should not exceed **€40,000** (including VAT and all costs).

Application Process

To apply, please submit one document, either in PDF or MS Word format (Maximum 25 A4 pages), with all information requested below to mairin.ocuireain@ldcn.ie. Please use the subject line: *Impact of Poverty – Tender for Commissioned Research*. The application document should be clearly structured and should incorporate the following sections in the order set out below:

1. Name of Lead Researcher

1. Primary point of contact (if different from above)
2. Relevant experience, including CVs of people who will work on the project. Please refer here to both:
 - a. Research competencies.
 - b. Knowledge of the poverty landscape in Ireland, including, as appropriate, knowledge of LDCs and the wider Community and Voluntary Sector.
3. Two references related to similar work undertaken.
4. Your understanding of the work to be completed.
5. Further information on proposed methodology, approach and deliverables (where you wish to extend or provide additional detail to the guidance provided in the Research Brief).
6. Project Management: A breakdown of time-allocation and costs.
7. Evidence of tax clearance

Criteria For Selection

Tenders will be evaluated according to the following criteria

✓ Understanding of the work to be completed -	25
✓ Experience of tenderer -	40
✓ Proposed methodology -	15
✓ Cost -	20

Conflict of Interest

Any interest involving the Tenderer and LDCN, LDCs, their staff, or relatives must be fully disclosed in response to this invitation at the time of submitting the tender.

Any other conflict of interest must also be fully disclosed.

Further Information

Requests for clarification or further information should be sent to mairin.ocuireain@ldcn.ie