

A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 for Public Authorities

*(Revised) April 2018*

Appendix 1 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

Template

The Innovation Strategy aims to define DAERA’s approach to supporting an increase in industry and departmental innovation and adoption, including in terms of collaborative partnerships, quality, timeliness, underpinning statutory regulations and ensuring its effective, timely dissemination to relevant business areas.

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

DAERA Science Strategy Framework – Innovation Strategy

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Developing a Policy Strategy Plan

Adopting a Policy Strategy Plan

Implementing a Policy Strategy Plan

Revising a Policy Strategy Plan Designing a Public Service

Delivering a Public Service

X

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing an Innovation Strategy as part of the DAERA Science Transformation Programme

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

1A. Name of Public Authority.

**SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016**

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*Reasons why a definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.*

*Rationale for using alternative definition of ‘rural’.*

*Details of alternative definition of ‘rural’ used.*

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition). Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of ‘rural’ is not applicable.

X

1F. What definition of ‘rural’ is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

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The majority of DAERA’s industry stakeholders are from rural areas of Northern Ireland and are involved in the agri-food, environment, fisheries, forestry and rural enterprise sectors. Consequently the implementation of the Innovation Strategy will have considerably more impact on those in rural areas than in urban areas.

The Innovation Strategy aims to provide a positive benefit to those working in the sectors within its remit, by helping to define how DAERA will accelerate innovation. Adoption of more innovation by businesses has been shown to drive research and development, which leads to economic growth. Businesses which innovate, are more productive, growing sales and employment twice as fast as those that are not innovating. Also innovation is considered essential in addressing societal issues and environmental challenges (*Innovate NI – Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2025).* The importance of business innovation is also reflected in the Draft *Programme for Government Framework 2016-17.* Thereforethe implementation of this proposed strategy will yield more benefits to businesses within rural areas than urban areas.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas *differently* from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The DAERA Innovation Strategy aims to define DAERA’s approach to supporting an increase in industry and departmental innovation and adoption. A lack of innovation within the public sector, including DAERA has emerged as a key barrier to innovation within those sectors which are supported, facilitated and incentivised through Government Departments. Research has shown that an innovative and enterprising public sector is vital to help address industry and societal challenges ahead.

A formal strategy to support an increase in innovation within the wider rural community, agri-food industry and the Northern Ireland environment is likely to have a positive impact on rural communities. It will help to embed within sectors in the DAERA remit, within rural areas, elements of the draft NI Industrial Strategy (*Economy 2030*) which has ‘Accelerating innovation and research’ as one of its five main pillars for growth of the local economy. The strategy proposes education, training and skills development in innovation, collaboration and networking, communication and promotion and facilitation of knowledge exploitation as ways to enhance innovation for people working in relevant sectors, businesses and the wider rural community.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

X

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

**SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service**

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2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

Rural Businesses Rural Tourism Rural Housing

Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas Education or Training in Rural Areas

Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas

Poverty in Rural Areas Deprivation in Rural Areas

Rural Crime or Community Safety Rural Development

Agri-Environment

Other (Please state)

X

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

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Information sources used in the completion of this assessment include:

* Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2018;
* Mid Year Estimates – Population Change January 2019;
* Innovate NI – Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 – 2025;
* UK Innovation Survey 2015: Northern Ireland Results
* Economy 2030 – A consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland, DfE 2017
* Innovation in the Irish Agrifood Sector, 2014
* Draft Programme for Government 2016-21

It is important to note that an informal engagement process with external stakeholders, including representatives from agri-food industry groups, which are predominantly based within rural areas, will be undertaken later this year, with evaluations of lessons learned and any necessary amendments made to the draft strategy.

Subject to approval the draft Innovation Strategy will then undergo a formal Public Consultation whereby DAERA will seek the views of the public on the proposals. Feedback received following the consultation exercise will be used to revise the strategy draft.

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders Published Statistics Consultation with Other Organisations Research Papers Surveys or Questionnaires Other Publications

Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).

X

X

X

X

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

X

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

**SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

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3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

Improving innovation and the business economy within rural areas as a result of the implementation of this strategy, could help to address rural poverty (job creation) and social isolation (local training and skills development). Globally we need to produce 50% more food by 2050 to feed our growing population. Innovation will be required for the agri-food industry to rise to this challenge.

Northern Ireland as a whole is estimated to be the least innovation active country in the UK (*UK Innovation Survey 2015: Northern Ireland Results*). The *Innovate NI* document highlighted the importance of innovation in driving economic growth and underpinning the growth of the best performing regional and national economies across the world. If Northern Ireland is to play its part in realising the vision within the draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (*Economy 2030*), then Northern Ireland businesses, including wider agri-food, will need a dramatic change in its culture, priority and performance in respect of innovation.

A study of innovation specific to the agri-food industry in Northern Ireland has not been carried out however a comprehensive report on *Innovation in the Irish AgriFood Sector* was completed in 2014. Much of the information within the report will also apply to the agri-food industry in Northern Ireland. This document states that *’the structural issues in agriculture that are well known as more general challenges (age profile, farm size, fragmentation etc) are also a significant barrier to innovation at the farm level. Advisory services and agricultural education were identified as potential facilitators of innovation’.*

This report also identified that there is still a conservative mindset dominating agri-food organisations with power and influence and that leaders in the agri-food sector need to be more open to the benefits of co-operation, collaboration and partnership for innovation. The proposed Innovation Strategy will highlight mechanisms to address these issues.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

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It is known that the farming community are slow to innovate (*Innovation in the Irish Agrifood Sector, 2014*). This disadvantages them in terms of their business development. The proposed Innovation Strategy aims to provide high level direction on development of innovation within the agri-food industry.

Of the 1,870,845 people living in Northern Ireland (2017), 36% or 670,486 people live in rural areas. A total of 1,022,400ha of land across Northern Ireland are farmed (*Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2018*) with 46,800 farmers and workers on 24,900 farms. This project considers the social and economic needs of these rural dwellers. The proposed Innovation Strategy aims to help rural businesses associated with the agri-food, environment, forestry and fisheries sectors to become more innovative. The Northern Ireland Industrial Strategy (*Economy 2030*) has ‘Accelerating innovation and research’ as one of its five main pillars for growth of the local economy.

The proposed strategy will also recommend education, training and skills development in innovation, collaboration and networking, communication and promotion and facilitation of knowledge exploitation as ways to enhance innovation for farmers, agri-food businesses and the wider rural community. Locally based skills development will help to address social isolation and job creation within rural areas.

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

**SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas**

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If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A.

This high level strategy will identify how innovation can be embedded into policy to foster an enabling environment for knowledge generation, exchange and exploitation, both within DAERA and also within rural communities.

As DAERA stakeholders predominantly live and work within the rural areas, the proposed DAERA Innovation Strategy will be heavily influenced by the needs of rural people. In the farming sector it is well known that structural issues including age profile, farm size and fragmentation are significant barriers to innovation at farm level. In response to this education and skills training will be offered to farmers and agri-food businesses within their rural areas. Skills training will be offered to all age groups and will be irrespective of farm size. Priority areas will be in Digitisation and dealing with Big Data, the Bioeconomy and Artificial Intelligence.

It must be stressed that given the wide remit of DAERA relevant skills, training will be open to all rural dwellers involved in agri-food, fisheries, forestry and the environment.

Through working in groups to improve communication and collaboration, the proposed strategy will promote the sharing of success stories within the wider agri-food community to encourage more innovators and adopters. Group working in rural areas will improve social interaction and help to overcome barriers to innovation within rural areas. An Innovation Promotional Plan is proposed where innovative practices by stakeholders are showcased. This will involve annual conferences, social media activity, organised visits, collaborative exhibitions etc. Again these activities will largely take place within rural areas and will be attended by people from the rural community.

The adoption of innovation by rural businesses will help to drive economic growth within rural areas, helping to address rural poverty.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

Yes No If the response is NO GO TO Section 5C.

X

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

**SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service**

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Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Elaine Chapman

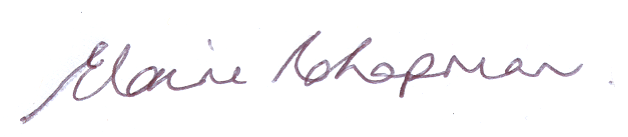
Position/Grade:

Grade II

Division/Branch

Science, Evidence and Innovation Policy Division

Signature:



Date:

6 March 2019

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Position/Grade:

Division/Branch:

Signature:

Date:

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.

X

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

**SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording**

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.