Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

Call for applications to support investments in new or existing visitor attractions

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Managing Authority	**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	**Enterprise M3**
Call Reference	**10RD15TO0001**
Deadline for the submission of applications	**Friday 8 January 2016 at 1700 hours**

Read the Growth Programme guidance. This explains what applicants must do to apply for a grant, how grant applications are assessed and how to meet the terms of a grant funding agreement if an application is successful.

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1. Call Context

1.1. Background

A single European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme has been set up to combine three separate European Funds. These are:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The Growth Programme provides funding to help projects in England that create jobs and economic growth. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has responsibility for managing EAFRD. Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages these grants on behalf of Defra.

Government has allocated £177 million of rural development funding from EAFRD for grants in the Growth Programme. These grants are available for:

- funding and developing micro, small and medium-sized rural businesses including food processing
- funding for small scale tourism infrastructure and tourism co-operation

1.2 Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are private sector-led partnerships between local authorities and businesses. Each LEP has set out in its ESIF strategy the local priorities for this funding the aim of which is to achieve economic growth in its area. There are 39 LEPs covering England, 37 have an allocation of rural development funding. To apply for this funding the project must be located in a rural area in England.

1.3 Other Rural Development Funding

Other rural development support for agricultural and forestry businesses will be available through LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), the Countryside Productivity Scheme and Countryside Stewardship.

1.4 Local Context

This call invites applications for investments that create jobs and grow the tourism sector in the rural areas of Enterprise M3.

The Enterprise M3 ESIF strategy identifies tourism is an important sector in the LEP area. It generates £2.6 billion for the local economy and supports more than 61,000 jobs. As a percentage of the workforce, this is higher than the national average.

The Enterprise M3 rural briefing paper shows there is potential to grow the rural economy by developing the tourism offer. There is a wide range of tourism assets in the local area including:

- New Forest National Park
- South Downs National Park
- Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- extensive woodland
- historic rural market towns

The beauty of the area, along with existing visitor attractions encourages local, national and international visitors to the area. The close proximity to London provides the opportunity to attract visitors from the city to extend their stay in the Enterprise M3 LEP area. The rural briefing paper highlights the need to invest in visitor attractions to maintain its appeal to these visitors.

This call seeks to support activities that:

- develop new rural visitor attractions
- develop and improve existing rural visitor attractions to encourage more visitors to stay for longer and spend more

Applications that create new attractions are a priority for this call. The call does not provide support for:

- creating new visitor accommodation
- developing existing visitor accommodation
- creating destination plans

2. Call Overview

2.1 Purpose of the Call

Theme – Supporting tourism in rural areas

This call seeks applications that support investments in the tourism sector in rural areas.

The rural tourism sector offers a significant opportunity for growth in developing the all year round destination offer and improving the quality of tourism products. This can benefit the wider economy of rural areas through high spend on rural

attractions and accommodation as well as an increase in tourism based enterprises and job opportunities.

Enterprise M3 LEP aims to support the creation of distinctive and high quality destinations based on what each individual destination can offer. This call provides support for:

- rural businesses and communities seeking to invest in recreational and small scale rural tourism infrastructure

2.2 Support Available

This call seeks applications from micro and small rural businesses in rural areas of Enterprise M3. Grants are available for investments in visitor tourism attractions.
The aim of this call is to support growth in the tourism sector and generate new jobs by encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more.

Examples include:

- creating new visitor attractions
- creating new activities at existing visitor attractions that encourage visitors to stay for longer

Applications that can demonstrate the following criteria below will be a priority for support:

- create 1 full time equivalent job for every £25,000 of funding requested
- create new visitor attractions, particularly those that focus on the countryside, such as farm parks
- create year round not seasonal jobs

Applications that show two or more of these criteria will be a higher priority for support.

2.3 Size of grants available

Grants will be available for this call from £50,000 up to €200,000 (approximately £140,000). State aid rules will apply which may affect the amount of grant offered. Further details on state aid rules are available from gov.uk.

Applicants can apply for a grant to cover up to 40% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of a project for this call would therefore be £125,000

Applicants must pay for any costs not covered by the grant with private funding, such as savings or a bank loan, not other public funds. If private funding isn't

used, Rural Payments Agency (RPA) may ask the applicant to repay any grant money already paid and may cancel any future payments.

2.4 Total Funding Available

The total grant funding available for this call is **£465,000.** Funding will be offered to a maximum of 9 projects, but the actual number of projects supported may be lower, dependent upon the scale and range of the projects coming forward. All applications are competitive and for this call RPA will assess applications after the close of the deadline.

3. Outputs to be delivered

Applicants need to show how their project will contribute to the achievement of the following total outputs for the call:

- creation of 18 new full time equivalent jobs
- additional number of day visitors
- additional number of overnight visitors
- increase in Gross Value Added

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate how they will deliver the outputs, committed to within the proposal along with any methodology used. Further details on the evidence requirements for each output will be available at full application stage.

Applicants will also need to ensure robust project management systems are in place that will capture and record the outputs. A detailed description of the systems will need to be provided at full application stage. All projects will be required to collect evidence to show that outputs have been achieved and report progress with each claim.

4. How to apply

There are two stages to the application process. Applications will be assessed at both stages and only the strongest will be successful. The 2 stages are:

- Stage 1: an outline application
- Stage 2: a full application

Further details on how to apply for a grant and an outline application form are available from gov.uk. The applicant will only be invited to submit a full application if their outline application is successful.

Work must not start on any part of a proposed project before the applicant has received and signed a grant funding agreement from the RPA. This includes ordering or paying a deposit on materials or equipment.

5. Information to consider before making an application

5.1 Eligibility

There will be standard eligibility requirements for each type of grant offered. Applicants will need to refer to gov.uk for further information on each of the types of grants available

5.2 Register with Rural Payments

Before applicants can submit an application for a grant from the Growth Programme, they will need to register on Rural Payments. If the applicant is already registered on Rural Payments, they will not need to do this again.

5.3 Cross Cutting Themes

All applications received under this call must demonstrate how the Cross Cutting Themes have been addressed in the project design and development. The cross cutting themes for all projects are sustainable development and equality and diversity. Further details on these can be found in the Outline Application form.

5.4 Quotes

Applicants must ensure that they obtain best value for money when buying goods or services. Important information on the number and format of the quotes required to demonstrate best value are available from gov.uk. Applicants will be required to submit these if invited to develop a full application.

5.5 Publicising the Grant

When a project is successful in obtaining rural development funding through Growth Programme, the grant beneficiary will be required to publicise the grant. The RPA will provide beneficiaries with further information with the grant funding agreement but they may expect beneficiaries to:

- mention it in any press releases or when communicating with customers, for example in newsletters and on their website (if applicable); and

- display a poster, plaque, or billboard, including EU logos, depending on the amount of funding received and the type of investment.

If the applicant does not do this, the RPA may apply a penalty by deducting payment from the grant.

6. Support

Guidance on how to apply for a Growth Programme grant is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/growth-programme-grants-for-the-rural-economy. Applicants can call the Rural Payments helpline on 0300 0200 301 or Email GPEnquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk for further support if required.

7. Submitting applications

Send the completed outline application form to growthapps@rpa.gsi.gov.uk. The RPA will email to confirm that they've received it.