

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment  
Funds Growth Programme

Call for Proposals  
European Regional Development Fund

Priority Axis 2: Enhancing Access To, and  
Use and Quality of, Information and  
Communications Technology

<b>Managing Authority:</b>	<b>Department for Communities and Local Government</b>
<b>Fund:</b>	<b>European Regional Development Fund</b>
<b>Priority Axis:</b>	<b>Priority Axis 2: Enhancing Access To, and Use and Quality of, information and Communications Technology</b>
<b>Call Reference:</b>	<b>OC20R17P 0569</b>
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership Area:</b>	<b>Leeds City Region</b>
<b>Indicative Fund Allocation:</b>	<b>£2,000,000</b>
<b>Call Open:</b>	<b>Friday 30 June 2017</b>
<b>Call Closes:</b>	<b>23:59, 8 September 2017</b>

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# 1. Introduction

The 2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds bring the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development together into a single European Union Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England supporting the key growth priorities of innovation, research and development, support for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, low carbon, skills, employment, and social inclusion.

The Government has confirmed that it will guarantee EU funding for structural and investment fund projects signed before the UK's departure from the EU, even when these projects continue after we have left the EU.

As a result, British businesses and other organisations will have additional certainty over future funding and should continue to apply for EU funding while the UK remains a member of the EU.

Funding for projects will be honoured by the government, if they meet good value for money and are in line with domestic strategic priorities. Each government department will take responsibility for the allocation of money to projects in line with these conditions and the wider rules on public spending. The full detail of the announcement can be found at the following [website link](#).

The funds are managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government for the European Regional Development Fund, Department for Work and Pensions for the European Social Fund and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. These Departments are the managing authorities for each Fund. In London, the Greater London Authority acts as an intermediate body for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund programmes. In some other areas, Intermediate Bodies are being designated by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Work and Pensions to perform the following tasks:

1. Input into project calls in respect of local development needs (with reference to ESI Funds Strategies); and
2. Assessment of applications against certain selection criteria in relation to fit with local priorities in respect of the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund.

The managing authorities and intermediate bodies work closely with local partners on ESI Funds sub-committees in each local enterprise partnership area. Partners on these sub-committees provide:

1. Practical advice and information to the managing authorities to assist in the preparation of local plans that contribute towards operational programme priorities and targets;
2. Local intelligence to the Managing authorities (or intermediate bodies where designated) in the development of project calls that reflect operational programme and local development needs as well as match funding opportunities; and
3. Advice on local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of the operational programme and the local European Structural and Investment Funds strategy to aid the Managing authorities' (or intermediate bodies where designated) assessments at outline and full application stage.

This call is issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and invites outline applications in respect of the European Regional Development Fund for England 2014 to 2020.

## 2. Call Context

On behalf of the national Growth Programme Board, the Department for Communities and Local Government (the managing authority) invites applications seeking European Regional Development Fund support under:

### **Priority Axis 2      Enhancing Access To, and Use and Quality of, Information and Communications Technology**

#### **Investment Priorities:**

- 2b**      Developing Information and Communications Technology products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for Information and Communications Technology

The **European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020** sets out how the European Regional Development Fund will focus on investment to support economic growth and job creation. **Priority Axis 2** of the operational programme aims to enhance access to, and use and quality of, information and communications technology.

Any application for funding will be required to clearly demonstrate that it meets the requirement of, and makes a meaningful contribution to, the delivery of the relevant Priority Axis of the [European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme](#).

In addition, applications will be expected to meet identified local development needs, as expressed in the scope of this call and as set out in the [Leeds City Region](#) European Structural and Investment Funds strategy.

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the detail of the operational programme, local European Structural and Investment Funds strategy and the relevant documentation listed in sections 5 through to 8 **prior to** submitting an outline application.

### 3. Scope of the Call

#### 1. Scope

This call invites outline applications which support the delivery of Priority Axis 2 of the European Regional Development Fund operational programme and respond to the local development need set out in the [Leeds City Region](#) European Structural and Investment Funds strategy.

<p><b>Indicative fund allocation:</b></p>	<p>Indicatively, through this call the managing authority expects to allocate up to £2,000,000</p> <p>The managing authority reserves the right to invite to full application (and subsequently approve) projects that have a cumulative value that is higher or lower than this indicative allocation, subject to the volume and quality of proposals received. The managing authority may also decide to place some projects submitted through this call on a reserve list and invite them to proceed at a later date, subject to the availability of funding.</p> <p>There is no indicative allocation of European Regional Development Fund funding between capital and revenue activity, both capital and revenue is eligible dependent on the nature of activities/Investment Priorities set out in the call.</p>
<p><b>Minimum application level</b></p>	<p>European Regional Development Fund investment is intended to make a significant impact on local growth. Applications are expected to demonstrate appropriate scale and impact. The managing authority does not intend to allocate less than £500,000 European Regional Development Fund to any single project. Consequently projects with a total value of less than £1,000,000 will not normally be supported under this call.</p>

<b>Duration of project activity</b>	Projects should plan to deliver activity for a maximum of three years; however the managing authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration, upwards or downwards.
<b>Geographical scope</b>	<p>The England European Regional Development Fund operational programme operates on a National basis. All eligible European Regional Development Fund expenditure must benefit organisations located in England.</p> <p>Revenue projects should predominantly support businesses based within the local enterprise partnership area of this call.</p>
<b>Specific call requirements</b>	<p>Applicants should note that:</p> <p><b>Value for Money</b> and alignment with <b>Domestic Strategic Priorities</b> will form a key part of the assessment and appraisal of all applications. Therefore proposals should clearly articulate and demonstrate how activities align with domestic strategic priorities and offer good value for money.</p> <p>The managing authority expects to award a single contract for the full indicative call allocation.</p> <p>Applicants will be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the digital and ICT needs of local businesses in Leeds City Region.</li> <li>• Engage and work with the LEPs Growth and Skills Service. The Growth Service is the single access point for SMEs for publicly funded businesses support programmes in Leeds City region.</li> <li>• Not duplicate but add value to the existing ERDF Digital Enterprise project already delivering ICT support to local SMEs across the City Region.</li> </ul>
<b>Call deadlines</b>	<p>For this specific call, applications will be assessed after the close of the single</p> <p>Applications received after the published call close date will not be considered. All applications will be assessed following closure of the call.</p>

## 2. Local development need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 2 of the operational programme, one or more of the relevant Investment Priorities and meet the local development need expressed in the table below.

## Local Development Need

### Local growth priorities:

#### Local Economic Context :

Leeds City Region is the biggest city region economy in the country, with an annual output of £64.6bn representing 5% of the English total. It hosts 121,000 businesses, 3 million residents and a workforce of 1.4m. Nine Higher Education institutions and 14 Further Education Colleges are based in the City Region, which is home to a student population of around 230,000.

Despite the City Region's undoubted economic strengths and assets, it is not realising its full potential. The decline of heavy industry has left a legacy of pockets of serious deprivation and an economy that is less productive than those in many other parts of the country. The LEP's revised vision for the City Region is to be a globally recognised economy where good growth delivers high levels of prosperity, jobs and quality of life for everyone. This revised vision places a greater emphasis on "good growth", where a radical uplift in growth, productivity and business success goes hand in hand with quality jobs that connect all people and places to opportunity and improved quality of life. Achieving the vision will mean that the economy becomes stronger, more dynamic and resilient, and will be on course to consistently improve performance compared to national averages and international competitors.

The original Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was agreed in 2014, and is now updated to reflect the new focus on good growth and to account for economic change since the initial publication. The SEP continues to be based on the four inter-connected strategic investment priorities:

PRIORITY 1: Growing Businesses

PRIORITY 2: Skilled People, Better Jobs

PRIORITY 3: Clean Energy and Environmental Resilience

PRIORITY 4: Infrastructure for Growth

The SEP also identifies ten "headline initiatives" that will help make real progress towards the LEP's vision. These include the City Region becoming "a global digital centre – with specialisms in data storage, analytics, digital health and tech skills".

#### Challenges

There are significant challenges that must be faced and overcome to enable Leeds City Region to deliver its ambitions.

In recent years, parts of the Leeds City Region have benefited from investment to upgrade digital infrastructure through joint public / private programmes to enhance a digitally connected and competitive City Region which includes Superfast West Yorkshire Local Broadband programme, the Superfast North Yorkshire programme and the Superconnected Cities programme. .

Despite this investment, the exploitation of digital technologies by businesses in some areas and sectors remains very low, and much of the potential created by the

large scale infrastructure investment in digital infrastructure is not being realised. Specific sectors of the economy have been particularly slow to adopt ICT or broadband due to outdated business models, low levels of business engagement in engaging with and take up of ICT, and a lack of understanding about the opportunities that innovation through ICT and better broadband provides for business growth.

For those businesses who have already received some support such as website development and use of social media, there is still a relatively poor understanding of the business benefits of more advanced applications like cloud solutions.

A recent evaluation report for the LEP identifies that only 59% of SMEs have a website and just one third of businesses currently trade online. Furthermore it is estimated that UK SMEs could increase their annual turnover by £18bn if the less digitally-capable firms began trading and marketing online. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce quarterly survey of 2013 highlighted a major need for intervention/support to help businesses expand their digital capabilities. It is estimated that up to 20,000 businesses in the LCR economy are in need of business support and expertise to help them exploit digital technologies to achieve business growth, greater investment and job creation.

The Leeds City Region Labour Market Analysis 2016/17 highlights the demand for digital skills among businesses. 3 of the top 10 most advertised vacancies in the year to August 2016 were for digital roles – business analysts (around 2,400 postings), .net developers (1,500 postings) and java software developers (1,000 postings) all featured in the top 10.

Looking at the specific skills businesses are seeking in advertised vacancies further emphasises the demand for digital skills, with web and developer skills such as SQL, Javascript and Microsoft C# all featuring in the top 10 alongside more basic IT skills such as Microsoft Excel. This is evidence that businesses are seeking individuals with the right digital skills to meet their growth ambitions.

Increasingly these skills are required across all sectors of the economy, and not just within the ICT sector. The Leeds City Region Business Survey (2015) found that 22% of all businesses said they needed to improve the basic IT skills in their workforce in the next 12-18 months, with a similar proportion needing to improve their advanced IT skills. Demand was inevitably highest in the logistics and communications sector (which also included ICT), but the number of financial services firms needing to improve their advanced IT skills was also elevated, with over a quarter of respondents identifying skills gaps in this area.

Intervention is required to ensure that all businesses are given the support and tools to maximise the opportunities that new technology affords. Increased capability within SMEs will result in faster growing businesses, businesses that innovate and reach international markets.

**Local priorities:**

Proposals should demonstrate alignment with local development need and priorities



including:

- Proposals should align with the West Yorkshire Local Broadband Plan (2015) which has recently been updated in consultation with local authority partners, Government and industry through the LCR Digital Innovation Steering Group and the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Business Innovation Group, which now includes the district of York.
- The West Yorkshire Local Broadband Plan outlines the priorities for superfast broadband infrastructure programmes to ensure all businesses in Leeds City Region are able to access enhanced broadband services to support their economic competitiveness and increased productivity.
- Proposals should ensure coverage across the Leeds City Region and consider specific targeting of businesses with the capacity to access newly upgraded infrastructure.
- Proposals should consider how they complement the Government's Super Connected Cities programme and support businesses not able to access this scheme.

**The types of interventions that may be supported include:**

- Activities focused on optimising new and emerging to improve SME productivity, increase SMEs digital capability and capacity to grow and innovate through access to and improved utilisation of superfast broadband.
- Support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in updating or introducing new ICT business models which will drive business performance. This may include coaching, advice, consultancy, mentoring and support to access new markets through improved ICT connections and skills strategies.
- Demonstration and pilot projects, showcasing how SMEs can stimulate innovation through the smart use of ICT, including the dissemination of the results.
- SME Voucher schemes towards enhanced ICT connections or ICT hardware e.g. a direct fibre connection to their premises or an ISDN line providing them with hyper-fast broadband (+100 mbps).
- Support the integration of SMEs in digital supply chains through the smart use of ICT.

This call responds to the needs as defined in the National ERDF Operational Programme under PA2, investment Priority 2b and the Leeds City Region ESIF strategy section 3.3 – Unlocking growth potential of businesses in key economic sectors, Programme Activity 1.3: Broadband Business Support & Connectivity Vouchers Programme.

For more information on the Leeds City Region ESIF Strategy please see - <http://business.leedscityregion.gov.uk/LCR-Portal/media/Portal-images/pdf%20downloads/A/Leeds-City-Region-ESIF-FINAL-31-Jan-2014-Revised-May-2014-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf>

### 3. Operational programme investment priorities

Applications must specify the activities to be delivered and must directly contribute to one or more of the following investment priorities:

<b>Investment priority</b>	<b>2b – Developing Information and Communications Technology products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for Information and Communications Technology.</b>
<b>Specific objectives</b>	<p>Increase the number of small and medium sized enterprises making productive use of digital technologies.</p>
<b>Indicative actions</b>	<p>The support provided through this specific objective will help small and medium sized enterprises to be able to understand and use information and communication technology products and services appropriate for their business. It will complement action under the other investment priority in this axis as well as action under priority axes 1 and 3:</p> <p>Under this investment priority, actions that the European Regional Development Fund may support include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for small and medium sized enterprises to update or introduce new information and communication technology business models which will drive business performance;</li> <li>• Provision of coaching, advice, consultancy, mentoring and support for small and medium sized enterprises to access new markets through improved information and communication technology connections;</li> <li>• Provision of coaching, advice, consultancy, mentoring and support for to develop information and communication technology skills strategies;</li> <li>• Provision of coaching, advice, consultancy, mentoring and support to implement productivity improvements from use of information and communication technology;</li> <li>• Demand-side voucher schemes;</li> <li>• Demonstration and pilot projects, showcasing how small and medium sized enterprises can stimulate</li> </ul>

	<p>innovation through the smart use of information and communication technology;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for diffusion of results from demonstration and pilot projects; and</li> <li>• Support for the integration of small and medium sized enterprises in digital supply chains through the smart use of information and communication technology.</li> </ul> <p>Activities will target small and medium sized enterprises, including social enterprises.</p>
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## 4. Required Outputs under this Call

Applicants will need to demonstrate how the eligible activity, funded by the European Regional Development Fund will achieve the programme-level outputs for Priority Axis 2.

For projects proposing to deliver activity against more than one investment priority, the appropriate outputs should be selected. Project will be required to report on, and evidence, the achievement of the outputs separately under each investment priority.

For projects coming forward under this call the expected outputs and results are:

<b>Investment Priority 2b</b>	
Output reference	Name
C1	Number of enterprises receiving support
C5	Number of new enterprises supported
C29	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products
P4	Additional businesses taking up broadband with speeds of at least 30Mbps

The managing authority expects the level of outputs proposed within outline applications to be realistic and achievable and to deliver good value for money. The application should clearly state the methodology used to determine the levels of outputs proposed.

Projects will only be supported if they demonstrate good value for money. An important consideration when assessing value for money is the level of European Regional Development Fund outputs that the project would deliver.

The managing authority has not set specific output targets for this Call and does not publish average or expected unit costs.

The local European Structural and Investment Fund strategy for each local enterprise partnership area includes details of the local, notional European Regional Development Fund allocation to each priority axis and the type and number of European Regional Development Fund outputs that are expected in return for this investment.

All operations will be required to report regularly on progress toward achievement of targets. This will need to include both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the appropriate geographical areas. Applicants will need to explain how they will collect and record this information to maintain a fully evidenced audit trail. It should be noted that if an operation fails to deliver contracted outputs, a performance penalty may apply.

## 5. Application Process and Prioritisation Methodology

There are two stages to the European Regional Development Fund application process:

1. Outline application and, if successful
2. Full application.

Acceptance of an outline application to progress to full application stage does not in any way indicate or constitute an offer of European Regional Development Fund grant.

Applicants must fully complete the [outline application](#) which will be assessed by the managing authority against all of the national [selection criteria](#) except where an intermediate body has been designated to assess against some of the selection criteria. Where an intermediate body has been designated to undertake delegated tasks, the intermediate body will undertake the assessment against the selection criteria in relation to fit with local priorities.

Outline applications will be assessed in two stages, Gateway assessment and Core assessment.

The Gateway assessment is undertaken by the managing authorities and considers:

- Applicant eligibility;
- Activity and expenditure eligibility; and

- Fit with the National operational programme and the local development need set out in section 2.

Applications that fail the Gateway assessment undertaken by the managing authority will be rejected. Applications which pass the Gateway assessment will then be assessed by the managing authority in relation to all Core assessment criteria.

In areas where an intermediate body<sup>1</sup> has been designated, the following will apply:

The intermediate body will assess the application against the following Core assessment criteria:

- Local strategic fit

The managing authority will assess the application against the following Core assessment criteria:<sup>2</sup>

- National strategic fit;
- Value for money;
- Management and control;
- Deliverability;
- Compliance;
  - Procurement
  - State Aid
  - Publicity requirements
- Cross cutting themes; and
  - Environmental sustainability
  - Equal opportunities

The intermediate body will also provide advice to the managing authority to assist the managing authority to make its assessment against the following Core selection criteria:

1. Value for money; and
2. Deliverability.

Having assessed projects against these criteria the relevant local enterprise partnership area European Structural and Investment Funds sub-committee will advise the managing authority or intermediate body as relevant on the contribution to local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of the operational programme and local European Structural and Investment Funds strategy to aid the managing authority's assessments (at outline and full application stage).

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<sup>1</sup> This process works differently for the Greater London Authority. Please contact the Greater London Authority for further details.

Having concluded their assessments the managing authority and the intermediate body will prioritise the applications they wish to proceed based on their assessment against their respective selection criteria. Only projects that the managing authority and the intermediate body each agree should proceed, based on their respective core selection criteria, will be invited to submit a full application. Subsequently only those full applications that the managing authority and the intermediate body each agree should proceed, based on their respective selection criteria, will be approved.

Please note that the managing authority's decision is final and there are no appeals. If you wish to complain about the calls and application process, please follow the procedure set out at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/complaints-procedure>

Potential applicants / applicants may wish to take advantage of information and support services funded through European Regional Development Fund Technical Assistance and available to assist the design and development of compliant projects / applications for the European Regional Development Fund. Details of your local Technical Assistance funded project can be found on the [Technical Assistance website page](#).

## 6. General Information

### 1. National Eligibility Rules

When developing an application, Applicants must refer to the [National Eligibility Rules](#) setting out the requirements of the 2014 to 2020 European Regional Development Fund Programme. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the National Eligibility Rules are adhered to both at application stage and following approval. Failure to do so can lead to financial penalties leading to recovery of up to 100% of the grant value. If in doubt on any of the requirements, applicants are strongly advised to seek specialist advice.

European Regional Development Fund eligibility rules apply to **all** project spend within the eligible costs, including match funding.

The European Regional Development Fund is governed by European regulations and national rules. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant documentation, (Section 8 Key Document refers) prior to submitting an outline application. If successful at the full application stage, Applicants will enter into [a Funding agreement](#) and must abide by the standard terms and conditions contained therein. Once a Funding agreement has been issued it should be signed and returned within 30 days, unless otherwise agreed with the managing authority. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to read these terms and conditions to

ensure that they are able to enter into such an agreement prior to responding to the call.

## **2. Eligible Applicants**

Section 4 of the [National Eligibility Rules](#) sets out who is eligible to apply. Financial Due Diligence checks will be undertaken on non-public sector applicants that are successful at the outline application stage. Checks will be carried out following notification of a successful outline application and may exclude applicants from further consideration. These checks will include assessment of the applicant's financial standing including ability to deal with cost overruns, the ability to cash flow a project in arrears and absorb a financial irregularity.

Applicants must be legally constituted at the point of signing a Funding Agreement. If the application is approved the applicant organisation will enter into a legally binding Funding agreement and therefore will carry the liability for ensuring that the terms and conditions of the Funding agreement are met.

If there is more than one organisation applying for the funds, a lead organisation must be selected to become the applicant (and grant recipient) with the remaining organisation(s) acting as delivery partner(s). In this situation the applicant would be responsible and liable for the delivery partner(s) and ensuring the project is operating compliantly.

During the application process the managing authority will consider the applicant's track record, both positive and negative. If the applicant has been involved in the delivery of previous European grants and any irregularities have been identified, the managing authority will expect to see what steps have been taken to ensure that the risk of further irregularities in the future is mitigated. It is acknowledged that some organisations will be new to European Structural and Investment Funds funding and will not have a track record.

## **3. Contribution rate and match funding**

European Regional Development Fund investment must not be used to replace existing funding sources. European Regional Development Fund investment must enable activity to take place that would not otherwise happen or to increase the scope, scale or intensity of activity. The level of European Regional Development Fund awarded will be the minimum in order for the project to proceed

The maximum contribution rate is 50% of the total eligible project costs subject to State Aid regulations.

The remaining 50% or more must come from other eligible sources as specified under section 6 of the National Eligibility Rules. During the application process applicants will need to satisfy the managing authority that they have, or are able to

put in place eligible match funding for the balance of costs. Other EU funds cannot be used as a source of match funding.

European Regional Development Fund investment is limited by State Aid regulations and where the award of European Regional Development Fund would constitute State Aid the European Regional Development Fund grant rate may fall below the 50% maximum.

European Regional Development Fund is paid quarterly in arrears and expenditure must be defrayed prior to the submission of any grant claims. Applicants may be asked to demonstrate how they are able to cash flow the operation.

#### **4. Project timescales**

European Regional Development Fund funding will normally be approved for three years; however the managing authority reserves the right to extend the contract term in exceptional circumstances.

Projects approved through this call will normally be expected to:

- Submit a detailed and complete full application within three months of formal selection at outline stage. Projects which fail to meet this deadline may be deselected;
- Commence delivery (defraying European Regional Development Fund eligible costs) within three months of formal approval. Projects which fail to meet this deadline may be deselected; and
- Be closed by June 2023.

#### **5. Capital projects**

In developing the budget for the outline application, applicants seeking European Regional Development Fund to support a capital project should note that:

1. New build projects will normally be expected to achieve the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of 'excellent'; however BREEAM 'very good' will be accepted where this is the maximum feasible standard;
2. Refurbishment projects will normally be expected to achieve the BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'; and
3. Infrastructure projects will normally be expected to achieve the Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment rating of 'Very Good'.

#### **6. Cross Cutting Themes / Horizontal Principles**

All applications selected as a result of this call will be required to demonstrate how the Cross Cutting Themes have been addressed in the project design and development. Cross Cutting Themes for European Regional Development Fund are



'equality and anti-discrimination' and 'sustainable development'. Further information is available in Section 11 of the [European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme](#).

Information and communications technology issues are likely to impact more on older people and disabled people, so digital infrastructure investments under priority axis 2 should be accompanied by relevant skills support.

## **7. Additionality, duplication and displacement**

Additionality is a core principle of European Regional Development Funding. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the activity paid for out of European Regional Development Funding adds value to new or existing activity.

European Regional Development Funding cannot support activities that duplicate existing provision / services within the region.

Applications need to identify and evidence how the beneficiaries will use the service and demonstrate that the project does not displace other activity available in the market place.

## **8. State Aid and revenue generation**

Applicants are required, in the outline application, to provide a view on how their proposal complies with State Aid law. Applicants must ensure that projects comply with the law on State Aid. Grant funding to any economic undertaking which is State Aid can only be awarded if it is compatible aid, in that it complies with the terms of a notified scheme under the General Block Exemption Regulation (EU) 651/2014.

Only if this is not possible should applicants use the De minimis regulation or 'no aid'. [Guidance for grant recipients](#), explaining more about State Aid, is available; it is important that Applicants take responsibility for understanding the importance of the State Aid rules and securing their full compliance with them throughout the project, if it is selected into the Programme.

The managing authority is not able to give legal advice on State Aid. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the operation is State Aid compliant.

## **9. Procurement**

All costs claimed by the applicant (grant recipient and / or delivery partner(s)) must be recovered on an actual cost basis. Other costs must be procured in line with National (including [Public Procurement Regulation 2015](#)) and EU regulations. Procurement will be subject to audit and verification and any irregularity will result in a financial penalty of up to 100% of the grant paid. Robust and transparent procurement is required to ensure that grant recipients:

- Consider value for money;
- Maximise efficient use of public money; and
- Maintain competitiveness and fairness across the EU.

It is **strongly recommended** that applicants seek and follow legal advice in respect of procurement requirements. Procurement irregularities remain the most substantive cause of error and clawback of grants.

## 7. Support

Please note that this is a competitive call and to preserve impartiality the managing authority and, where appropriate, the intermediate body are unable to enter into correspondence with applicants over their outline application. Details of where guidance can be found are contained throughout this call document. In exceptional circumstances, if there are issues with accessing this guidance, please contact: [YH.ERDFENQUIRIES@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:YH.ERDFENQUIRIES@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

## 8. Key Documents

- European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme;
- Outline application form;
- Outline application form guidance;
- Local enterprise partnership area's European Structural and Investment Funds strategy;
- Eligibility guidance;
- Target definitions; and
- Funding agreement (revenue and / or capital).

## 9. Document Checklist

Incomplete applications will be rejected. Please ensure the following information (documents) are submitted.

Outline stage:

- (i) Fully completed outline application;
- (ii) Financial tables; and
- (iii) Outputs, results and indicators tables.

## 10. Document Submission

Completed outline applications must be submitted via **email** to the address in Section 7.

Outline application forms not received by the deadline will not be assessed. Outline applications which are not fully completed will be excluded.

For this call applications will normally be required to **commence delivery/activity within three months** of the award of a Funding Agreement.

Any changes related to the deadline for the submission of the outline application form will be notified on the [European Growth Funding](#) website pages.