

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>OC06R17P 0611</b>
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership Area:</b>	<b>Coventry and Warwickshire</b>
<b>Indicative Fund Allocation:</b>	<b>£1,442,735</b>
<b>Call Open:</b>	<b>Wednesday 6 September 2017</b>
<b>Call Closes:</b>	<b>23.59 on Friday 10 November 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:

- Input into project calls in respect of local development needs (with reference to ESI Funds Strategies); and
- 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:

- Practical advice and information to the managing authorities to assist in the preparation of local plans that contribute towards operational programme priorities and targets;
- 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
- 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 [Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) 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

### 3.1. 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 [Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) 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 £1,442,735.</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>
<p><b>Duration of project activity</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Geographical scope</b></p>	<p>The England European Regional Development Fund</p>

	<p>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 Coventry and Warwickshire local enterprise partnership area.</p>
<b>Specific call requirements</b>	<p><b>Please note: Value for Money and alignment with Strategic Domestic 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>
<b>Call deadlines</b>	<p>For this specific call, applications will be assessed after the close of the single deadline.</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>

### 3.2. 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.

<b>Local Development Need</b>
<p><b>Local growth priorities:</b></p> <p>The socio-economic analysis detailed within the Coventry and Warwickshire European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy identifies a shortfall in the number of local commercial premises that have access to superfast broadband (pertinent to Investment Priority 2a), and the under-exploitation amongst Coventry and Warwickshire small and medium sized enterprise of the opportunities information communication technologies can offer in fostering business growth and innovation.</p> <p>Although a solid foundation is now in place across Coventry and Warwickshire for extending the availability and use of superfast broadband, there is still a need for further intervention to ensure that Coventry and Warwickshire businesses are able to access fast broadband speeds. In rolling out the UK's superfast broadband infrastructure, the focus of the private sector to date has been on those geographical parts of the network that offer highest returns for lowest cost. This was estimated to leave some 91,385 premises without access to superfast broadband within Coventry</p>

and Warwickshire.

This issue particularly disadvantages Coventry and Warwickshire's rural areas, where there are fewer broadband subscribers and higher installation costs. Small and medium sized enterprises in these areas also already experience higher energy and transport costs. It should also be noted that there are areas within Coventry without access to superfast broadband.

The Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire (CSW) Superfast Broadband Project – a partnership of the eight local authorities in the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership area, plus Solihull has sought to address this shortfall; however at the end of the currently contracted project, some 16,258 premises in Coventry and Warwickshire in state aid "white areas" will not be able to achieve superfast speeds (30Mbps). In addition, a further 16,014 premises are considered to be under review and may become "state aid white" if the market fails to deliver.

Increased access to superfast broadband will play a key role in growing the local economy, given the high levels of reliance of local businesses on information communication technologies and broadband, and the importance of the knowledge economy for future growth in the sub-region. For example, Coventry and Warwickshire has a high concentration of high growth, high value manufacturers, and has also witnessed an expansion of its digital media and software sectors (with 1,300 information communication technologies and software businesses concentrated around six science parks, and the presence of the Serious Games Institute to support the growth of this sector). Continued investment in broadband infrastructure and services will therefore play an important role in further increasing the competitiveness of these sectors.

In addition to enhancing the broadband infrastructure, there is a need for the provision support measures that will not only stimulate further uptake and improve usage of superfast broadband, but also increase the number of small and medium sized enterprises that are making productive use of information communication technologies and digital technologies.

Exploitation of information communication technology is key to increasing small and medium sized enterprise competitiveness and productivity growth and to enabling research and innovation. However, while the majority of UK businesses with 10 or more employees have a website (79% in 2010), approximately 85% do not use a website for selling their goods or services (European Regional Development Fund England Operational Programme 2014 to 2020). For small firms it is estimated that a 10% productivity increase is achieved from internet usage, as small and medium sized enterprises with significant internet usage grow and export twice as fast as others. In fact, evidence shows that the impact of broadband on productivity is highest for enterprises with between 1 and 9 employees and increasing the proportion of small and medium sized enterprises exploiting information communication technology opportunities will increase growth potential in small and medium sized enterprises.

At present, only a small proportion of small and medium sized enterprises are fully exploiting the opportunities information and communication technology offers in areas such as e-commerce, open innovation, and market research. Lack of awareness of the advantages of utilising broadband and other forms of information and communication technology and how to exploit them, constrains business exploitation of the opportunities ICT presents. There are three notable forms of market failure causing this:

- Limited access to external information, advice and expertise;
- Imperfect market knowledge;
- Limited access to finance.

As a result, the local economy requires the provision of support provision that will support businesses to adopt new information and communication technology business models, provide access to new markets and supply chain opportunities through improved information and communication technology connections, improve their employees' awareness of the opportunities presented by broadband enabled technologies and enhanced use of wider information and communication technology and deliver productivity improvements applying a common evaluation framework to identify what works and measure impact.

### **Growth Hubs**

All applicants should articulate within their application how they are going to work with and alongside the Coventry & Warwickshire Growth Hub to ensure: (i) local priorities and needs will be met; and (ii) the proactive referrals of small and medium sized enterprises to and from the growth hubs to enable on-going support of local small and medium sized enterprises to maximise opportunities of growth.

Growth hubs are locally-led partnerships that coordinate business, innovation and trade support within a local enterprise partnership area and make it simple for businesses to access the support they need. They should bring together all of the local bodies involved in supporting businesses – and work with national bodies to ensure that national and local, public and private business support works together in the most streamlined and effective way possible, putting the business customer at the centre of the system.

Specifically, they raise awareness of national and local business support, provide a single access point for businesses and provide a diagnostic and signposting service to make sure that businesses know what is available and can access the right support for them. Growth hubs will deliver against the following five key principles:

- a) developing strong, inclusive partnerships with local stakeholders;
- b) putting in place robust governance arrangements to oversee growth hub activity and ensuring alignment with the local enterprise partnership's strategic economic plan;



- c) ensuring plans for growth hubs are deliverable now and sustainable;
- d) joining up national and local business support and simplifying the local offer;
- e) applying a common evaluation framework to identify what works and measure impact.

### **Knowledge Base Institutions and Networks, including the Catapult Centres**

Where appropriate, applicants should articulate within their application how they are going to work with and alongside national and local knowledge base institutions and networks, including Catapult Centres, to ensure the provision of effective referral routes that enable small and medium sized enterprises to identify and access the most appropriate and tailored support to develop their growth capabilities and maximise opportunities of growth.

***All applicants will need to ensure and demonstrate that proposals add value to existing provision/ services.***

### **Local priorities:**

Proposals should demonstrate alignment with local development need and priorities including:

Activities delivered through Investment Priority 2b should prioritise the take-up and exploitation of emerging digital technologies and networks by eligible small and medium sized enterprises and social enterprises in Coventry and Warwickshire

- The primary beneficiaries of these investments should be eligible small and medium sized enterprises and social enterprises within Coventry and Warwickshire, with a strong but not exclusive focus on Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership's priority sectors. These include concentrations of Intelligent Mobility, Digital & Creative, and Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering.
- Applicants should consider how their proposed activities will be aligned with activities that will potentially be delivered through Priority Axis 1 (Research and Innovation) and Priority Axis 3 (Enhancing the Competiveness of small and medium sized enterprises) within Coventry and Warwickshire.

Cross-Local Enterprise Partnership applications are welcomed, particularly those that align activity to the growth focus of the Midlands Engine and the productivity challenge articulated by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

***Applicants will need to ensure that their proposals are adding value to existing provision/ services.***

### 3.3. 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:

<p><b>Investment priority</b></p>	<p><b>2b – Developing Information and Communications Technology products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for Information and Communications Technology.</b></p>
<p><b>Specific objectives</b></p>	<p>Increase the number of small and medium sized enterprises making productive use of digital technologies.</p>
<p><b>Indicative actions</b></p>	<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 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 innovation through the smart use of information and</li> </ul>

	<p>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:

- (i) Outline application and, if successful
- (ii) 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:

- Value for money; and
- 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).

Having concluded their assessments the managing authority and the intermediate body will prioritise the applications they wish to proceed based on their assessment

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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.

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

### 6.1. 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.

## 6.2. 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.

## 6.3. 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.

#### **6.4. 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.

#### **6.5. Project extensions**

Existing grant recipients whose projects:

1. Do not involve the direct development of premises or infrastructure; and
2. Have a funding agreement that ends/has a financial completion date during the period of this call or within 18 months of the closing date of this call; and
3. Whose project addresses the priorities set out in section 2

May apply for a second phase of delivery – this will be expected to be in the same form as the current project ( i.e. a genuine continuation of activity) but may reflect improvement/some change to reflect experience of phase 1. The application must be made using the standard outline application form. Where changes to phase 1 are significant, these should be presented as a new application. Projects may apply to be extended for up to 3 years.

Applications in respect of the development of premises or other infrastructure should be presented as new projects, this includes applications that have a link to an existing ERDF project e.g. further phases of the development of sites or premises.



**Please note** - Extensions to existing projects will be assessed against the criteria set out in this call in the same way as 'new' projects. There is no guarantee that extensions will be selected. Extension requests relating to projects that end more than 18 months after the closing date of the call or do not meet the requirements set out in this call will be rejected. The applicant's track record and the performance of existing contracts will be taken into account during the assessment process.

## **6.6. Capital projects**

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

- 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;
- Refurbishment projects will normally be expected to achieve the BREEAM rating of 'Very Good'; and
- Infrastructure projects will normally be expected to achieve the Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment rating of 'Very Good'.

## **6.7. 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.

## **6.8. 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.

## 6.9. 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.

## 6.10. 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:

[WM.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:WM.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:

- Fully completed outline application;
- Financial tables; and
- 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.