



Department
for Work &
Pensions



European Union
European
Social Fund

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

Call for Proposals – Online Applications European Social Fund

Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth

Managing Authority	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
ESI Fund	European Social Fund
Priority Axis:	Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth
Investment Priorities	2.1: Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning and: 2.2: Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems
Call Reference:	North East Region: ESF Skills for Growth OC25S19P1405
LEP Area:	North East Region
Call Opens:	8 May 2019
Call Closes:	Midnight 27 August 2019
Application Process	<p>Applications for funding must be completed and submitted using the ECLAIMS IT system.</p> <p>Applications submitted via any other method will not be accepted.</p> <p>Please do not use ECLAIMS to access or apply against ERDF calls published on GOV.UK – the online application process is only applicable to specified ESF open calls.</p>

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1. Call Context

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

The Government has confirmed that it will guarantee funding for ESF projects that are contracted by the end of 2020. Whatever the outcome of the EU negotiations, this guarantee will stand. This ensures that UK organisations, such as charities, businesses and universities, will continue to receive funding over a project's lifetime if they successfully bid into EU-funded programmes before the end of 2020, even in the event of a no-deal. Details of the guarantee can be found at the following [website link](#).

All contracted ESF projects must be completed by the end of the programme period in 2023. Each application for ESF will be required to demonstrate that it delivers good value for money and domestic strategic priorities.

European Structural and Investment Funds are managed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (ERDF), Department for Work and Pensions (ESF) and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (EAFRD). In London, the Greater London Authority acts as an Intermediate Body for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund programmes. Unless stated otherwise, the term "Managing Authority" will apply to all these organisations. These Departments are the Managing Authorities for each Fund. The Managing Authorities work closely with local partners who 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 in the development of project calls (decided by the Managing Authorities) that reflect Operational Programme and local development needs as well as match funding opportunities;
- Advice on local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of Operational Programmes and the local ESIF Strategy to aid the Managing Authority's appraisal of each Full Application.

This call is issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to commission ESF Funded projects that will support the **Priority Axis 2 of the Operational Programme: Skills for Growth** and **Investment Priority: 2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning** and **Investment Priority: 2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems** as set out in the Operational Programme.

All applications will need to be eligible under the European Social Fund Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020. The [ESF Operational Programme](#) is available for applicants to read.

This call for proposal sets out the requirements for any applicants to consider before applying. Applications against this call will be appraised as part of a single-stage appraisal process and successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with the DWP. Further information is given in sections 4 to 10.

All ESF applicants will need to be aware of the requirement to collect and report data on all participants as per Annex 1 of the ESF regulation (see Appendix A). This will be in addition to the requirement to report on the output and result indicators referred to in section 3 of the call for proposal.

1.1 National Context

This priority axis aims to support skills for growth. It will support activities through:

Investment priority: 2.1 - Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences

ESF will not fund activity that duplicates or cuts across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities. Exemptions to this principle will be considered only where a local specific need and/or market failure has been demonstrated and where the activity falls within the scope of the Operational Programme.

Full details of what can and cannot be supported under this Investment Priority are set out in the Operational Programme. Details of the specific objectives have been reproduced below.

Specific Objective	Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support
To address the basic skills needs of employed people, particularly in SMEs and micro businesses.	The additional support from this investment priority will help employed people to gain basic skills. It will also improve the capacity of SMEs and micro businesses and support business growth. We have set an output target for the number of participants without basic skills and a result target for participants gaining basic skills.
To increase the skills levels of employed people from the existing level to the next level up, to encourage progression in employment.	The additional support from this investment priority will help employed people to progress at work through achieving higher skills, and it will drive growth in their organisation by improving productivity. We have set result targets for participants gaining qualifications or units – separate targets for level 2 and level 3.
To increase the number of people with technical and job specific skills, particularly at level 3 and above and into higher and advanced level apprenticeships, to support business growth.	The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will have gained a qualification or a unit of qualification. This investment priority will also support business growth through the development of a more highly skilled workforce. We have set a

	result target for participants gaining qualifications or units at level 3 or above.
To increase the skills levels of employed women to encourage progression in employment and help address the gender employment and wage gap.	The additional support from this investment priority will support women in raising the level of their skills, helping them to progress in employment or self-employment and achieve higher earnings. There is a result target about progression in work. This investment priority will also contribute to supporting business growth through the development of a more highly skilled workforce.

Investment Priority 2.2 - Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes

ESF will not fund activity that duplicates or cuts across national policy on grants and loans for tuition for skills activities. Exemptions to this principle will be considered only where a local specific need and/or market failure has been demonstrated and where the activity falls within the scope of the Operational Programme.

Full details of what can and cannot be supported under this Investment Priority are set out in the Operational Programme. Details of the specific objectives have been reproduced below.

Specific Objective	Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support
To promote improvements in the labour market relevance of skills provision through active engagement with relevant institutions and employers, particularly SMEs and Micro businesses.	The additional support from this investment priority will enable the design of skills provision which will help individuals gain skills and qualifications relevant to the needs of the labour market

Local Development Need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 2, Investment Priority 2.1 and Investment Priority 2.2 of the Operational Programme, and which meets the **local development need** expressed in the text and table below.

Local Priorities:

This Call is seeking applications which help deliver the North East region's strategies and plans that promote the development of a highly skilled workforce.

The last 5 years has witnessed a period of economic growth with an increase in the number of jobs available and welcome improvements in the North East region's Gross Value Added (GVA) and productivity levels, although the rate of improvement

will need to increase to meet the region's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2024 targets. The Strategic Economic Plan has been refreshed in 2019 and this document together with the regional 'European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) strategy forms the core context of the North East Region Local Development need and priorities.

Applications are particularly welcome which have a focus on the following sectors:

- Those areas of the economy that are strategically important to the region, notably:
Digital
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
Health, Life Sciences and Social care
Energy
- Those industrial sectors in the region that 'enable' growth in other sectors of the regions' economy notably:
Construction
Education
Financial Business & Professional Services
Transport & Logistics
- Those sectors of the economy that employ most of the regions workforce and form the majority employment base, including:
Administrative and clerical
Arts, Culture and Tourism
Care & human healthcare services
Customer services and retail
Hospitality & Catering

As well as these strategically important and enabling sectors, upskilling the workforce through the offer of learning and development opportunities is vital across the whole of the regions' economy and this call therefore has specifically been designed to generate interest and applications across all sectors that will augment both the skillsets of individual employees and support business productivity and growth.

For Priority 2.1 this call seeks proposals for projects that provide training and learning and development opportunities for people within the current workforce in the region to acquire new skills from basic skills levels through to management and leadership programmes across the full range of employment sectors.

For Priority 2.2 this call seeks proposals that support activity to improve the opportunities to provide placements, work experience and higher-level apprenticeships within SMEs and micro businesses and build the capacity and infrastructure of SMEs and micro businesses to create such opportunities in the North East region.

Local Economic Context

The North East Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) launched in 2014 set out the growth ambitions for the 10-year period to 2024 providing a clear

framework for realising the potential of the whole of the North East region. This overall strategy dovetails and aligns with the regions' European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Strategy. More information about the NELEP's SEP and other strategic plans can be found at:

<https://www.nelep.co.uk/the-plan>

Additionally, project applicants should familiarise themselves with the regions European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) strategy which are provided via the links below.

<https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/esif-strategy-2014-2020.pdf>
<https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/esif-strategy-2014-2020-summary.pdf>

Developing and Delivering a Skilled Workforce

A skilled workforce is central to driving economic growth in the region with investment in skills similarly driving increased productivity thus benefitting the North East region (and UK) as a whole. In this respect, to back the regions' commitment to support and deliver 'more and better jobs' we need to ensure there is an adequate supply of appropriately skilled and trained staff within the current and future workforce to meet current and future employer skills needs.

The region is fortunate in relation to the quality of assets and infrastructure available through the educational and vocational training institutions, businesses and agencies that are committed to and combine and contribute to upskill the workforce. With four universities, nine FE colleges and numerous vocational training providers with a strong reputation for responding to the opportunities presented by a growing and changing economy this infrastructure of facilities and staff enable high quality design and delivery of learning and development and training solutions to the regional labour market. For example, in 2017/18 the north east featured both as the area the highest proportion of apprenticeships and the highest number of employers taking on apprentices in the UK.

Key Challenges to be addressed

The region does, nonetheless, face a number of key skills challenges that particularly inhibit business growth. Notably, in comparison with other UK regions, the area has overall, a lower skilled workforce with insufficient numbers of employed people qualified to level 3 and above.

This call offers the opportunity to improve the skill levels of the workforce not only for the benefit of the individuals acquiring new skills but also their employer and the economy more generally given the positive impact that upskilling has on productivity and profitability.

Upskilling the existing workforce also needs to be also viewed alongside an ageing demographic in certain skilled and technical occupations that requires urgent action,

this is particularly so in the workforce and occupations that underpin our priority sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing and Health & Life Sciences.

Furthermore, there is pronounced mismatch between the balance of supply and demand in the North East labour market and although many employers actively engage with the education and training system this is often uncoordinated, lacks consistency that often results in spontaneous interventions that are short-term fixes rather than long-term solutions. Investment Priority 2.2 particularly can address this mismatch.

Engagements between education and training providers and businesses also tends to be geared towards larger companies who have Human Resources and Learning and Development teams. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and micro businesses require significant support to navigate education and training institutions offers. This includes securing better access to students and trainees of all ages through placements, internships and work experience. Investment Priority 2.2 again particularly provides the opportunity to address this infrastructure deficit by allowing tailored, managed and coordinated responses and solutions.

Specific Considerations

As noted there is still a mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market – using the term skills in its broadest sense, the skills achieved within the educational curriculum are not always the skills required by employers.

With regard to digital skills these need to be embedded within the workforce across all sectors, from the basic skills that everyone needs to participate in the economy and their local community, through to those skillsets required for specialised digital and technology roles in our key strategically important and enabling sectors.

In addition, as the use of technology increases in most jobs, people in these scenarios either leave or struggle to re-enter employment as their skillsets become redundant in the face of digital and technological advances. This is a waste of 'human capital and resource', particularly an issue for the older workforce. This can be addressed by upskilling those within the workforce who fall into this category under Investment Priority 2.1. This, unless addressed in turn, puts additional pressure on the 'sister' ESF Priority Axis 1 programmes and projects that aim to help people back into work.

This call therefore within IP 2.1 also offers the prospect of improving progression by opening up opportunities for employees to acquire new and additional skills enabling career progression. This movement up the career ladder will subsequently allow for more movement at the role that the employees have vacated and is applicable across skill levels from Level 1 upwards.

A separate particular priority is for skills training at Level 3 and above in sector specific technical skills together with training in 'generic soft skills' that are needed for all staff to be rounded and productive employees. Moreover, this notion will also assist the links between employers and education and training providers thus supporting other elements of this call (IP 2.2) 'Improving the relevance of education

and training systems to employers and businesses' addressing and reducing the oft-quoted mismatch between skills supply and demand.

More generally, this Call seeks applications which help deliver the overall objective of promoting the development of a highly skilled workforce, in both the region's priority and enabling sectors noted but also the region's major employment sectors (retail, hospitality and catering, public services, culture, leisure and tourism and caring services) that provide the majority of the North East regional jobs and are the mainstays of all UK regional economies.

At a strategic level, the North-East region is similar to all other UK regions, in that it is dominated by SME and micro-sized businesses. The vast majority of these will manifest themselves with owners and managers often 'juggling' multiple roles just to get by on a day-to-day basis. Leadership and Management skills training delivered flexibly can greatly assist long-term strategic improvements in business operations, much needed across the UK.

Interested lead and delivery partners should be conscious of the multiple roles and juggling of tasks that takes place in most firms and we would welcome applications that can support 'flexible' learning packages to support this cohort of managers and staff across the region.

Applications are welcome that can support 'flexible' learning packages to support this cohort of managers and staff across the region.

Investment Priority 2.1

The European Social Fund (ESF) aims to help people get better jobs and ensure fairer job opportunities for all. In response to the challenges and opportunities for growth set out in the regions' Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area SEP therefore has a focus of its employment, inclusion and skills activities around the following:

Support for Management, Leadership and Enterprise skills (2.1) - Support skills provision that delivers an increase in business starts targeted at the smart specialisation and growth sectors; pre-start support; entrepreneurial skills development; and training for innovators throughout their academic and business careers.

Support for employer led skills activities (2.1) - Focused on SMEs in smart specialisation and growth sectors.

Support skills development for the workforce (2.1) - Develop skills including: for those newly employed/ low skilled and those facing redundancy; enabling progress or sustainment in work. Focus on low skilled, tackling barriers to employment. Skills refresh e.g. IT skills/specific qualifications to address gaps in emerging technologies.

Support for industry specific intermediate and high-level skills that respond to employer demand and offer flexible responses to emerging and projected skills needs (2.1) - Focused on smart specialisation and growth sectors
Applications which address these priorities are welcome, and in particular those that incorporate the following strands:

- projects that target those within the workforce who currently lack basic skills
- projects that 'upskill' people at Level 2 to Level 3 to enable scope for progression within the workforce
- project that provide support for technical and sector specific skills including Leadership and Management
- projects that enable women to progress in the labour market.

Investment Priority 2.2

The European Social Fund (ESF) aims to help people get better jobs and ensure fairer job opportunities for all. In response to the challenges and opportunities for growth set out in our Strategic Economic Plan, the North East LEP and its' regional partners will focus its employment, inclusion and skills activities around the following:

Support for collaborative projects (2.2) - Placements, internships or other activities enabling students & graduates to gain industry relevant experience & skills to meet current & future employment demands.

Enable businesses to engage in skills provision & work directly with education providers to link industry with curriculum (2.2) - Locally relevant activities supported will align course content with business demand, lead to increased work placement opportunities and create work-ready, highly skilled employees.

Business/educator links for business growth (2.2) - To include support to encourage take up of graduates & highly skilled staff; tackling replacement demand and succession planning leading to increased participation in higher level skills”.

Applications which address these priorities are welcome, and in particular those that incorporate the following strands:

- Supporting the provision to develop further and higher education and training provider student placements, this is an issue regionally in terms of both the volume and quality of the opportunities that are available:
- The capacity and capability of SME and micro businesses to host placements and improving the quality of support provided by educational institutions to support businesses and students to benefit all parties.
- Support for SME and micro businesses to offer opportunities for new graduates from the four local universities to encourage employment per se and also to encourage more graduates to stay in the region. Please see link below for further information:

<https://www.nelep.co.uk/news/can-encourage-graduates-live-work-stay-north-eas>

Call Outline

Activities that can be supported

Applications that cover elements of the following specific objectives either individually or collectively would be welcome.

Investment Priority 2.1 – projects should deliver activities that target

People who need to improve their basic skills *by* supporting those in the workforce who lack basic skills that as well as improving the skills of the employee will also improve the capacity of SMEs and micro businesses and support business growth.

Improving the skill levels of the current workforce to enable progression via investing in staff to upskilling to Level 3 from Level 2 skills that will additionally drive growth in the business by improving productivity and open up entry level opportunities.

Increasing the numbers of staff with technical, job specific and sector-based skills through for example, supporting employees within the workforce acquire qualifications at Level 3 and above (or units towards), higher-level apprenticeships and management and leadership assist business growth through the development of a more highly skilled workforce.

Specifically, with regard to management and leadership training we are keen to receive submissions that recognise how SMEs and micro businesses ‘typically operate’ and offer flexible learning packages that suit supervisors and managers time constraints. Co-designed learning packages that offer and promote the benefits of businesses investing in senior employees’ leadership and management skills can bring about and benefit to the business such as:

- enhanced business productivity turnover and profit
- engaged, more motivated managers and leaders
- improved retention rates and lower recruitment costs
- a measurable and tangible return on investment (RoI)

Women to enable them to progress in the labour market. Women who, although continuing to make up an increasing share of the workforce tend to occupy more junior roles within the workforce and therefore we are particularly keen to encourage projects that offer women skills training and learning and development opportunities that enable career progression.

Investment Priority 2.2 - project applications are encouraged that:

- Support the development of student placements, internships etc. within SMEs that provide students with the industry experience to complement academic studies
- Support the capacity of SME’s to offer work placement and internships to students that utilise their advanced skills to contribute to business growth.
- Projects that support the development of new employment engagements that broker increased graduate placements and student work experience opportunities
- Projects that support advanced apprenticeships in the region’s key sectors.
- Projects that support the development of education and business links that equip students and graduates with the skillset to start and grow a business

Applicants should also note that the list above for both IP 2.1 & 2.2 is not exhaustive and we are keen to receive applications that both address the overall framework and objectives of Priority Axis 2 and also are rooted in lead applicant and delivery partner organisations own knowledge and experience of what works in the provision and

delivery of workforce development and skills training in the region –(subject to complying with eligibility requirements).

More generally across all proposed activities, applicants should address how their specific interventions will proactively support women and other (protected) groups disadvantaged in the labour market acquire new skills and progress in the labour market as a cross-cutting theme.

Target Audience:

IP 2.2

Activities should be focused on support to SME organisations as the primary target audience, however applicants should also provide information on the total number of participants expected to benefit from the project as a consequence of the ESF project support to SME organisations. This information should be recorded in the additional IP2.2 Annex template available on GOV.UK and then uploaded into ECLAIMS as a supporting document as part of their online Full Application. Performance of the ESF Project(s) will then include monitoring against the individual participant target (ESF Output Target O1) as well as the relevant SME Output and Result targets.

Consortia/Partnership Applications

Applications are encouraged from consortia or other similar types of partnership arrangements. In each such case the application must be completed and submitted in the ECLAIMS IT system by the lead organisation on behalf of the partnership/consortia. The lead applicant must have the financial capacity to meet the required Due Diligence criteria and, if ESF funding is awarded, this organisation will then become the lead Grant Recipient, accountable for delivery of the overall ESF Project.

Details of the local ESIF Strategy can be found at: <https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/esif-strategy-2014-2020.pdf>
<https://www.nelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/esif-strategy-2014-2020-summary.pdf>

1.3 Scope of activity

This call invites Full Applications which support the delivery of Priority Axis 2, **Investment Priority 2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning** and **Investment Priority 2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems** of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the North East Region Local Enterprise Partnership Area European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy.

This call aims to address the identified shortfalls listed in section 1.2 Local Development Need above.

2. Call Requirements

All applications are competitive.

<p>Indicative Fund Allocation:</p>	<p>Indicatively, through this call the Managing Authority expects to allocate approximately £27.16m ESF</p> <p>IP 2.1 – Approximately £20m ESF</p> <p>Approximately 15% - £3m allocated to the Transition Region</p> <p>Approximately 85%- £17m allocated to the More Developed Region</p> <p>IP 2.2 – Approximately £7.16M ESF</p> <p>Approximately 15% - £1.16m allocated to the Transition Region</p> <p>Approximately 85% - £6m allocated to the More Developed Region</p> <p>The Managing Authority reserves the right to decrease or increase the indicative allocation, or support more or fewer projects subject to the volume and quality of proposals received.</p>
<p>Minimum application level</p>	<p>European Social Fund investment is intended to make a significant impact on local growth. Applications are expected to demonstrate appropriate scale and impact.</p> <p>The MA would prefer, and will give preference to, applications over £5m (of European Social Fund) to any single project for IP 2.1. However, in exceptional cases we will consider applications of not less than £4m.</p> <p>The Managing Authority does not intend to allocate less than £1,791,500 of European Social Fund to any single project for IP 2.2.</p> <p>Applications requesting an ESF amount below the ‘Minimum Application Level’ will be rejected. It is important to ensure a range of activity is supported as detailed in the call and also the need for coherence.</p>

	<p>Therefore, the MA favours a small number of projects being delivered.</p> <p>The minimum project size for both ESF & match funding, is dependent on the intervention rate determined by Category of Region (CoR) 60% Transition Region & 50% More Developed Region.</p> <p>As North East Region LEP area spans two CoR – Transition and More Developed applicants will need to make it clear in their online Full Application how much of their requested project funding applies to each CoR and ensure that output and result figures are recorded for both CoR.</p>
Duration of project approvals	<p>Projects must be completed no later than 3 years and 6 months after the proposed project start date; however, the Managing Authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>All ESF Projects must be completed by 31st December 2023. Project costs cannot be incurred beyond this date.</p> <p>NOTE: Delivery of activities and associated costs can be incurred up to and including 31st December 2023, with the full and final claim expected no later than February 2024.</p>
Geographical Scope	<p>All interventions should be focused on activity and beneficiaries within the North East Region Local Enterprise Partnership area.</p>
Specific call requirements	<p>This is a call for ESF activity.</p>
Call Deadlines	<p>For this specific call, applications will be appraised following closure of the call. Applications submitted to the Managing Authority via the ECLAIMS IT system after midnight on the published call close date will not be considered.</p> <p>If the you encounter any technical difficulties completing or submitting your Full Application via ECLAIMS, please send an email to E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK .</p> <p>Technical support is available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to submit your application in good time to allow time to resolve any technical issues. Except in the unlikely event that there is a general failure of the system in the final hours, we will not normally extend the deadline for technical issues.</p>

	<p>If you do not already have ECLAIMS access, to avoid any unnecessary delays in submission of your Full Application, it is recommended that you submit new ECLAIMS access requests as early in the application process as possible by sending an email to E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK .</p> <p>The Managing Authority reserves the right to reject applications which are incomplete or not submitted in a timely and compliant way.</p>
Application selection	All applications will be scored in line with the ESF scoring criteria, but the MA reserve the right to offer ESF funding where a project complements other activity or provides niche activity to target groups within the ESF Operational Programme.
Applicant proposals	These can only contain activities which are eligible for ESF.
Eligible match funding	<p>Applicants will need to have eligible match funding for the balance of costs, which must be from a source other than the European Union. The applicant will need to provide information to demonstrate that the operation is likely to have the required level of match funding in place at the point of formal approval.</p> <p>The intervention rate in the North East Region LEP Area is 50% in the More Developed areas and 60% in the Transition areas, so 50% of match funding must be provided in the More Developed areas and 40% of match funding must be provided in the Transition areas.</p>
Procurement	All procurement must be undertaken in line with EU regulations.
State Aid law	Applicants must demonstrate compliance with State Aid law.
Audit/ Compliance	All expenditure and activities will be subject to rigorous audit and non-compliance may lead to financial penalty.
Calls listing multiple activity	The applicant is required to list each activity they plan to deliver, supported by a clear breakdown of costs. Expected outputs and results per activity should be provided.

ESF cannot be used to duplicate existing activities or activities that do not address market failure. ESF can only be used to achieve additional activity or bring forward activity more quickly. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that proposals are additional to activity that would have occurred anyway or enables activity to be brought forward and delivered more quickly than otherwise would be the case in response to opportunity or demand.

3. Deliverables required under this Call:

Applications will be expected to achieve the minimum indicative level of Programme Deliverables by contributing to the following Investment Priority. The definitions of which can be accessed at the [ESF Operational Programme](#).

Investment Priority	2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning
Specific Objectives	Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences
Indicative Actions	<p>ESF will not support activities that duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes, but may be used to support additional activities or target groups, including provision co-designed with local partners.</p> <p>Examples of activities that may be supported include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skills shortages or needs in particular sectors or local areas which are not currently being addressed by employers or individuals; • leadership and management training in Small and Medium size Enterprises (up to 250 employees); • training and support for people at all levels, in particular addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups in and out of the workplace; • access to learning; information about learning and skills; • brokerage of opportunities between learners and employers.

Results Table – IP 2.1 More Developed and Transition area:

NOTE: When recording your quarterly profile figures for each Results in ECLAIMS, please ensure you select the Result with the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T = Transition, MD = More Developed.

ID	Result Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
R3	Participants gaining basic skills	11%
R6	Participants gaining level 2 or below or a unit of a level 2 or below qualification (excluding basic skills)	25%
R7	Participants gaining level 3 or above or a unit of a level 3 or above qualification	8%
R8	Employed females gaining improved labour market status	35%

Outputs table – IP 2.1 More Developed area:

NOTE: When recording your quarterly profile figures for each Output in ECLAIMS, please ensure you select the Output with the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T = Transition, MD = More Developed.

ID	Output Indicator	Total Minimum target value for this call
O1	Participants	17356
O1	Participants (Male)	8678
O1	Participants (Female)	8678
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	1981
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	1394
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	1141
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	868
O6	Participants without basic skills	1975

Outputs table IP 2.1– Transition area:

NOTE: When recording your quarterly profile figures for each Output in ECLAIMS, please ensure you select the Output with the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T = Transition, MD = More Developed.

ID	Output Indicator	Total Minimum target value for this call
O1	Participants	2567
O1	Participants (Male)	1283
O1	Participants (Female)	1284
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	338

O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	107
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	200
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	128
O6	Participants without basic skills	334

Investment Priority 2.2

Investment Priority	2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems
Specific Objectives	To promote improvements in the labour market relevance of skills provision through active engagement with relevant institutions and employers, particularly SMEs and micro businesses.
Indicative Actions	<p>ESF will not support activities that duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes, but may be used to support additional activities, including provision co-designed with local partners.</p> <p>Examples of activities that may be supported include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for collaborative projects, placements, internships or other activities with SMEs that enable students and graduates to gain industry-relevant experience and skills; • building capacity in SMEs to provide project/placement/ internship opportunities and enhance the contribution of advanced skills to SME growth, including programmes to specifically engage the most disadvantaged groups or those who face particular local disadvantages in utilising advanced skills; • brokering opportunities to encourage and increase work experience, work placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, and graduate placements particularly through wider employer engagement and involving supply chains; • promoting apprenticeships (especially at advanced levels in manufacturing and other priority sectors) by developing a supportive environment for employer engagement; • developing better links with business to equip students with the skills to start and grow a business to meet local business needs.

Results Table IP 2.2 More Developed and Transition areas:

NOTE: When recording your quarterly profile figures for the following Result in ECLAIMS, please ensure you select the Result drop-down entry with the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T = Transition, MD = More Developed.

ID	Result Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
R9	Small and Medium Enterprises successfully completing projects (which increase employer engagement; and/or the number of people progressing into or within skills provision)	75%

Outputs Table

NOTE: ESF applicants applying for funding under Investment Priority 2.2 must Provide Output target figures for “CO23 Number of supported micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)” and also for “O1 - Total Number of Participants”.

Target forecasts for CO23 must be recorded directly into the ‘Deliverables’ screen in ECLAIMS.

However, the target figure for “O1 Total Participants” should instead be recorded in the separate IP2.2 Annex, which is available on GOV.UK and which should then be uploaded as a mandatory supporting document in ECLAIMS as part of the Full Application.

When recording your quarterly profile figures for the CO23 Output in ECLAIMS, please ensure you select the CO23 Output Result drop-down entry with the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T= Transition, MD = More Developed.

IP 2.2 Outputs - More Developed area:

ID	Output Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
CO23	Number of supported micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)	708
O1	Total number of participants	There is no target value for this call however applicants will be expected to provide a total number of

		participants the project is aiming to support in both the application and associated IP2.2 Annex.
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IP 2.2 Outputs -Transition area:

ID	Output Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
CO23	Number of supported micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)	122
O1	Total number of participants	There is no target value for this call however applicants will be expected to provide a total number of participants the project is aiming to support in both the application and associated IP2.2 Annex.

Outputs and Results Rationale

Applicants must explain in detail in their Full Application how they have estimated each of the outputs and results for their project, demonstrating clearly how each of the proposed outputs and results directly link to their specific project activities and objectives. The related output and results figures need to be consistent e.g. there should not be more 'Inactive Participant' forecast results than actual Inactive Participants recorded as taking part in the ESF Project in the forecasted output figures.

Applicants must also explain their approach for forecasting each deliverable; including the specific base-lining/research they have undertaken to ensure their projected profiles are realistic and achievable and any assumptions they have made which impact on their forecasts.

Where an applicant is proposing one or more output or result figures below the expected minimum target value for this call, an explanation must also be provided by the applicant in their Full Application.

ESF Outputs and Results Indicator Definitions Guidance is available on GOV.UK [here](#).

Applicants will also need to ensure robust systems are in place, and be able to describe them, to capture and record the targets and to report quantitative and qualitative performance across the North East Region LEP area. All operations will be required to collect data and report progress against the deliverables with each claim. Where an operation underperforms against their deliverables they may be subject to a performance penalty.

In addition, applicants applying for ESF funds under I.P 2.2 will be expected to complete a short annex, along with the standard application Full Application form. This is to ensure that full consideration is being given to the 'Value for Money' (VFM). The [Annex for ESF IP 2.2](#) funding calls can be located on the European Growth Funding website pages.

There must be a fully evidenced audit trail for all contracted deliverables.

4. General Information

Essential information to support the drafting of an application and delivery of a successful ESF funded project is available at the [European Growth Funding](#) website pages.

4.1 Compliance and Eligibility

When developing an application, Applicants should refer to [guidance](#) on eligible Applicants, activities and costs. These are for guidance only and Applicants should take their own specialist advice if in doubt. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the rules and guidance are adhered to both at application stage and following approval.

European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) are governed by European regulations and national rules. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant documentation listed in the 'Document Checklist' (Section 8 of this call specification) prior to completing and submitting their Full Application in the ECLAIMS IT system. If successful, Applicants will enter into the standard Funding Agreement and must abide by the standard terms and conditions contained therein. Applicants are therefore strongly advised to read these terms and conditions to ensure that they would be able to enter into such an agreement prior to responding to the call. Once a Funding Agreement has been issued it should be signed and returned within a short timescale.

4.2 Intervention Rate & Match Funding

ESF is funding used where no other funding can be obtained (the funder of last resort) and the maximum ESF intervention rate for the operation is 60% (depending on category of region). This means ESF can contribute up to 60% of the total eligible project costs, subject to State Aid regulations. The remaining 40% or more must come from other eligible sources. For all full applications, the applicant will need to provide information to demonstrate that the operation is likely to have the required level of match funding in place at the point of formal approval.

ESF is not paid in advance and expenditure must be defrayed prior to the submission of any claims. Applicants may be asked to demonstrate how they are able to cash flow the operation.

4.3 Applicants

Applicants must be legally constituted at the point of signing a Funding Agreement, and be able to enter into a legally binding Funding Agreement. The Applicant will be the organisation that, if the application is successful, enters into a contract for ESF and therefore carries the liability for ensuring that the terms of the ESF Funding Agreement are met by them and to all delivery partners. If there is more than one organisation applying for the funds, a lead organisation must be selected to become the Applicant. It is this organisation that carries the responsibility and liability for carrying out a compliant project.

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 with this (these) grant(s) have been identified, the Managing Authority will look into these and expect to see how and what steps have been taken to ensure that these have been addressed to mitigate the risk of further irregularities in the future. It is acknowledged that some organisations will be new to ESIF funding and will not have a track record.

4.4 Cross Cutting Themes

All applications received under this Call should demonstrate how the Cross Cutting Themes have been addressed in the project design and development. Cross cutting themes for ESF are 'gender equality and equal opportunities' and 'sustainable development'.

For ESF, the project applicants will be required to deliver their services in-line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (as defined in the Equality Act 2010). All projects must have a gender and equal opportunities policy and implementation plan which will be submitted at full application stage and in-line with Managing Authority guidance. Project applicants will also be required to answer a number of ESF-specific equality questions which will be set out in both the Full Application screens in the ECLAIMS IT system and the related ESF Online Full Application guidance.

For ESF, all projects will also be required to submit a sustainable development policy and implementation plan (in-line with guidance produced by the Managing Authority).

The ESF programme particularly welcomes projects that have an environmental focus that can meet the strategic fit at local and programme level whilst also adding value by:

- supporting environmental sustainability; and/ or
- complementing the environmental thematic objectives of other programmes such as ERDF; and/or
- using the environment as a resource to help motivate disadvantaged people

Further information is available in the [ESF Operational Programme](#) and in ESF Action Note 019/18: [New Assessment Scoring Procedures for Equality and Sustainable Development in ESF](#).

4.5 State Aid & Revenue Generation

Applicants are required, in the Full 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.¹ 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 or is covered by the De Minimis Regulation. 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.

Where the Applicant does not perceive that there is any State Aid, it should state whether or not it considers Articles 61 and 65(8) of regulation 1303/2013 to apply. This revenue should be taken into account in calculating eligible expenditure. Article 61 refers to monitoring revenues generated after completion of the project, and Article 65(8) how to deal with differences in the forecast and actual revenues at the end of the operation. The details of this will be tested at the full application stage.

4.6 Funding Agreement

The Funding Agreement is a standard, non-negotiable and legally binding document. Any successful Applicant will be subject to the terms and conditions contained within this agreement. Applicants are strongly advised to seek their own advice to ensure that they would be able to enter into and abide by the terms of the Funding Agreement.

Failure to meet any of the conditions of the agreement or the commitments within the application will result in claw back of funding.

Applicants should be aware that additional provisions and securities may be included within the Funding Agreement to protect the investment. These will be further discussed if relevant following the Full Application stage.

4.7 Procurement

All costs delivered by the Grant Recipient (the applicant) and/or delivery partners must be delivered on an actual cost basis. Other costs must be procured in line with EU regulations. The most common error identified during audit has been failure to

¹ Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that: "Save as otherwise provided in the Treaties, any aid granted by a Member State or through state resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it affects trade between Member States, be incompatible with the internal market."

comply with relevant procurement regulations and crucially to maintain a full audit trail to prove that they have complied with the relevant regulation. 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 European Union.

It is recommended that applicants seek their own legal advice pertaining to their procurement and requirements to publicise any tendering opportunities.

The Managing Authority is not able to give legal advice on procurement. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the project is compliant in this respect.

4.8 Retrospection

There will be no retrospection for applications made against this call.

For organisations applying for ESF funds through the Single-Stage Application process, the effective date for incurring eligible ESF expenditure will be the day after the relevant open call closing date. Any expenditure incurred by an ESF Direct Bid project prior to this date is ineligible.

However, any expenditure incurred by an ESF applicant, up to and including the date on which an ESF Funding Agreement is fully executed, will be at the applicant's own risk.

5. Application Process & Prioritisation Methodology

The ESF application process is a single-stage process – Full Application only.

Applicants must fully complete the Full Application information required in the ECLAIMS IT system (section 9 refers).

The ESF Online Full Application guidance for Applicants, is available on the [European Growth Funding](#) website pages – this document includes step-by-step details of how to record your Full Application information in ECLAIMS, as well as guidance on the depth and content expectations.

Following the call closing date, applications will first be subject to a Gateway Assessment undertaken by the Managing Authority under the following criteria:

- Applicant eligibility;
- Activity and expenditure eligibility; and
- The fit with the ESF Operational Programme and the call.

Proposals that pass the Gateway Assessment will move into the Core Assessment which consists of the following:

- Strategic fit;
- Value for money;
- Management and control;

- Deliverability;
- Procurement / tendering; and
- State Aid compliance.

The Managing Authority will seek advice from partners when considering applications to ensure its appraisal is informed by local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of Operational Programmes and the local ESIF Strategy. This will include the relevant LEP Area ESIF Committee and other partners deemed relevant to the application.

The appraisal and any prioritisation will be undertaken using only the information supplied as part of the application process. The Managing Authority cannot accept further detail outside this process.

Non-public sector Applicants may be subject to due financial diligence checks. Applicants will be required to submit accounts, and to clarify financial or other organisational information. New Applicant organisations may be required to provide details of a guarantor.

If, following the appraisal process, an applicant is not satisfied with the ESF funding decision for their project, they can submit an appeal in writing to the ESF Managing Authority.

6. Technical Support

All Full Applications for this call **must** be completed and submitted using only the ECLAIMS IT system. Applications submitted via any other method will not be accepted.

If you encounter any technical difficulties completing or submitting your Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT system, please send an email to:
E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK

It is your responsibility to submit your application in good time to allow time to resolve any technical issues. Except in the unlikely event that there is a general failure of the system in the final hours, we will not normally extend the deadline for technical issues.

Technical support is available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm.

Please retain evidence of your request(s) for any Technical Support, in case there are any issues arising around this element of the application process which may need further investigation.

Please also note that, as this is a competitive call and to preserve impartiality, other than providing Technical Support, we are unable to enter into correspondence with applicants over their Full Application prior to the call closing date. Details of where guidance can be found are contained throughout this calls document.

7. Key Reference Documents

When developing your Full Application, it is recommended that you refer to the following documents as a minimum:

- ESF Online Full Application Guidance;
- Local Enterprise Partnership area's ESIF strategy;
- National ESF Eligibility Rules;
- ESF Programme Guidance.

8. Full Application – Supporting Document Checklist

The appraisal will be undertaken on the basis of the Full Application information submitted by the applicant using the ECLAIMS IT system, together with any supporting documents uploaded into ECLAIMS IT system by the applicant at the point of closure of the call.

As a minimum, applicants should upload the following documentation into the ECLAIMS IT system alongside completion of the required Full Application screens/fields in ECLAIMS.

Failure to upload the requested documentation could result in the application being rejected.

The ESF Online Full Application Guidance explains how documents should be uploaded into ECLAIMS and Annex B of the same guidance explains the naming conventions to be used for each document.

Mandatory Supporting Documents

1. **A visual, high level customer journey** document e.g. flow chart;
2. **Confirmation of match funding** from each funder. Match-funding should be confirmed (with the exception of SME contributions) prior to the issuing of any Funding Agreement;
3. **Detailed Granular Budget breakdown** (All costs must be itemised, eligible, appropriate for the project and profiled across the project period. The granular budget should also include all hourly rate figures, per job role, for staff working part-time or part of their time on the ESF Project – calculated using the 1720 hour rate calculation set out in the [ESF Programme Guidance](#) on GOV.UK. This includes match-funded staff roles);
4. **Equality & Diversity Policy and Implementation Plan** this can be a single, combined document or 2 separate documents. (Applicant is responsible for ensuring that Delivery partners also hold relevant policies);
5. **Sustainability Policy and Implementation Plan** this can be a single, combined document or 2 separate documents. (Applicant is responsible for ensuring that Delivery partners also hold relevant policies);
6. **Job Descriptions** at least 1 per lead applicant and 1 per each Delivery Partner;
7. **Organogram** covering all staff, including any delivery partner and/or match-funded staff posts;
8. **Sample HR letter** as per the requirements set out in the [ESF National Eligibility Rules](#) on GOV.UK;
9. **Project level risk register** (this should cover areas such as financial risk, output risks, delivery risks etc. please ensure that the register covers how these risks will be managed and mitigated);

10. **Anti-Fraud Statement** (a statement on how you will deal with suspected fraud in your organisation and if appropriate, with your sub-contractors).
11. Fully completed [Annex for ESF IP 2.2](#);

Optional Supporting Documents

12. **Recruitment Policy** this can be a single, combined document or 2 separate documents. (Applicant is responsible for ensuring that Delivery partners also hold relevant policies);
13. **Sample Timesheet** applicable if you or your Delivery Partners have members of staff working part of their time on your ESF Project;
14. **Procurement policy** applicable if your ESF project is expecting to incur procurement costs from existing or future procurements and you are not intending to use the 40% Flat Rate Indirect Cost option;
15. **Retention Policy** this can be a single, combined document or 2 separate documents. (Applicant is responsible for ensuring that Delivery partners also hold relevant policies);
16. **Draft SLA with Delivery Partners** applicable if your ESF Project will have one or more Delivery Partners;
17. **Independent state aid advice** applicable only if you have obtained independent advice to support your quoted ESF project State Aid position;
18. **Proof of Irrecoverable VAT** applicable only if you have Irrecoverable VAT which is relevant to your ESF Project
19. **Due Diligence Financial Information** applicable if your organisation is a private or voluntary and community sector organisation or a Further Education College, you must upload:
 - Financial accounts for the most recent 3 years;
 - Proof of existence - Certificate of Incorporation, Charities Registration, VAT Registration Certificate or alternate form of incorporation documentation;
 - Proof of trading - Financial Accounts/Statements for the most recent two years of trading including, as a minimum, Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheets;
 - Completed FVRA Applicant Template (for applications requesting annualised funding of greater than £1m).

NOTE: The ECLAIMS IT system can accept most standard Office file formats such as MS Word documents and excel documents in the format xlsx.

However, documents which contain macros cannot be uploaded into the ECLAIMS IT system.

In addition, the ECLAIMS IT system cannot accept tables, graphics or other visuals in the narrative fields within the Full Application screens. If you wish to include this type of information as part of your Full Application, you will need to upload this information as part of a supporting document.

9. Full Application Submission

Completed Full Applications must be submitted to the ESF Managing Authority via the ECLAIMS IT system.

Although the ECLAIMS IT system is designed to be intuitive, it is strongly recommended that you closely follow the steps in the ESF Online Full Application Guidance, published on GOV.UK to give the best chance of you submitting a fully completed, compliant Full Application.

The Managing Authority reserves the right to reject applications which are incomplete or not submitted in a timely and compliant way.

10. Accessing ECLAIMS

If you do not already have access to the ECLAIMS IT system, please send an email to E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK as soon as possible.

You should complete a form for **each** individual person in your organisation who will be responsible for completing and/or submitting your Full Application.

Each new ECLAIMS user will then receive an email from an organisation called Datamart – this will contain their unique log-in details. The user will need to follow the instructions within the email to change their password in the first instance. They will then be able to access and use the ECLAIMS IT system.

NOTE: To avoid any unnecessary delays in submission of your Full Application, it is recommended that you submit new ECLAIMS IT system access requests as early in the application process as possible.

The ECLAIMS IT system is a web based application available through the following link. It is recommended that you use the Chrome browser to access the ECLAIMS IT system, or if this isn't available, Firefox.

<https://ECLAIMS.communities.gov.uk/esif-web/>

11. Timescales

Launch of Call advertised on GOV.UK	8 May 2019
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	Midnight 27 August 2019

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

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

12. Appendix A – Common output indicators

Appendix A - extract from Annex 1 of the ESF regulation

Common output and result indicators for ESF investments

(1) Common output indicators for participants

"Participants" refers to persons benefiting directly from an ESF intervention who can be identified and asked for their characteristics, and for whom specific expenditure is earmarked. Other persons shall not be classified as participants. **All data shall be broken down by gender.**

The common output indicators for participants are:

unemployed, including long-term unemployed
long-term unemployed
inactive
Inactive, not in education or training
employed, including self-employed
below 25 years of age
above 54 years of age
above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training
with primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)
with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)
with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)
participants who live in jobless households
participants who live in jobless households with dependent children
participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children
ethnic minorities
Participants with disabilities
other disadvantaged
homeless or affected by housing exclusion
from rural areas

Common immediate result indicators for participants are:

inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving
participants in education/training upon leaving
participants gaining a qualification upon leaving
participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving

Common longer-term result indicators for participants are:

participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving

participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving
participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving