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 Priority	2.1: Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning
Call Reference:	Higher Level, Entrepreneurship, and Leadership and Management Skills – OC22S19P1426
LEP Area:	Liverpool City Region
Call Opens:	28 May 2019
Call Closes:	Midnight – 12 August 2019
Application Process	Applications for funding must be completed and submitted using the ECLAIMS IT system. Applications submitted via any other method will not be accepted. 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.

Contents

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** 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	The additional support from this investment priority will support women in raising the level of their skills, helping them to progress in

help address the gender employment and wage gap.	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.

.

Local Development Need

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

Local Priorities:

- This call aims to improve Higher Level, Entrepreneurship, and Leadership and Management skills, these three areas are key to driving productivity in the Liverpool City Region.

- Projects must deliver one of three activities which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 2, Investment Priority 2.1 of the Operational Programme, and which meets the local development need expressed in the text below.

- **For Higher Level Skills**, creating the skills needed to increase economic growth and improve productivity presents a significant challenge to the Liverpool City Region. Improvements in skills levels in recent years have not happened quickly enough to close the performance gap with national rates.

- Liverpool City Region, through robust research, have a good understanding of the character, design and structure of the indigenous business base and are therefore better able to implement national policy in a way that responds to local needs. Liverpool City Region aims to better target resources to deliver growth and prosperity based on higher wages, more jobs and stronger productivity; with the freedom and flexibility to determine the level and type of resource that is invested in their priorities, to enable greater specialisation where needed and to support a more highly skilled and appropriately qualified workforce.

- Liverpool City Region research with local employers identifies the priority of creating high quality professional and technical routes to employment, if the City Region is to increase the number of residents with NVQ Level 3 technical skills aligned to the local growth sectors. Just to "catch up" with the national average, the Liverpool City Region needs an additional 69,000 working age residents with NVQ Level 3 skills and almost 70,000 additional residents with Level 4 plus skills (NOMIS, ONS annual population survey 2017).

- There are currently a large number of employers in the City Region using the Apprenticeship programme as an effective means of building capacity in their workforce, with 12,230 Apprentices starting in 2017/18. The pace of engagement and take up of the new trailblazer Apprenticeships and Degree

Apprenticeships needs improving, in line with Government policy. While a number of these new Apprenticeship standards align with priorities in the sector based Skills for Growth Action Plans, much more needs to be done locally to build the capacity of employers and providers to take up these opportunities and in doing so meet latent demand. These Skills for Growth Action Plans clearly articulate current and future skills needs of local businesses.

- The evidence base shows that whilst the Liverpool City Region is a high performing economy, it has an ageing workforce and GVA per resident is lower than nationally. This call seeks proposals to support the existing workforce to provide skills training to employed individuals to upskill them, improve efficiencies, and support business productivity.

- Digital skills are becoming increasingly essential for getting access to a range of products and services. However, there is a digital divide where up to 4.3 million of the adult UK population are estimated to have zero digital skills (unable to do any of the activities described in the five basic digital skills) Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Index 2018. An estimated 8.4% of the population have never used the internet at all, Internet Users, UK 2018 (ONS).

- The Liverpool City Region Employer Skills Survey (2017) highlights that many local businesses are not fully exploiting their opportunities. The report identified that Digital, Construction and Advanced Manufacturing sectors report the largest technical skills gaps. Without the right technical skills to, productivity challenges will remain and businesses will increasingly struggle to remain competitive.

- Workforce training is commonplace across the City Region, concerning over 84% of businesses surveyed; there is a positive correlation between training provision and business size. Job specific training continues to be the most commonly provided form of training to the current workforce, with a relatively uniform pattern across sectors.

- The prevalence and value of training budgets vary by business size and sector. Eight out of 10 businesses who have provided training did so through external training providers, and the high levels of satisfaction with those providers expressed by respondents indicates the quality and value of training available across the City Region. However, some businesses still see training as costly and time-consuming, suggesting there are still barriers continuing to hamper workforce development.

- The recent evaluation of the City Region's Skills for Growth programme shows a need for short sharp provision (1, 2 or 3 days) to meet specific needs of employers e.g. Microsoft Excel, Introduction to Project Management. Employers and providers confirm this.

- **For Entrepreneurship**, the area aims to improve the numbers of self-employed people and the sustainability of the enterprises they create.

- Liverpool City Region has an annual output of £32,030 million (ONS 2017). It hosts 42,470 businesses, over 1.5 million residents and a workforce of

709,000 (NOMIS 2018). The five Higher Education institutions and six Further Education Colleges in the City Region, make it home to a student population of around 100,000.

- In 2017, the highest annual growth in real GVA of combined authority areas was in the Liverpool City Region at 3.3% (ONS 2017).

- Despite the City Region's undoubted economic strengths and assets, it is not realising its full potential. The changes in employment has left a legacy of pockets of serious deprivation.

- In 2016, the LEP, acting as a link to the private sector of the City Region, published a growth strategy, 'Building our Future'. This sets out ambitions for driving economic growth in the City Region based on three pillars:
    - Productivity – focusing on businesses where the opportunity for growth is greatest
    - People – ensuring residents and workers are equipped with the right skills
    - Place – making the most of the City Region's physical and cultural assets and infrastructure

- **For Leadership and Management**, a challenge across the growth sectors is, at present, Liverpool City Region ageing workforce and declining working age population, alongside a higher than average population with NVQ Level 4+ skills. The Annual Population Survey in 2017 indicates that 31.3% of the working age population have attained Level 4+, compared to 38.6% in England.

- At senior levels, there are particularly pronounced issues of replacement demand and growth demand, and emerged as significant issues in several of Skills for Growth Action Plans. Particularly Advanced Manufacturing, Maritime and Logistics, and Construction. The Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Low Carbon, Construction and Digital aspect of Creative and Digital action plans raised the need to attract women into the industries, and highlighted the lack of women in leadership and management roles. According to data released by WISE (September, 2015) for the UK, women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) management roles has increased from 59,698 to 74,421 between 2014 and 2015, but this still only represents 11.5% of management roles, which reflects the current position in Liverpool City Region.

- The Employer Skills Survey of 2017 found that whilst 34% of employers had invested in management training and 28% in supervisory training, there was a clear split across different types of companies:

	Management training	Supervisory training
Large	69%	61%
SME	39%	31%
Micro	13%	10%

- Despite the best efforts of many people over many years, there are still many people who end up as 'accidental managers', moved into managerial roles as

a result of their technical competence. Managers have to deal with broader well-being issues, with more serious mental health issues being increasingly prevalent. The introduction of millennials (those born between 1981 and 2000) into the workplace is causing more issues particularly with behaviours being shaped by social media, entering organisations.

- Leadership and management are not the same and require different skills and development, but that both are equally necessary. In small organisations where people need to perform more multifunctional roles, this separation can seem artificial.

- Delivery across all three areas must note that:

  o Liverpool City Region is committed to improve inclusion and narrow gaps for under-represented groups (including: over 50s, male/female, BME, disabled people, care leavers, and residents of disadvantaged areas) as such, proposals must ensure equity of access to Apprenticeships and learning.
  o Liverpool City Region is committed to Social Value. This proposal must evidence how it supports social, economic, and environmental Social Value.
  o Liverpool City Region continues to face higher underlying economic inactivity than nationally, to an extent impacted by higher deprivation and poorer health levels. Currently the City Region has 35,000 more inactive individuals than on average across the country.

- Project proposals should demonstrate strategic alignment with the Liverpool City Region's ESIF Strategy 2014-2020, the Skills Strategy, Apprenticeship Growth Plan, its ongoing Skills for Growth work and Growth Strategy; along with the European Social Fund Operational Programme 2014-2020.
- Details of the local ESIF Strategy can be found at: https://www.liverpoollep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Final-ESIF-Strategy-4-February-2016-to-DCLG.pdf

Call Outline

- The Liverpool City Region comprises the local authority areas of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral (Transition Region) and Halton (More Developed Region).

- Liverpool City Region invites proposals for three areas to the value of approximately £5m.

- **Approximately £1m European Social Fund, funded from Investment Priority 2.1. Promoting access to Higher Education delivering Higher Level Skills**

  - There is an increasing demand from many businesses in the growth sectors for more higher level skills, and many of these are at the cutting edge of knowledge and technological development. The City Region invites proposals to improve the skills of the workforce in line with the

eligibility requirements of the ESF Operational Programme and which meet the specified growth needs of businesses across the City Region.

- Applicants should identify how they will capture match funding and this could include employers making a significant contribution to the costs of the training.

- Proposals are invited that demonstrate:
  - The nature and scope of the skills interventions proposed and how the interventions will impact on the individual and SMEs;
  - Practical support through coaching, advice, consultancy and mentoring to individuals seeking to improve skills to support SMEs improve their products and competitiveness;
  - That an assessment of the current skills profile of the individual will be undertaken and a bespoke training plan will be created which relates to the sector in which they are employed and the employer's needs and to develop the appropriate training option or provide access to it;
  - The services must drive up skills levels, focusing on the skills being sought by employers;
  - How impartial advice and guidance will be offered to employers to help them determine the most appropriate training and provider for individuals;
  - The services must deliver skills provision, which offers both accredited and non-accredited skills training which is innovative, responsive to local skills needs. Provision will normally be accredited but where suitable accredited provision does not exist, bespoke packages may be delivered (*applicants will need to evidence qualifications delivered are full or units of level 2 or 3, as identified on the learning aims hub, to meet required outputs*):the Delivery Plan must be shared with the Combined Authority;
  - Encouraging disadvantaged people to engage in skills and help address the employment and wage gaps; and,
  - Close partnership working with established training providers, business support providers and networks.

- These activities are indicative only. Applicants are encouraged to develop innovative approaches, backed by evidence, to support the value of the proposed activities, the effectiveness of the proposed delivery approach and the rationale for specific targeting. Applicants need to identify how funding will be allocated across all aspects of the scheme.

- Some of the outcomes expected will be:

  - Broker opportunities with local SMEs and employers in targeted priority and growth sectors to support existing employees as well new staff to access additional qualifications in digital skills through the form of NVQs, work experience, internships etc. Accredited units of learning at Level 2 or 3 and above may be funded where these do not lead to a full qualification. Work related learning and experience, developed and delivered in partnership with employers

- o Increase participation in traineeships and apprenticeships as well as opportunities to link learning to work experience. Exploring and achieving progression opportunities

- **Approximately £1.5m European Social Fund, funded from Investment Priority 2.1. Improving entrepreneurial skills.**

  - The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices highlights that good work matters, that it should be fair and decent with realistic scope for development and fulfilment. Self-employment can provide people with greater self-efficacy and control, providing they have the skills to do this successfully.

  - The self-employed are a large and growing part of the UK labour force. Five million people—15% of workers—are now self-employed, and the expansion of self-employment has played an important part in current record employment levels. Self-employment takes many forms: from entrepreneurs and sole trader business owners, to consultants and contractors across industries and pay scales. New technology has facilitated the growth of the "gig economy", which continues to alter the nature of work in many sectors. There is no good reason to believe the growth in self-employment will not continue. (Self-employment and the gig economy – House of Commons May 17).

  - Self-employment can therefore be a very positive choice, allowing people to use entrepreneurial skills to grow businesses that add great value to society. The greater autonomy associated with self-employment can also have particular advantages for people for whom employee work may be less suitable: for example, people with health conditions, or with caring responsibilities. Entrepreneurship and self-reliance should be supported and encouraged wherever possible.

  - The self-employed are also diverse in their reasons for becoming self-employed. They include growth-driven 'opportunity' entrepreneurs, 'lifestyle' self-employed, and 'necessity' entrepreneurs, driven into self-employment by the inability to secure a salaried job. The heterogeneous nature of self-employment, and the diverse reasons for becoming self-employed can be influences both on the performance of the businesses established by the self-employed, and the skills and development needs of the self-employed themselves.

  - There is strong evidence that cultural and attitudinal factors also influence both the likelihood of someone choosing self-employment and their chances of making a success of it. Being self-employed and being successful at it are much more likely among people with family backgrounds of entrepreneurship; there is similar evidence that cultural factors contribute to the persistence of regional patterns of self-employment incidence (high or low).

  - The evidence on the relationship between educational background on the one hand and entry to and success in self-employment on the other is

complex and mixed. The relationship also varies between occupations and sectors. Thus in some sectors and occupations (e.g. skilled trades in construction) self-employment is more of a 'norm' than in others. Overall, however, someone is more likely to be self-employed if they have no qualifications than if they have some, but among those with qualifications there is no clear relationship between the level of qualifications and the likelihood of being self-employed.

- This Call responds to these challenges. The business start-up rate, measured as the number of business births per 10,000 people (and a key competitiveness indicator) is lower in Liverpool City Region than in the UK as a whole, and to other core city LEPs. In Liverpool City Region there are 43 private sector businesses to 1,000 population (aged 16-64), in comparison to England which has 75 private sector businesses per 1,000 population. The Liverpool City Region has 42,470 businesses; however, the City Region has a deficit of 18,500 businesses compared to the national average. Growth in the overall business stock has mirrored the national average over recent years despite business start-up rates being below the national average, a result of business closure rates not being as bad as nationally. However, 'churn' in business start-up and closure rates is generally seen as indicative of an entrepreneurial culture (many new starts will fail; hence, having a high start-up rate even with a higher failure rate is seen as a positive). Business survival rates are broadly similar to national rates; hence, it is critical for the City Region to have more business start-ups. There is a below average levels of self-employment and the City Region has a lower number of micro-businesses (less than 5 employees) than nationally.

- Women are less likely to be self-employed – only 4.6% of females in employment in Liverpool City Region are self-employed, compared with a figure for males of 11%. Female self-employment is also lower than the national average at 7.1% (NOMIS APS, Sept 2018).

- Being self-employed can be challenging, but many people find that the benefits are endless; including the chance to use existing skills or personal interests, having financial independence, enjoying flexible working hours and meeting new people. Participants should benefit from a range of skills development, complementing that provided through the Entrepreneurship Hub to turn their ideas, and expertise into a business or social enterprise.

- The chosen provider will be required to identify how it will develop good working relationship with the One Front Door approach of Liverpool City Region and act as a source of referrals as well as a recipient of referrals from it.

- **Approximately £2.5m European Social Fund, funded from Investment Priority 2.1., designed to provide improved leadership and management.**

  o In relation to the Operational Programme, this focus is on the development of leadership and management skills in employers with between 10 and 50 employees: this should be flexible but have a balance between in person and online development. Applicants should

identify how they will develop technical skills and behaviours, and build a support network for participants including:

- Balancing technical competencies with developing appropriate behaviours, and any additional support and training must focus on both.
- Being flexible and meeting the needs of individuals: there is a role at one level for formal off the job training programmes) as well as a mixed mode approach for smaller organisations.
- The development of cohorts and support networks.

o Applicants should also identify how they propose to evidence and track the impact of their interventions with individuals and the companies that they work for.

- **Proposals for all three areas should** identify how they will be inclusive, particularly for:
  o people with learning difficulties and disabilities;
  o people without English, Maths, IT qualifications at Level 2;
  o people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds;
  o people returning to the labour market following parental or caring responsibilities; and
  o people with experience of the care system.

- Liverpool City Region is committed to Social Value. All proposals must evidence how it supports social, economic, and environmental Social Value.

- For people with learning difficulties and disabilities, applications are welcome from specialist organisations that provide progression to employment from internships. All applicants should themselves be committed to achieving 'disability confident'.

- Learners with complex educational needs receive support through an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. For people with an EHC plan up to age 25, proposals for employment and skills support must be undertaken with Local Authorities. People with an EHC plan aged 25 and over, or those who were formerly acknowledged as having an Education and Health Care plan, who are resident in Liverpool City Region, may be supported in learning by the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB). In these cases applicants should consider with local Colleges, Local Authority learning providers and independent training providers as well as the Combined Authority as the funder how ESF could add value to the current delivery available.

- This specification will not duplicate learning provision funded by the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) in Liverpool City Region. Learners aged 19 and over resident in Liverpool City Region have a legal entitlement to fully funded English and maths skills, a first level 2 and first level 3 qualification for those aged between 19 and 23. Applicants should consider how their proposals could add value to current AEB devolved provision for Liverpool City Region residents through referrals to AEB

funded provision. The successful applicant will have established relationships with local FE Colleges, Local Authority community learning providers and independent training providers where appropriate for the purpose or learner referrals to mainstream AEB funded provision.

For Liverpool City Region residents aged 19 and over people without IT qualifications at Level 1, applicants will have established relationships with local FE Colleges, Local Authority community learning providers and independent training providers to ensure referrals to devolved AEB funded provision ready for a new fully funded legal entitlement for IT learning from 1 August 2020 in order to make referrals for those learners with a legal entitlement to this provision to devolved AEB providers wherever possible. When proposing to deliver IT skills required in the workplace, applicants should demonstrate their understanding of the skills employers are increasingly requiring as a pre-requisite for employment and seek to establish new routes into employment with IT skills as an underpinning foundation. Wherever possible this delivery should incorporate and not duplicate local devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded provision

This Call is open to all ESF eligible participants – irrespective of their employment status.

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.liverpoollep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Final-ESIF-Strategy-4-February-2016-to-DCLG.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** of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the Liverpool City 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

Indicative Fund Allocation:	Indicatively, through this call the Managing Authority expects to allocate approximately **£5,192,901m ESF**

	If applicable: **Approximately - £4,568,736 allocated to the Transition Region** **Approximately - £624,165 allocated to the More Developed Region** 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.
Minimum application level	European Social Fund investment is intended to make a significant impact on local growth. Applications are expected to demonstrate appropriate scale and impact. The Managing Authority is seeking and will give preference to applications over **£1,298,225 of ESF to any single project** – however in exceptional cases we will consider applications of not less than **£1m** if applicants are proposing to deliver just the "Higher Level Skills" strand of activity stated in this Call. 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. Therefore, the MA favours a small number of projects being delivered. 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. As Liverpool City 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.
Duration of project approvals	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. All ESF Projects must be completed by 31st December 2023. Project costs cannot be incurred beyond this date.

	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.
Geographical Scope	All interventions should be focused on activity and beneficiaries within the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership area.
Specific call requirements	This is a call for ESF activity.
Call Deadlines	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. **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 .** **Technical support is available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm.** 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. **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 .** The Managing Authority reserves the right to reject applications which are incomplete or not submitted in a timely and compliant way.
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	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. The intervention rate in the Liverpool City 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.
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	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. Examples of activities that may be supported include:

	- 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 – Transition and More Developed areas

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 –Transition

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	4838
O1	Participants (Male)	2419
O1	Participants (Female)	2419
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	1264
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	441
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	745
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	242
O6	Participants without basic skills	1565

Outputs table – More Developed

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	827
O1	Participants (Male)	413
O1	Participants (Female)	414
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	190
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	96
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	119
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	41
O6	Participants without basic skills	235

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 Liverpool City 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.

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.

---

[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."

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 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 you 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).

Optional Supporting Documents

11. **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);
12. **Sample Timesheet** applicable if you or your Delivery Partners have members of staff working part of their time on your ESF Project;
13. **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;
14. **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);
15. **Draft SLA with Delivery Partners** applicable if your ESF Project will have one or more Delivery Partners;
16. **Independent state aid advice** applicable only if you have obtained independent advice to support your quoted ESF project State Aid position;
17. **Proof of Irrecoverable VAT** applicable only if you have Irrecoverable VAT which is relevant to your ESF Project
18. **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	28 May 2019
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	Midnight 12 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