



2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

Call for Proposals – Online Applications European Social Fund

Priority Axis 1: Inclusive Labour Markets

Managing Authority	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
ESI Fund	European Social Fund
Priority Axis:	Priority Axis 1: Inclusive Labour Markets
Investment Priority:	1.1: Access to Employment for Jobseekers and Inactive People.
Call Reference:	Women in Enterprise across Birmingham and Solihull Call Ref: OC12S20P1738
LEP Area:	Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP More Developed area (Birmingham, Solihull, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest)
Call Opens:	27 February 2020
Call Closes:	Midnight – 17 June 2020
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 <u>do not</u> use ECLAIMS to access or apply against <u>ERDF</u> calls published on GOV.UK – the online application process is only applicable to specified ESF open calls.</p> <p>Please note: the ECLAIMS system can only be accessed from within the UK.</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.

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 1 of the Operational Programme: Inclusive Labour Markets** and **Investment Priority: 1.1 Access to Employment for Jobseekers and Inactive People** 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 usually 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.

However, if an existing ESF Grant Recipient submits an application to extend their existing ESF Project via this open call and, if the cumulative value of all Full Applications received against it is below the call value, the ESF Managing Authority may choose to consider and assess that application via the Project Change Request route.

The decision on whether or not to use the Project Change Request route is a Managing Authority decision and will only be considered once the call is closed. To determine whether the Project Change Request route may be appropriate, the Managing Authority will take into account:

- Existing project performance against financial, output and result targets;
- The existing Grant Recipient track record within the ESF Programme;
- Completeness, robustness and detail of the information provided in the Full Application Form and supporting documents which would inform the Project Change Request assessment;
- Scale and complexity of any proposed changes between their existing ESF Project and their new Full Application proposal;
- Eligibility and availability of match-funding for the new/extended project delivery period.

This list is not exhaustive and, if there are any concerns about the delivery and/or management of the existing project, then the Full Application will be subject to the standard Full Appraisal process.

The same Project Change Request route may also be considered by the Managing Authority where the cumulative value of applications against an open call exceeds the overall call value, but the ESF Managing Authority then exercises their right to “increase the indicative allocation, or support more or fewer projects subject to the volume and quality of proposals received” as set out in this call specification or in cases where there is only one applicant against this call and that applicant is already delivering the same type of ESF Project in the same LEP Area under the same Investment Priority.

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.

UK Withdrawal Agreement

Under the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK will continue to participate in programmes funded under the current 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) until their closure.

This means that the vast majority of programmes will continue to receive EU funding across the programme’s lifetime. In many cases, funding will continue until after 2020 and the end of the transition period. In addition, UK organisations can continue to bid for new grant funding under the current MFF.

More information on the continued UK participation in EU Programmes can be found at the following [website link](#).

1.1 National Context

This priority axis aims to increase participation in the labour market and thereby improve social inclusion and mobility. It will support activities through:

Investment priority: 1.1 - Access to employment for job seekers and inactive people, including the long term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility

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 improve the employability of long-term unemployed people, so that they can compete effectively in the labour market.	This specific objective is focused on those who are long-term unemployed and who are less likely to move back into work than people who have been unemployed for less time. The additional support from this investment priority will help long-term unemployed people to tackle their barriers to work and move into sustainable employment. The main result target focuses on moving participants into employment (including self-employment) on leaving. There will be a quantified result target set for this result indicator in each category of region.
To provide individuals from groups which face particular labour market disadvantage with additional support so that they can compete effectively in the labour market.	This objective is focused on those who are unemployed but have more than one major barrier to progressing into employment (including self-employment) and sustaining employment. This client group will be more challenging to help and will often require intensive ongoing support to address complex barriers, which will be reflected in the targets. Support will be tailored to individual needs. Participants will include individuals who are over 50, lone parents, disabled or have health problems, from ethnic minorities or who lack basic skills. The main result targets focus on moving participants into employment or into education/training or getting them involved in active job search. Output targets will ensure we are reaching appropriate numbers of participants from these groups.
To encourage inactive people to participate in the	This objective is focused on individuals who are distant from the labour market and who need additional support to give them the skills and/or

labour market and to improve their employability.	confidence to enable them to move towards employment (including self-employment). Participants will include individuals who are lone parents, disabled or who have health problems, are over 50 or who are from ethnic minorities. The priority will be on those who are receiving inactive benefits. The main result that will be achieved is that inactive participants will engage more in the labour market. A specific output target will ensure we are targeting inactive people, and we have result targets to measure movement into work and increases in activity.
To address the basic skills needs of unemployed and inactive people so that they can compete effectively in the labour market.	This objective is focused on individuals who lack the basic skills required by employers, such as IT, literacy and numeracy. Participants will have the opportunity to gain basic skills relevant to labour market needs or to enable them to progress towards gaining further skills. The main result will be that those without basic skills will be helped to gain them. This will enable them to play a fuller part in the labour market. There is an output target for participants without basic skills and a result target for participants gaining basic skills.
To provide support for women at a disadvantage in the labour market, and particularly those who are currently inactive, to contribute to our efforts to reduce the gender employment gap.	The additional support from this investment priority will help more unemployed and inactive women to complete effectively in the labour market. It will be focused on engaging and providing additional support to women who have barriers to entering the labour market, including language, skills, age and caring responsibilities. Participants could include older women wishing to return to work after caring for children, lone parents or women from ethnic minorities who have never worked. The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will be in sustainable employment (including self-employment) or engaged in active job search on leaving. There is a stretching output target for female participation and a result target for participants with childcare needs receiving childcare support.

1.2 Local Development Need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 1, Investment Priority 1.1 of the Operational Programme, and which meets the **local development need** expressed in the text and table below.

The ambition in Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) area is to ensure young people and adults from all backgrounds, including women who may have previously been excluded from the labour market, are equipped with the skills and support they will need to secure and sustain employment and thereby contribute to,

benefit from and are included in the economic growth forecast for the area in the future.

This will be achieved through promoting inclusion, raising aspirations, facilitating educational excellence and delivering an employment and skills system that responds quickly and effectively to changing business needs. In the GBSLEP area, we require employment support and skills provision that is designed specifically to address the complex local needs of locally targeted communities, this includes the relatively low rates of Economic Activity among women in the region with just 69.5% of women in the area who are economically active compared to 74.3 nationally (Source: ONS annual population survey July 18 – June 19). The programme should effectively tackle the entrenched issues of economic exclusion, lack of aspiration and multiple disadvantages these communities face. We require prospective bidders to facilitate Individual Advice and Guidance, Skills and Training that will enable participants to move into self-employment and employment opportunities locally. The programme will create opportunities for economic activity in disadvantaged communities and the long term workless groups that take account of individual circumstances including cultural issues and health barriers as well as social and psychological aspects affecting behaviour and motivation.

Local Priorities:

The GBSLEP area faces a number of significant labour market challenges and there are many inter-connecting issues to be addressed when seeking to tackle unemployment (including long term unemployment), youth unemployment, worklessness, and economic inactivity in the LEP area.

Economic activity (includes residents of working age who are either employed or unemployed, but actively seeking work) is recovering after falling sharply during 2011-2014 in GBSLEP. At the end of Q1 2019 the economic activity rate in the GBSLEP region rose to 75.7%. However, this remains below the national rate of 78.9% (Nomis report)¹.

In GBSLEP the unemployment rate for 16+ at 6.3% is significantly higher than the national figure of 4.1%. The rate for those in the same group who are from an ethnic minority background at 9.2% is both higher than the rate for all adults in the area and higher than the national figure of ethnic minorities of 6.9%.

Self-employment and Enterprise Start Ups analysis shows that the rate of self-employment in the GBSLEP (9.5%) is lower than the UK average (10.7%). Within these overall figures, however, there is significant gender disparity, with males at 14% and females at 5%.

On 15th November 2018 Birmingham launched 'A Social Enterprise City' and this call aims to capitalise on this as a catalyst to promote and encourage under-represented groups, including women from ethnic minority backgrounds, to move into self-employment, including social enterprises in the area. Although this has shown some

¹

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185545/report.aspx?town=birmingham#tabempune mp>

positive results as we can see from the above quoted reports the area continues to fall below the national average.

Research shows that women from ethnic minorities are seen to be under-represented as entrepreneurs, and to have lower levels of business performance. The similarity in core concerns and business outcomes suggests potential benefits from exploring the connections between ethnic minority and women-led (EMW) businesses. Potential business barriers include poor business planning and pre start-up advice, actual or perceived discrimination, the quantity and quality of businesses, market failure in signposting to ongoing business support, and the uniqueness of EMW enterprises. Recent efforts towards boosting this sector have only returned modest changes, suggesting that area remains underdeveloped and holds potential of benefitting from ESF support.

Call Outline

This call is for the More Developed region (made up of Birmingham, Solihull, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest).

This call aims to address employment barriers and basic skills needs (required by employers), such as IT, literacy and numeracy and will be a key sector in enabling and driving economic growth in the GBSLEP area. This call activity will support unemployed people and encourage inactive residents to move closer to employment and self-employment through participation training, business planning, confidence building, work placement and volunteering, thereby increasing their confidence, skills, abilities and employability, empowering all participants to take full advantage of employment and self-employment opportunities now and in the future.

Note activity to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) aged 16-29 has been targeted in the ESF call for the GBSLEP Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the ESF call for NEETs and at risk of NEETs.

Support for young people in any proposals responding to this call should be therefore targeted at non-NEETs;

The preference is to award large funding agreements covering a range of activities. Applicants can collaborate where appropriate to achieve synergy of operation and to avoid duplication across similar areas in the LEP geography.

The aim of this programme is to encourage the development and expansion of an appropriately skilled and work ready population that can take advantage of current and future employment and business opportunities.

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: [found here](#)

Website: http://centrefenterprise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GBSLEP_A4_070214_v8.pdf

1.3 Scope of activity

This call invites Full Applications which support the delivery of Priority Axis 1, **Investment Priority: 1.1 Access to employment for jobseekers and inactive people** of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull 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 £2m ESF to the More Developed Region (Birmingham, Solihull, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest) 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 does not intend to allocate less than £500,000 of European Social Funding to any single project. The minimum project size, both ESF & match funding, is dependent on the intervention rate determined by category of region: 50% More Developed Region.
Duration of project	Projects should be for a maximum of three years; however the Managing Authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances.
Geographical Scope	All interventions should be focused on activity and beneficiaries within the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership area.
Specific call requirements	This is a Call for ESF activity. Priority will be given to applicants that deliver the best value for money in terms of outputs/ results delivered in relation to grant requested.

	<p>This call for ESF investment has been issued with complementary calls under ESF Investment Priority 2.1. Priority will be given to applicants that submit linked proposals across the two funds. See 'Local Priorities' section for further information.</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	<p>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.</p>
Applicant proposals	<p>These can only contain activities which are eligible for ESF.</p>
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>
Procurement	<p>All procurement must be undertaken in line with EU regulations.</p>

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.

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	1.1 Access to employment for jobseekers and inactive people
Specific Objectives	To help those who are disadvantaged but still relatively close to the labour market to tackle their barriers to work, and enter and sustain employment.
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 actions which may be supported for all unemployed and inactive people include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional and innovative approaches to pre-employment training, to ensure individuals have the core work-related skills that employers require, including preparation for apprenticeships; • support for those who need pre-traineeship and pre Work Programme assistance, to prepare them for the next step. • training for those who need to upgrade their skills or learn new skills (including basic skills and English for non-speakers) to compete in the local labour market and adapt to changes in the economy; • helping people access or benefit from apprenticeships, including support for women to enter non-traditional sectors which addresses barriers to entry (e.g. construction); • providing access to transport where this is a barrier to taking up a job; • providing advice, guidance and support by plugging gaps in national provision where appropriate, in order to help people,

	<p>make better informed choices, and in particular to take account of the jobs available in the local area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific careers advice for women, to help them make informed career choices; • using self-employment as a route out of worklessness, including providing advice and support for self-employment (an attractive option where an individual is struggling to find work with an employer, either because they lack experience or because they face discrimination).
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Results Table

ID	Result Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
R1	Unemployed participants into employment (including self-employment) on leaving (L)	22%
R2	Inactive participants into employment, or job search on leaving (MD)	33%
R3	Participants gaining basic skills (MD)	4%
R4	Participants with childcare needs receiving childcare support (MD)	36%
ESF-CR06	Participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving (MD)	34%

Outputs Table

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	2383
O1	Participants (Male)	1000
O1	Participants (Female)	1383
ESF –CO01	Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	1480
ESF – CO03	Inactive	903
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	454
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	694
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	599
O6	Participants without basic skills	557
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	295

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 Greater Birmingham and Solihull 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 50% (depending on category of region). This means ESF can contribute **up to 50%** of the total eligible project costs, subject to State Aid regulations. The remaining 50% 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.² 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.

² 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."

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 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 the ECLAIMS IT system, as well as guidance on the depth and content expectations.

Following the call closing date, applications will usually 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.

However, the Managing Authority reserves the right to assess applications from existing Grant Recipients via the Project Change Request route where appropriate, as set out in the 'Call Context' section of this specification.

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. **Due Diligence Financial Information.** 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).

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

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.	27 February 2020
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	Midnight 17 June 2020

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