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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	Greater London Authority (GLA)
ESI Fund	European Social Fund
Priority Axis:	Priority Axis 2: Skills for Growth
Investment Priorities	2.1: Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning; and 2.2: Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems
Call Reference:	London ESF Priority 2 Call 2021-23 – OC23S21P1832
LEP Area:	London
Call Opens:	15 March 2021
Call Closes:	23:59 – 4 June 2021
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 <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.
	Please note: the ECLAIMS system can only be accessed from within the UK.

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1. Call Context

The 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 Greater London Authority (GLA) to commission ESF Funded projects that will support the **Priority Axis 2 of the Operational Programme: Skills for Growth** and **Investment Priorities: 2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning** and **2.2: Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems** as set out in the Operational Programme.

All applications will need to be eligible under the European Social Fund Operational Programme for England. The <u>ESF Operational Programme</u> 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 usually be appraised as part of a single-stage appraisal process and successful applicants will enter into a funding agreement with the GLA. Further information is given in sections 4 to 10.

The 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 ESF Call Template – Online Application

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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 in 2023-24.

This means that the vast majority of programmes will continue to receive EU funding across the programme's lifetime. 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 <u>website link</u>.

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;

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

Where appropriate, training may complement activities delivered within the thematic objectives relating to innovation, low carbon, climate change, ICT and SME competitiveness, especially where improving intermediate and advanced skills can contribute to these thematic objectives. The focus on SMEs complements ERDF priorities, reflects the lower level of leadership, management and enterprise skills in smaller businesses and takes account of the fact that larger businesses in the UK are already eligible for skills support through the Employer Ownership Fund (EOF).

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 in the tables below.

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Investment priority: 2.1

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

Investment priority: 2.2

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

Local Development Need

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

Local Priorities:

- ESF in London is managed by the Greater London Authority, under the strategic direction of the Mayor and London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP).
- In 2014 LEAP was allocated approx. £692m for the delivery of the ESIF Strategy for London 2014-20¹. ESF in London is also underpinned by the strategic priorities outlined in the Skills for Londoners Strategy as well as the Mayor's other strategies, including the Economic Development Strategy² and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy³.
- As a city London is facing the most challenging period in recent history. The
 economic, social and health impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) cannot be
 overstated. We need to: restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on
 London's most vulnerable communities and rebuild the city's economy and
 society
- Under this 4th ESF funding round, the GLA and LEAP are seeking to allocate approximately £39m⁴ ESF (to be spent by December 2023) to help tackle the unprecedented challenges London is facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Funding is available to support projects under both Priority 1 and Priority 2 of the ESF 2014-20 Programme. A second Call for projects under Priority 1 is being launched in parallel with this Priority 2 Call.
- The Skills for Londoners Strategy⁵ sets out the Mayor's vision for skills and adult education in London and the priorities set by the Mayor. The Skills for Londoners Framework⁶ provides further information on implementation of the strategy. Achieving the Mayor's vision is not without its challenges. Many Londoners do not have access to the opportunities that this global capital city provides. London still has above average unemployment rates; the highest proportion of people in poverty of any UK region exacerbated by the high costs of living; high numbers of Londoners in low pay, with little chance to progress to better-paid, more secure work; there are continued and persistent gender, race and disability pay gaps; and a high number of Londoners are without basic skills in literacy, English language, numeracy and digital skills.

¹ https://lep.london/european-structural-investment-funds

² https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/economic-development-strategy

³ https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/mayors-strategy-equality-diversity-inclusion

⁴ £39m ESF is the amount indicatively available across both Calls.

⁵ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sfl_strategy_final_june_20186.pdf

⁶ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sfl_framework_final.pdf

- There are also challenges in aligning skills provision with the needs of the London economy. London is a high-skilled economy demanding a need for higher-level skills; there is a historic low level of employer investment in workforce training and apprenticeship places; and skills shortage vacancies in various sectors. Skills requirements are also changing, particularly in response to technological advancements, including automation. To better meet the needs of Londoners and employers, London must have an agile skills system that can effectively respond to the London economy and enable its businesses to succeed in competitive global markets.
- Certain groups in London are disproportionately unequal in their levels of skills and qualifications. This is evident between different population groups and also between different areas in London. The proportion of adults in London with a degree level qualification is higher amongst those from White and Asian/Asian British backgrounds and for those who are not disabled. In terms of geography, the proportion of adults with degree level qualifications is higher in Central and West London than in other areas. Adults in East London are more likely to have no qualifications.
- One in eight Londoners have no or low qualifications, while a third lack NVQ Level 3 (equivalent to A levels) or above⁷. Those with higher qualifications are more likely to be in work, with 88.6% of Londoners with degrees employed in 2019. This compares to 49.8% for those without qualifications.
- UK employers spend less on training their employees than others globally. Where training is provided, it's often for those who are already highly skilled. This reinforces the skills gap and means those in low paid/insecure roles have fewer in chances to progress in work.
- The London labour market has been particularly affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the measures to contain it. The number of jobs in London recorded their largest quarterly fall on record (since 1996) in June 2020, contributing to an overall fall of 229,000 workforce jobs from March to September 20208. The greatest falls in percentage terms were registered in the Arts & Entertainment, Accommodation & Food and Construction Sectors.
- The London unemployment rate also recorded a record-high increase on the previous quarter to reach 6.9% in the three months to November 20209, with signs that younger workers have been particularly affected by rising unemployment so far.
- Online job vacancies in London fell dramatically between March and August 2020 across most occupations and sectors (and especially for hospitality, leisure and sales related roles). Despite some signs of recovery, many sectors have also been impacted by the further lockdowns and restrictions introduced at the end of 2020.

⁷ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/lis-evidence-base-final.pdf

⁸ GLA Economics COVID-19 Labour Market Round-Up, Dec 20

⁹ Data from the ONS Labour Force Survey for the quarter ending November 2020 **ESF Call Template - Online Application**

 More detailed analysis of London's skills landscape will be available in the Local Skills Report for London, which is due for publication in March 2021¹⁰. The Report will set out London's skills needs and priorities, including growth sectors and occupations.

The London Recovery Programme

- COVID-19 has had a major impact on the capital. London's economy and businesses have been severely hit, as well as its local communities. The London Recovery Board (the Board) and the London Recovery Taskforce, convened by the Mayor of London in summer 2020, are leading London's response to COVID-19.
- The development of a new mission-orientated strategy and action plan is now being taken forward as part of the London Recovery Programme, on which the Board leads. It has identified a grand challenge to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on communities and build back better the city's economy and society.
- The Board has adopted a Mission-based approach to meeting this challenge.
 The Missions are designed to be bold, ambitious yet realistic and flexible enough so that they can gather wide support for delivery and adjust to emerging evidence and issues.
- The London Recovery Programme is made up of 9 Missions to meet London's grand challenge. The GLA and LEAP encourage applicants to familiarise themselves with the 9 Missions and consider ways in which their proposals can support the mission priorities and aims.
 - A Green New Deal Tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and improve air quality by doubling the size of London's green economy by 2030 to accelerate job creation for all.
 - A Robust Safety Net By 2025, every Londoner is able to access the support they need to prevent financial hardship.
 - High Streets for All Deliver enhanced public spaces and exciting new uses for underused high street buildings in every Borough by 2025, working with London's diverse communities.
 - A New Deal for Young People By 2024 all young people in need are entitled to a personal mentor and all young Londoners have access to quality local youth activities.
 - Helping Londoners into Good Work Support Londoners into good jobs with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery.
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing By 2025 London will have a quarter of a million wellbeing ambassadors, supporting Londoners where they live, work and play.

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¹⁰ The report will be available on the GLA website at https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/skills-and-employment/skills-londoners

- **Digital Access for All** Every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025.
- Healthy Food, Healthy Weight By 2025 every Londoner lives in a healthy food neighbourhood.
- Building Strong Communities By 2025, all Londoners will have access to a community hub ensuring they can volunteer, get support and build strong community networks.
- More information about each of the recovery missions can be found here https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/londons-recovery-coronaviruscrisis/recovery-context
- ESF can play a key role in the delivery of the Helping Londoners into Good Work and A New Deal for Young People Missions, in particular. Applicants will need to set out how their projects will support the priorities and emerging actions of these two Missions. Some of the key areas of focus that projects should consider are set out below.

Helping Londoners into Good Work Mission.

- There are four key strands of activity under this Mission:
 - Supporting Londoners hardest hit by the pandemic into good work, while ensuring that Londoners with the most complex needs are not left behind.
 - Coordinating skills, careers and employment support so there is 'no wrong door' for Londoners seeking assistance.
 - Establishing sector specific London 'Academies' to support Londoners to gain relevant skills and move into good work in sectors key to London's recovery.
 - Close working with employers and job creation initiatives to promote good

A New Deal for Young People

- The aim of this mission is that by 2024 all young people in need are entitled to a personal mentor and all young Londoners have access to quality local youth activities.
- Many young Londoners face barriers to realising their potential. They need support in developing their confidence, their social skills, boosting their mental health, and improving their educational and employment prospects.
- On top of this, many of London's young people have experienced increased mental illness, stress, and trauma as a result of the pandemic. Their educational, training, and employment experiences and prospects, have been negatively affected too.
- The mission recognises the value of youth work, mentoring, and encouraging positive relationships between youth practitioners and young people in need. Youth practitioners have a big influence on maintaining positive mental health for young people, as well as their physical health and safety. Their

- essential work has been all too often undervalued in the past. London's youth practitioners will be central to delivering this mission.
- Where projects are working with young people, we would expect mentoring to be a key feature of the provision. In particular, we would like to see projects where trusted individuals provide personal mentoring and tailored support that focuses on young people facing the greatest barriers to realising their potential. This could include a range of social skills, mental health support, educational and employment skills or a combination of all.

Call Outline

- Through this call, the GLA and LEAP are seeking projects that can help tackle London's employment and skills challenges and support London's recovery from COVID-19. As noted above, we are keen that applicants look at ways in which their activities can align with the Recovery Missions, in particular, the Helping Londoners into Good Work Mission and the New Deal for Young People Mission.
- Projects which support the skills priorities of the <u>Green New Deal</u> and <u>Digital</u>
 <u>Access for All</u> recovery missions are also encouraged, for example, projects that
 provide training and upskilling for people to move into Green jobs and projects
 that support the delivery of both basic digital skills and sector specific digital skills.
- Some groups including lone parents, people living with disabilities and health conditions, care leavers, older Londoners, young people, homeless people and some BAME groups – remain under-represented in the workforce and are often more likely to be worse-off than other Londoners. There are also a high number of Londoners without basic skills in literacy, English language, numeracy and digital skills. Applications focusing on these groups will be particularly welcomed.
- Projects should use a variety of outreach strategies in order to engage participants and should not just rely on engagement through traditional routes.
- Projects should also provide flexible support that is tailored to the needs of individual participants. Where projects are working with participants who have more complex needs, longer term and more intensive support should be offered.
- Employment retention and progression are key priorities for the GLA and LEAP.
 Projects funded through ESF in London under Investment Priority 2.1 should,
 wherever possible, support participants to progress in work, this could include a
 positive change in contract or moving into higher paid work paying at least the
 hourly London Living wage. Further details on the definition of the London ESF
 'In-work Progression' result and target setting are included in section 3 below.
- Applicants may apply for funding for projects that cover one or both Investment Priorities (IP) (IP2.1 and IP2.2). Where applications cover more than one IP, it must be clear which activities fall under which IP.

- The majority of ESF provision in London is being delivered through Co-Financing Organisations (CFOs) including the GLA, National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), DWP and the four borough Sub-Regional Partnerships¹¹ (SRPs).
- Applicants must clearly set out how their proposed project both complements and avoids duplicating existing and planned ESF provision, as well as mainstream provision, such as the Mayor's Adult Education Budget (AEB). This will be a key consideration in the scoring of applications, particularly in relation to strategic fit and value for money.
- Details of existing and planned ESF provision in London can be found on the LEAP website https://lep.london/content_page/european-social-fund.
 More information about AEB in London can be found at https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/skills-and-employment/skills-londoners/adult-education-budget
- We recognise that the impact of COVID-19 may make project delivery more challenging at this time. In response to this a number of easements have been introduced by the national Managing Authority to support providers during this period. More information can be found in the COVID-19 response Q&A published by the Managing Authority on gov.uk.¹²
- Projects will be funded on the basis of actual costs. A number of simplifications have been introduced since the start of the ESF programme to simplify project administration. For example, where staff will spend a set amount of time working on the ESF project (e.g. 40%) and this does not fluctuate month by month, direct staff costs may be calculated using the fixed percentage methodology. Under this methodology, a flat percentage (e.g. 40%) of the member of staff's actual gross employment costs per month can be claimed and there is no requirement for defrayal evidence or timesheets to be provided¹³.
- To improve the planning and coordination of ESF activity in London, four subregional contract geographies have been agreed with London boroughs; these are:

¹¹ The Sub-Regional Partnerships are Central London Forward, Local London, South London Partnership and West London Alliance.

¹² https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-coronavirus-covid-19-response/european-social-fund-2014-to-2020-programme-questions-and-answers-on-covid-19-response

¹³ Full details of all simplified cost options available to ESF projects applying under this Call can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-programme-guidance/simplified-cost-options



 The GLA and LEAP encourage applications for projects that cover one or more of the agreed sub-regional geographic areas in their entirety.

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.

1.3 Scope of activity

This call invites Full Applications which support the delivery of Priority Axis 2, Investment Priority 2.1 Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning and Investment Priority 2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the London 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.

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Indicative Fund Allocation:	Indicatively, through this call the Managing Authority expects to allocate approximately £12,000,000 ESF
	The output and result volumes in the tables below in section 3 (Required Deliverables) are based on the following indicative split of funding across the two Investment Priorities covered by this call:
	 Investment Priority 2.1 - £10,000,000 Investment Priority 2.2 - £2,000,000
	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. The managing authority may also decide to place some projects submitted through this call on a reserve list and invite them to proceed at a later date, subject to the availability of funding.
	Two calls for London are being launched simultaneously, one for Priority 2 and one for Priority 1. Approximately £39,000,000 ESF is available across both calls and the Managing Authority reserves the right to allocate funding flexibly across the two calls, increasing or decreasing the indicative allocations at Priority Axis level and/or Investment Priority level.
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 ESF to any single project.
	Applications requesting an ESF amount below the 'Minimum Application Level' will be rejected.
Duration of project	Projects must be financially completed (i.e. have a proposed Financial Completion Date) no later than 31 st December 2023; however, the Managing Authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances.
	All ESF Projects must complete delivery by 31 st December 2023. Project costs cannot be incurred beyond this date.

Geographical Scope	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. All interventions should be focused on activity and	
	beneficiaries within the London 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 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 .	
	Please note that requests received within 5 working days of the call closing date may not be processed in time.	
	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 usually 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.	

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	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.
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.
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 one or both the following Investment Priorities. 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 codesigned 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.

Investment	2.2 Improving the labour market relevance of education and
Priority Specific Objectives	training systems To promote improvements in the labour market relevance of skills provision through active engagement with relevant institutions and employers, particularly SMEs and micro businesses.
Indicative	 ESF will not support activities that duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes, but may be used to support additional activities, including provision co-designed with local partners. Examples of activities that may be supported include: support for collaborative projects, placements, internships or other activities with SMEs that enable students and graduates to gain industry-relevant experience and skills; building capacity in SMEs to provide project/placement/ internship opportunities and enhance the contribution of advanced skills to SME growth, including programmes to specifically engage the most disadvantaged groups or those who face particular local disadvantages in utilising advanced skills; brokering opportunities to encourage and increase work experience, work placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, and graduate placements particularly through wider employer engagement and involving supply chains; promoting apprenticeships (especially at advanced levels in manufacturing and other priority sectors) by developing a supportive environment for employer engagement; developing better links with business to equip students with
	the skills to start and grow a business to meet local business needs.

Results Table – Investment Priority 2.1

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. 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 - Investment Priority 2.1

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. MD = More Developed.

ID	Output Indicator	Total Minimum target value for this call
01	Participants	10,211
01	Participants (Male)	(5,284)
01	Participants (Female)	(4,927
O4	Participants over 50 years of age	2,278
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	4,736
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	1,410
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	511
O6	Participants without basic skills	2,659

Results Table – Investment Priority 2.2

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

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

Outputs Table – Investment Priority 2.2

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

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

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

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

		Minimum Target value for this
ID	Output Indicator	call
CO23	Number of supported micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)	423
01	Total number of participants	There is no target value for this call however applicants will be expected to provide a total number of participants the project is aiming to support in both the application and associated IP2.2 Annex.

Outputs and Results Rationale

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

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

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

ESF Outputs and Results Indicator Definitions Guidance is available on GOV.UK here.

Applicants will also need to ensure robust systems are in place, and be able to describe them, to capture and record the targets and to report quantitative and qualitative performance across the London 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.

London Specific 'In-work Progression' Result

Employment retention and progression are key themes for the GLA and LEAP. London ESF projects funded under Investment Priority 2.1 should, where possible, support participants to progress in work. Participants progressing in work can experience a positive change in contract¹⁴ or move into higher paid work paying at least the hourly London Living wage¹⁵.

Applicants should include target volumes for the London 'In-work progression' result in <u>section 5.15</u> of the full application (in the narrative response) in ECLAIMS. Applicants should include a rationale in this section for the volume of results proposed.

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¹⁴ A 'Positive change in contract' is defined as a Participant's employment contract changing from; a) a zero hours contract to a permanent contract or a temporary contract of at least six months' duration; or b) a temporary contract of less than six months' duration to a permanent contract or a new temporary contract of at least six months' duration.

¹⁵ This result should be evidenced with an employer declaration or contract of employment detailing: total (pre-tax) hourly wage paid, or a payslip and declaration of hours worked. A self-decleration, in accordance with ESF guidance, may also be acceptable.

Management Information (MI) on the number of participants achieving an 'In-work progression' result will need to be reported each quarter as part of the claim submission, in the project progress report on ECLAIMS.

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 <u>guidance</u> 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 <u>up to 50</u>% 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. 16 Grant funding to any economic undertaking which is state

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¹⁶ 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 **ESF Call Template - Online Application**

aid can only be awarded if it is compatible aid, in that it complies with the terms of a notified scheme or is covered by the De Minimis Regulation. Guidance for grant recipients, explaining more about State Aid, is available; it is important that Applicants take responsibility for understanding the importance of the State Aid rules and securing their full compliance with them throughout the project, if it is selected into the Programme.

The Managing Authority is not able to give legal advice on State Aid. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the operation is State Aid compliant.

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

4.6 Funding Agreement

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

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

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

4.7 Procurement

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

undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it affects trade between Member States, be incompatible with the internal market."

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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.

4.9 Duplication of Provision

Applicants are required, in their Full Application, to "identify any organisations offering the same or similar activity" as their proposed project. Applicants are also asked to "explain how the proposed project adds value to and doesn't duplicate existing provision, and does not conflict with national policy".

To help inform their response, applicants should access the ESF List of Beneficiaries published on GOV.UK - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-useful-resources and search for any other ESF funded projects operating under the same Investment Priority in the same geographical area(s) as their proposed ESF Project.

Where there is potential duplication and/or overlap, the applicant should ensure they explain how they will work with any other pre-existing ESF Projects to ensure their new project will add value and not conflict with existing provision.

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 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.

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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

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applicants over their Full Application prior to the call closing date. Details of where guidance can be found are contained throughout this calls document.

Call 'Q&A'

Applicants may submit general clarification questions about the call to esifcalls@london.gov.uk. Answers will be published on the LEAP website at https://lep.london/EU in a 'Questions and Answers' document. The document will be updated on a weekly basis while the call is open and applicants should check the document regularly for updates. The deadline for submission of questions is 28 May 2021, any questions submitted after this deadline will not be answered.

A 'Frequently asked Questions' page will also be available at https://lep.london/EU

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;
- ESF National Eligibility Rules and Programme Guidance;
- ESF Programme Guidance on Simplified Cost Options.

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

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- part-time or part of their time on the ESF Project calculated using the 1720 hour rate calculation set out in the <u>Simplified Cost Options Guidance</u> 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;
- Organogram covering all staff, including any delivery partner and/or matchfunded staff posts;
- 8. **Sample HR letter** as per the requirements set out in the <u>ESF National Eligibility</u> Rules and Programme Guidance on GOV.UK;
- 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 <u>not</u> 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. Requests submitted within 5 working days of the call closing date may not be processed in time.

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	15 March 2021
Deadline for submission of Full Application via	23:59
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	4 June 2021

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 <u>European Growth Funding</u> 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		

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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