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:	**1.2 Sustainable Integration of Young People into the Labour Market**
Call Reference:	**COVID-19 Response NEETs Engagement in New Anglia – OC24S21P1840**
LEP Area:	**New Anglia**
Call Opens:	**19 April 2021**
Call Closes:	**Midnight 14 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.**

Contents

1. Call Context

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

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: 1.2 Sustainable Integration into the Labour Market of Young 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 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. The Operational Programme identifies the need to address high levels of youth unemployment in specific areas of England this will be delivered through the following Investment priority:

Investment priority 1.2 Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people (ESF), in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee

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 support the rise in the participation age by providing additional traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities	The additional support from this investment priority will help more young people enter traineeships and apprenticeships (in areas that do not qualify for the Youth Employment Initiative up to 2018) It will improve the quality of what is offered to individuals by improving recruitment and assessment and engagement with employers. By helping more young participants aged 15 to 24, male and female, who were NEET or at risk of NEET, to take up traineeships or apprenticeships, we will improve movements into work.
To engage marginalised 15-18 year olds and support them to re-engage with education or training	The additional support from this investment priority will help to find and engage young people who are disconnected from mainstream activity in areas that do not qualify for the Youth Employment Initiative. Participants could, for example, be members of gangs, care leavers, young lone parents, ex-offenders or young people with learning difficulties. They are likely to require more intensive and tailored interventions. The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will be engaged with education or training on leaving, and this will be measured by the result target.
To address the basic skills needs of young NEETS so that they can compete effectively in the labour market;	The additional support from this investment priority will help young NEETs (in areas that do not qualify for the Youth Employment Initiative up to 2018) to acquire the basic

	skills necessary to enable them to progress into an apprenticeship, traineeship or other employment. The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will have gained basic skills. There is an output target for participants without basic skills and a result target for participants gaining basic skills.
To provide additional work experience and pre-employment training opportunities to unemployed 18-24 year olds	The additional support from this investment priority will help unemployed 18-24 year olds (in areas that do not qualify for the Youth Employment Initiative up to 2018) to transition into training or sustainable employment (or self-employment). The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will enter traineeships, apprenticeships or sustainable employment (including self-employment) on leaving.
To support young lone parents to overcome the barriers they face in participating in the labour market (including childcare).	The additional support from this investment priority will help young lone parents (in areas that do not qualify for the Youth Employment Initiative up to 2018) to move closer to and into sustainable employment (including self-employment). Support will include assistance with childcare when this has not been covered by public provision, such as Universal Credit. It will also help participants to overcome other barriers, such as low basic skills or lack of confidence. The main result that will be achieved is that more participants will move into sustainable employment (including self-employment). There is an output target for the number of lone parents.

1.2 Local Development Need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 1, Investment Priority 1.2 of the Operational Programme, and which meets the **local development need** expressed in the text and table below.

Whilst there has been a drop in the number of NEETs nationally (ONS, November 2020) in Norfolk numbers have increased from 629 to 814 young people who are NEET and 135 'Not Known' over the last year (NCC data, March 2021), representing 4.7% across Years 12 and 13 against a national figure of 2.8%.   Suffolk does not have such a significant increase, but there too there is a higher than national average NEET levels of 3.54% across year 12 and 13.

This reflects both the high level of disadvantage in our area[1] and the additional barriers faced by our young people – for example, the number of pupils in Norfolk with SEN/EHCPs is above both regional and national levels as is the percentage of Looked After Children; Youth Offending and All Pupil Absence & Exclusions (DfE Local Authority data, October 2020). In Suffolk, the proportion of SEN pupils within the NEET group has increased to over 10% in the last year.   Existing barriers to achievement have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

The disruption to education caused by school and college closures has the greatest impact on disadvantaged students who have received less support than their peers in accessing technology, teacher guidance and resources, time spent learning, support from parents/carers, attendance and assessment (source: UK Parliament, Rapid Response, September 2020).

Young people with SEN are even further disadvantaged. The challenges around their transition back into education are likely to result in formal, informal and self-exclusion (School Exclusion Risks after COVID-19, Daniels et al, June 2020) and for those who do have a successful return, a two year programme *'at least'* is required to enable them to '*even begin'* to catch up with their peers (Time Out Youth, June 2020).

These students have lost the most in terms of educational outcomes but also, as wellbeing is linked to disadvantage, will bear an 'unequal impact' on their mental health (Centre for Mental Health, June 2020). Mental health has 'worsened substantially' as a result of COVID-19 with young adults[2] and females hit hardest. A survey conducted by Young Minds in response to the Education Committee (May 2020) showed 83% of respondents agreed the pandemic had an adverse effect. Their concerns centred around loss of routine and social contact but also other mental health risks including domestic violence and substance misuse, which have risen during lockdowns.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has in turn reduced opportunities to support young people with these issues - 88% of youth organisations are likely to cut their provision, 17% likely to close permanently, 65% likely to lose funding and 71% intend to reduce staff hours (C19 Impact on Children Report, UK Youth, March 2020). Among respondents whose children had received mental health support in the previous three months (through the NHS, private providers, school counsellors, charities and helplines) 25% said that their child was no longer able to access it, but still needed it.

Post 16 providers are reporting equivalent pressures. Norfolk and Suffolk FE Colleges and training providers have confirmed all courses are full, with no further recruitment possible. These are often the type of roll on/roll off, first step programmes that are vital to engage disadvantaged young people. There is a 'bottleneck' in provision with learners unable to progress into Apprenticeships and onto the next level of learning because of the impact of furlough and redundancies on their work experience and employment opportunities.

This meant that young people who were unable to secure a place in September 2020 have been left with no post 16 option at all - the volume of NEETs and Not Knowns has exceeded provider capacity to respond.   This situation is anticipated to continue and possibly to get

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[1]   There are eight LA areas in Norfolk and Suffolk listed in the Social Mobility Index of 50 worst performing areas - Norwich 2nd;   Waveney 7th, Breckland 19th, Great Yarmouth 28th, and King's Lynn & West Norfolk 32nd, Ipswich 33rd, North Norfolk 45th, and Babergh 49th.

[2] Young adults and females had worse mental health prior to the pandemic (Health Foundation, June 2020).

worse, with a cumulative effect of new cohorts of disengaged young people leaving school before the previous cohort has secured a pathway towards further education or work.

Local Priorities:

It is anticipated the resulting project from this Call will address national and local priorities around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education, training and employment opportunities for young people reported across Government departments (eg: Ofsted Report 2 – Children hardest hit by COVID-19 pandemic are regressing in basic skills and learning, November 2020).

The issues faced by young people, especially those facing particular barriers, are a particular concern addressed in the New Anglia LEP Covid-19 Economic Recovery Restart Plan, with a renewed commitment from all partners to the New Anglia Youth Pledge, which states that 'every young person in Norfolk and Suffolk will have the support they need to get into high quality education, employment, training, or an apprenticeship.'   The Plan cites the Resolution Foundation estimate that of those leaving education this year, those with fewest qualifications will be 37% less likely to have a job in three years' time, and places renewed emphasis on the challenges facing those with the most complex issues.

This project will enable additional coordination which will specifically contribute to the New Anglia Skills Advisory Panel's strategic objective 'equipping people for success' and the Economic Strategy for Norfolk and Suffolk (2017) priority 'driving inclusion and skills'. This document states that 'We want to raise and support aspiration across all ages' And 'We will help our young people set their ambitions high and understand the exciting local careers available to them' for this vulnerable group raising their aspirations and attainment has never been more vital.

It then goes further, stating that 'together we will: Develop new approaches and remove barriers to getting people back into work, especially for those furthest from the jobs market and provide support for all into sustained employment. This will include our pilot work and health programmes, the delivery of high quality basic skills training in English, Mathematics and ICT and the development of pathways for young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to move into supported employment.

The challenges these young people face put them at risk of being 'furthest from education or employment' with this project proposal addressing this through a coordinated approach and tailored intervention to support these individuals to re-engage, and eventually become the skilled and economically active employees or business leaders needed in the region.

A number of ESF projects address the needs of young people dropping out of employment or further education, and the pathway to apprenticeships and other particular provision. This Call request focuses on high school leavers, including those who have not completed their school education, who have not had a chance to gain any employment experience, or to even begin to think about further education, because of the disruption to their education caused by the pandemic. Providers are reporting that many young people have disengaged and lost all confidence in attending educational institutions or looking for steps towards employment.

Call Outline

This Call seeks to fund a project to deliver a coordinated response to NEET transitions, focused on 'wraparound' support for young people who have been impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns, both educationally and in terms of their wellbeing and mental health.

The successful project should prioritise provision for those NEETS who have not completed their high school education as a result of the pandemic and/or have not been able to secure any form of further education place or employment since leaving school.

It is also expected that the successful project will offer a service which combines support in the community with the creation of a 'safe space' for NEETS within an FE College or Colleges as part of the process of re-engagement with the education and training system.

In addition, the objectives of this Call request are to provide –

- Blended 1:1 and small group work with 15-18 year old NEETS to build social and emotional confidence and skills and to re-engage them.
- A safe, supportive and welcoming setting for young people to attend regularly and begin to re-socialise, offering clear progression routes.
- A clear process for engaging NEETS including involvement of County Council Childrens Services teams in identifying young people to engage.
- Pastoral support and a point of contact for each young person to build trust and share concerns.
- Provision from entry level through to Level 3 in one place
- A single service able to also support additional SEN needs where needed.
- Flexible start dates throughout the year – Either a rolling start or, 2 or 3 set start dates throughout the year
- Summer schools and other provision out of term time as an option if needed.
- Generic skills provision to help young people with workplace skills such as IT and customer service, as well as basic skills where required.
- Short courses in a range of practical and nurturing subjects to build confidence

This Call would complement other New Anglia LEP Priority 1 projects, which focus on –

- general employability support for adults and young people
- employability support for people with long-term health conditions, including mental health.
- Support to help young people find the right path through education into employment (Youth Pledge)
- Support to a specific cohort of young people many of whom are also NEET, but are particularly at risk of 'County Lines' exploitation

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 here

1.3 Scope of activity

This call invites Full Applications which support the delivery of Priority Axis 1, **Investment Priority 1.2 Sustainable Integration of Young People into the Labour Market** of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the New Anglia 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 **£500,000 ESF**. 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.
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 **£400,000) 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 31st December 2023; however, the Managing Authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances. All ESF Projects must complete delivery by 31st December 2023. Project costs cannot be incurred beyond this date. NOTE: Delivery of activities and associated costs can be incurred up to and including 31st December 2023, with

	the full and final claim expected no later than February 2024.
Geographical Scope	All interventions should be focused on activity and beneficiaries within the New Anglia 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 .** 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. 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.

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	**1.2 Sustainable Integration Of Young People Into The Labour Market**
Specific Objectives	Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people (ESF), in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee
Indicative Actions	ESF will not support activities that duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes, but may be used to support additional activities or target groups, including provision co-designed with local partners. Examples of actions for all young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET include: • literacy, numeracy, ICT and employability provision to ensure that individuals have the basic skills needed in all jobs and to help them prepare for apprenticeships and progress through other routes to gaining higher skills;

	- support which complements other skills provision, such as crosscutting and 21st century skills, including team working, effective communication, problem solving, critical thinking and self-direction; - training and vocational qualifications to equip young people for specific jobs; - support for young women to enter non-traditional sectors (e.g. construction) which addresses barriers to entry e.g. to apply for apprenticeships; - community and informal learning to engage young people who have struggled at school and encourage them to access more formal learning; - intermediate labour market activity to provide a structured and supportive environment where young people can gain work experience; - using self-employment as a route out of worklessness, including providing advice and support for self-employment. Activities which are not specifically applicable should be removed.

Results Table –

ID	Result Indicator	Minimum Target value for this call
R3	Participants gaining basic skills	4% (applies to all Categories of Region)
R5	Participants (below 25 years of age) in employment, including self-employment, or education/ training upon leaving	43% More Developed
ESF-CR06	Participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	34% More Developed

Outputs table –

ID	Output Indicator	Total Minimum target value for this call
O2	Participants	659
O2	Participants (Male)	346
O2	Participants (Female)	313
ESF –CO01	Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	409

ESF – CO03	Inactive	250
O5	Participants from ethnic minorities	126
ESF - CO16	Participants with disabilities	94
O6	Participants without basic skills	116
ESF - CO14	Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	54

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 New Anglia 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%. 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.[3] 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.

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[3] 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."

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.

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 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;
- [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 part-time or part of their time on the ESF Project – calculated using the 1720 hour rate calculation set out in the [Simplified Cost Options 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 and Programme Guidance](#) 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	19 April 2021
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	Midnight 14 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 [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