



Department
for Work &
Pensions



European Union
European
Social Fund

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

Call for Proposals – Online Applications European Social Fund

Priority Axis 4: COVID-19 Response

Managing Authority	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
ESI Fund	European Social Fund
Priority Axis:	Priority Axis 4: COVID-19 Response
Investment Priority	4.1 – Addressing the Digital Divide in response to Coronavirus
Call Reference:	Lump Sum Digital interventions OC00S21X1838
LEP Area:	All LEP areas, excluding London
Call Opens:	23 April 2021
Call Closes:	Midnight 04 June 2021
Application Process	<p>Applications for funding must be completed and submitted using the ECLAIMS IT system.</p> <p>Applications submitted via any other method will not be accepted.</p> <p>Please <u>do not</u> use ECLAIMS to access or apply against <u>ERDF</u> calls published on GOV.UK – the online application process is only applicable to specified ESF open calls.</p> <p>Please note: the ECLAIMS system can only be accessed from within the UK.</p>

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1. Call Context

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

This Call is seeking applications for projects to run for up to a maximum of 12 months from the project start date as stated in the Funding Agreement. 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 **Priority Axis 4 of the Operational Programme: COVID-19 Response and Investment Priority: 4.1 Addressing the Digital Divide in response to Coronavirus**. This Priority Axis and Investment Priority exist to enable delivery of the specific support set out in this Call, against the COVID-19 output indicators set out in part 3.

All applications will need to be eligible under the European Social Fund Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020 which is published here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020>. However, please note that the published Operational Programme, currently confirms that all projects in this Priority will have been completed by 31st December 2020. This is not the case for this call, as projects can run for up to 12 months from the date of their Funding Agreement.

Eligibility criteria for this Call is set out in the specific eligibility criteria document published alongside this Call. Information on the process needed to submit

applications in response to this Call can be found in the Lump Sum Digital Interventions Call Guidance which is also published alongside this Call.

This Call sets out the requirements for 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 DWP. Further information is given in sections 4 to 10.

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

Priority Axis 4 aims to support activities necessary in responding to the impact of COVID-19. It will support activities through:

Investment priority: 4.1 – Addressing the digital divide in response to Coronavirus - This Investment Priority within the Programme will seek to address two of the main 'access' issues associated with digital exclusion. The first is that of having physical access to the internet, i.e. a device that will allow the user to access the internet. The second is the issue of data poverty, which can act as a barrier to creating a digitally inclusive society - just having the device is often not enough, due to the cost of data and the often unaffordable costs of home internet access. Internet access in the home is only available through long-term broadband / data contracts, which are often unaffordable for those on lower incomes, and 'pay as you go' services often attract a 'poverty premium' in that they are more expensive per byte of data than would be the case through 12 month or 2 year contracts.

It is important for applicants to note that the intention of the previous Digital Call was to commit all available funds, and that all activity for the interventions delivered within PA4 needed to end by 31 December 2020 to take advantage of the European Commission's 100% co-financing easement which is set out in the ESF Operational Programme. This is not applicable to this call.

This is because the full value of Priority 4 was not committed to projects. We are now launching this second call with the aim of committing the remaining funds. Activities under this call must be carried out in line with the ESF Programme match funding requirements, which are set out later in this document, and the timescale set out in Section 1 above.

ESF will not fund activity that duplicates or cuts across national policy. 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.

The specific objective to be supported under this Investment Priority is set out in the table below:

Specific Objective	Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support
To address the digital divide, by providing access to information and services, through digital technologies	<p>The additional support from this investment priority will help digitally marginalised people to gain access to online services and information. It will also improve the capacity of people to engage in the digital society, including helping them to stay engaged throughout any further local / national restrictions due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Activities to be supported are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loan of digital devices to ESF participants to allow internet access • The provision of data, enabling access to the internet • Human resource to assist participants to set up the equipment and understand basic functions (e.g. start up, charging the device, using the data allowance, accessing the internet).

1.2 Development Need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 4, Investment Priority 4.1 of the Operational Programme, and which meets the **development need** expressed in the text below.

- It is estimated that approximately 1.9m households in the UK do not have access to the internet, and are digitally excluded, resulting in inequality for those who cannot access information and services throughout the COVID-19 lockdown and continued social distancing measures.
- In the fight against COVID-19 a number of services (including information and advice) have moved their primary contact to online channels, widening the already existing digital divide – those that have access to the internet versus those that don't.
- Digital exclusion is not always the single barrier facing individuals, and often correlates with other inter-related issues such as unemployment, low pay and lower educational attainment.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted this divide, and accelerated the need to address it – in tandem with the other support the ESF programme can offer.
- If not addressed, this divide will only continue to widen, and will result in high levels of inequality in the population if not addressed now.

- This Call seeks to address two of the main 'access' issues associated with digital exclusion.
- The first is that of having physical access to the internet, i.e. a device that will allow the user to access the internet. The second is the issue of data poverty, which can act as a barrier to creating a digitally inclusive society - just having the device is often not enough, due to the cost of data and the often unaffordable costs of home internet access. Internet access in the home is only available through long-term broadband / data contracts, which are often unaffordable for those on lower incomes, and 'pay as you go' services often attract a 'poverty premium' in that they are more expensive per byte of data than would be the case through 12 month or 2 year contracts.
- Data poverty is a key digital issue today since it acts as barrier to a digitally inclusive society and it further entrenches inequality and marginalisation.
- Therefore, this Call also seeks to provide a data allowance to participants, truly enabling them to get online, in order to access information and services (such as Government advice on the pandemic, DWP's 'Find A Job' service, mental health and counselling support services, online shopping for those vulnerable / shielding etc.)

Call Outline

- Through this call the Managing Authority is seeking applications for 'Lump Sum' based ESF projects to deliver digital support to ESF participants in Priority Axis 1 and Priority Axis 2 Investment Priority 2.1. Participants supported through Investment Priority 2.2 are not eligible for support from this call. The support delivered through this call will be in addition to the support they are receiving through their existing projects.
- Applications are welcome from existing ESF Grant Recipients and new applicants. This can also include additional activity to projects which are currently being assessed by the ESF Managing Authority.
- This additional activity must be wholly focussed on the loan of equipment and provision of data to existing ESF participants who would not otherwise have access to the internet, as complimentary to existing ESF provision. Eligible costs will therefore cover: the equipment / data and the provision of human resource to distribute the equipment and enable the participant to 'set up' and start to use that equipment. Longer term digital support and training to access online services should be provided through existing ESF project activity.
- The delivery of the actual activity to each participant is therefore expected to be of very short duration. However, projects are expected to run for up to 12 months, thereby providing more time to identify and support existing ESF participants with the means to access services via the internet.
- No upper or lower financial limit will be applied to project applications made against this Call. This will enable smaller, locally based organisations to apply for funding and also provides scope for larger organisations to apply to deliver larger scale projects where they have identified sufficient demand for provision.

- To reflect the expectation for projects to run for up to 12 months, the “lump sum” element will be divided into quarters and each quarter will be classed as a separate, stand-alone “lump sum”. Projects will be required to accurately forecast the outputs they expect to achieve in each quarter in their application. It must be noted that, as a ‘lump sum’ project, if an organisation anticipates supporting, for example, 100 participants through the provision of the equipment and data in a quarter, but only supports 95 participants, the project will not be able to draw down any funding for that quarter or roll forward those participant numbers to be included in the next quarter. Equally, any over-achievement against forecast in any quarter will not be eligible for additional funding and cannot be rolled forward to be included in the next quarter.
- Each project will be required to submit claims for payment for each separate quarter’s activity as set out in the Funding Agreement.
- Applications are invited to deliver the activity across England, excluding London.

Procurement

Procurement rules will apply to organisations who are ‘Contracting Authorities’. Applicants must therefore follow the requirements set out in the [Public Contracts Regulation 2015](#) and the [ESIF National Procurement Requirements](#).

Consortia/Partnership Applications

The Managing Authority encourages applications 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 4, **Investment Priority 4.1 Addressing the Digital Divide in response to Coronavirus** of the European Social Fund Operational Programme and responds to the development need set out above and in Priority 4 of the Operational Programme.

This call aims to address the identified shortfalls listed in section 1.2, Development Need, above. Applications are invited from organisations to deliver short-term activity to existing ESF participants in addition to the ESF support they are currently receiving. The short-term activity will consist of projects procuring and loaning an appropriate device (e.g. tablet, laptop) and providing a minimum three-month allowance of data, provided via a data dongle, to existing ESF participants. The expectation is for one device and one data dongle to be provided per participant.

Activity will also include a small amount of set up support to enable users to understand functionality and get on line. Any further or on-going support to enable participants to access online services should be provided through the existing ESF provision. All activity to enable participants to receive the equipment and any initial set up support must be completed by the project end date as stipulated in the Funding Agreement. The Managing Authority recognises that for some participants, use of the data allowance will continue past the end date stipulated in the Funding Agreement, dependent on the date the dongle is provided.

Devices need to provide:

- Access to the internet and online services;
- Email account set up and access.

In addition, Projects will need to ensure appropriate levels of security and control are included on the device and should also be evidenced. This includes:

- Access controls such as the ability to limit administrator access;
- Software installation restrictions;
- Anti-virus / anti-phishing / anti-ransomware controls;
- Internet filtering to limit access to inappropriate websites;
- Device tracking;
- The facility to remotely wipe the device of data if required.

2. Call Requirements

<p>Indicative Fund Allocation:</p>	<p>Indicatively, through this Call the Managing Authority expects to notionally allocate remaining PA4 funds (£3.6m ESF) across all areas of England apart from London to fund the provision:</p> <p>Less Developed: £171,000 (4.75%) Transition: £844,920 (23.47%) More Developed: £2,584,080 (71.78%)</p> <p><i>Figures reflect remaining PA4 funds at Category of Region level following commitment of funds from the Digital Interventions Call launched in 2020.</i></p> <p><u>As this is a national measure, available to all ESF participants outside of London, all projects, regardless of where they operate, should use the above percentages to apportion their draft budget and claims between the Categories of Region.</u></p> <p>The Managing Authority reserves the right to decrease or increase the indicative allocation, or support more or</p>
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	fewer projects subject to the volume and quality of proposals received.
Maximum application level	<p>European Social Fund investment is intended to make a significant impact on local growth. Applications are expected to demonstrate appropriate scale and impact.</p> <p>As set out under “Call Outline”, no upper or lower financial limit will be applied to project applications made against this Call.</p>
Duration of project	As set out in para. 1.3 above, the activity is very short-term. It consists of the loan of a device and provision of data allowance to an ESF participant and some initial set-up support. Projects are expected to last for up to 12 months, with project activity divided into “lump sum” project quarters.
Geographical Scope	All interventions should be focused on activity and participants within England only
Specific call requirements	This is a call for ESF activity.
Call Deadlines	<p>For this specific call, applications will be appraised upon receipt, without waiting for the call to close. Applications submitted to the Managing Authority via the ECLAIMS IT system after 23:59 on the published call close date will not be considered.</p> <p>If you encounter any technical difficulties completing or submitting your Full Application via ECLAIMS, please send an email to E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK .</p> <p>Technical support is available Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to submit your application in good time to allow time to resolve any technical issues. Except in the unlikely event that there is a general failure of the system in the final hours, we will not normally extend the deadline for technical issues.</p> <p>If you do not already have ECLAIMS access, to avoid any unnecessary delays in submission of your Full Application, it is recommended that you submit new ECLAIMS access requests as early in the application process as possible by sending an email to E.CLAIMSSUPPORT@DWP.GOV.UK .</p>

	The Managing Authority reserves the right to reject applications which are incomplete or not submitted in a timely and compliant way.
Application selection	<p>The ESF Managing Authority will offer funding to those applications meeting the relevant Strategic Fit and Core Selection Criteria detailed in the Scoring Framework. In order to proceed to a Funding Agreement, applicants must meet all of the Strategic Fit and Core Selection Criteria elements within the appraisal process.</p> <p>Please note the ESF Managing Authority will not apply a numerical scoring methodology for this Investment Priority. If applications fail to meet any of the Strategic Fit or Core Selection Criteria elements, then projects cannot proceed to a Funding Agreement. Applicants should note that all elements must be met.</p>
Applicant proposals	These can only contain activities which are eligible for ESF.
Eligible match funding	<p>Applicants will need to have eligible match funding for the balance of costs, which must be from a source other than the European Union. The applicant will need to provide information to demonstrate that the operation is likely to have the required level of match funding in place at the point of formal approval. For this Call the following intervention rates will apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Developed region – 50%; • Transition region – 60%; • Less Developed region – 80%. <p>This means 50%, 40% and 20% of match funding is required respectively in each region. Based on the ESF values provided above, the match funding values for each Category of Region are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Developed region – £2,584,080; • Transition region – £563,280; • Less Developed region – £42,750. <p>Projects will be required to attribute total project costs, including match funding, using the notional allocation percentage splits set out above and summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Developed region – 71.78%; • Transition region – 23.47%; • Less Developed region – 4.75%. <p>More information and guidance to help projects calculate how to apportion costs and match funding accurately are provided in section 4 of this Call.</p>
Procurement	All procurement must be undertaken in line with EU regulations and following the guidance referenced under the “Procurement” paragraph above.

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:

Investment Priority	Investment Priority: 4.1 Addressing the Digital Divide in response to Coronavirus
Specific Objective	To address the digital divide, by providing access to information and services, through digital technologies
Indicative Actions	<p>ESF will not support activities that duplicate or replace existing support within national programmes, but may be used to support additional activities or target groups, including provision co-designed with local partners.</p> <p>Activities to be supported are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loan of digital devices to ESF participants to allow internet access • The provision of data, enabling access to the internet • Human resource to assist participants to set up the equipment and understand basic functions (e.g. start up, charging the device, using the data allowance, accessing the internet)

Outputs Table

NOTE: When recording Output figures in ECLAIMS, projects will need to apportion them using the notional allocation percentage splits as set out in “Indicative Fund Allocation” above and also in para. 4.2 below, regardless of where the activity has been delivered. Please ensure you select the correct, relevant Category of Region suffix i.e. L = Less Developed, T = Transition, MD = More Developed.

ID	Output Indicator	Target values for this call
CV30	Value of ESF actions to combat or counteract the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (total public cost)	£6,790,110. This comprises of £3,600,000 ESF plus £3,190,110 match funding applied. at the intervention rates set out in this document.
CV31 Total Participants	Number of participants supported in combating or counteracting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic	We aim to support up to 11,300 ESF participants through this Call and will apply the following split as per the published Operational Programme.

Outputs Rationale

Applicants must explain in detail in their Full Application how they have estimated each of the outputs for their project (as set out above), demonstrating clearly how each of the proposed outputs directly links to their specific project activities and objectives. The related output figures need to be consistent, for example the value for CV30 should equal the total project cost. The value for CV31 should equal the number of participants supported through Investment Priority 4.1.

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

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. All operations will be required to collect data and report progress against the deliverables with their claim. However, as this is a lump sum call, where an operation underperforms against their deliverables they will not be paid (see Call Outline section, bullet point 5).

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 published alongside this Call.

4.1 Compliance and Eligibility

When developing an application, Applicants should refer to the Lump Sum Digital Inclusion Call guidance published alongside this Call which includes the eligibility criteria specifically relating to activity delivered as a result of this Call. 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 further supporting information requirements (set out in 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 80% (depending on category of region and as set out in Part 2 – Call Requirements). This means ESF can contribute up to 80% in the Less Developed region, up to 60% in the Transition region and up to 50% in the More Developed region of the total eligible project costs, subject to State Aid regulations. The remaining portion of project costs 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.

As set out in earlier in this published Call, as this is an England wide measure, projects will be required to attribute total project costs and participant numbers across all three Categories of Region, regardless of where the project or participants are based, using the Programme level percentage splits set out in Part 2. This enables all Categories of Region to have equal access to the available funding and removes any restrictions caused by where participants live or where the project is based.

The following example sets out how projects costs are attributed across all Categories of Region for a project with total costs of £1,000,000:

- £47,500 Less Developed total cost (attributable to this CoR). This comprises 80% ESF (£38,000) and 20% match (£9,500); and
- £234,700 Transition total cost (attributable to this CoR). This comprises 60% ESF (£140,820) and 40% match (£93,880); and
- £717,800 More Developed total cost (attributable to this CoR). This comprises 50% ESF (£358,900) and 50% match (£358,900).

In percentage terms, applying the Programme level percentage splits and intervention rates set out in Part 2, the figures are as follows:

- 4.75% of the total project costs attributed to Less Developed – 3.8% of the £1m is ESF value (£38,000) and 0.95% (£9,500) is match funding. This totals 4.75% (£47,500); and
- 23.47% of the total project costs attributed to Transition – 14.082% of the £1m is ESF value (£140,820) and 9.388% is match funding (£93,880). This totals 23.47% (£234,700); and
- 71.78% of the total project costs attributed to More Developed – 35.89% of the £1m is ESF value (£358,900) and 35.89% is match funding (£358,900). This totals 71.78% (£717,800).

The Managing Authority has created a simple Excel workbook to enable projects to easily calculate and attribute project costs and match funding at Category of Region level. This is published alongside this Call.

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 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

This Call seeks to address digital poverty and exclusion for some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. Activity delivered as a result of the Call seeks to address inequality in terms of increasing access to the growing number of services, including employment support, delivered on-line. Projects should apply flexibility to the type of device loaned and ensure any individual requirements or accessibility issues are covered when procuring and issuing the equipment. The procurement arrangements as set out in this document will enable projects to secure devices which are fit for purpose and support equality of access to on-line services for all participants.

Whilst this Call seeks applications for projects to run for up to 12 months, the actual activity to provide the device and data allowance to a participant will still be very short-term and time-bound. As a result, projects will not be required to provide specific evidence relating to cross cutting themes such as equal opportunities or sustainable development policies.

4.5 State Aid & Revenue Generation

Applicants are required, in the Full Application, to provide a view on how their proposal complies with State Aid law. Applicants must ensure that projects comply with the law on State Aid.¹ Grant funding to any economic undertaking which is state aid can only be awarded if it is compatible aid, in that it complies with the terms of a notified scheme or is covered by the De Minimis Regulation. Guidance for grant recipients, explaining more about State Aid, is available; it is important that Applicants take responsibility for understanding the importance of the State Aid rules and securing their full compliance with them throughout the project, if it is selected into the Programme.

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

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.

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

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 a 'Lump Sum' basis. However, equipment / data devices must be procured in line with the guidance set out in this document and 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 Grant Recipients 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.-The effective date for incurring eligible ESF expenditure will be the day after the date that the application was submitted. Any expenditure incurred by an ESF project prior to this date is ineligible.

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

5. Application Process & Prioritisation Methodology

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

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

Applicants should follow the Lump Sum Digital Inclusion Call guidance published alongside this Call. The guidance includes step-by-step details of how to record your Full Application information in ECLAIMS, as well as guidance on the depth and content expectations.

Following the call closing date, applications will 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.

It is essential that applicants read the application guidance, and ensure submissions fully meet all aspects detailed in this Published Call. All applicants will be notified whether their submission has been approved for funding.

Non-public sector Applicants may be subject to due financial diligence checks. Please refer to Section 8 “Further Supporting Information” for the documentation required.

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 in order 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.

7. Key Reference Documents

When developing your Full Application, it is recommended that you refer to the applicant guidance provided specifically for this Call.

8. Further Supporting Information

The appraisal will be undertaken on the basis of the Full Application information submitted by the applicant using the ECLAIMS IT system. Applicants are also required to provide:

- **An Anti-Fraud Statement** (a statement on how you will deal with suspected fraud in your organisation and if appropriate, with your sub-contractors);
- **A risk assessment** to include mitigating actions to manage the risk of loss of equipment for participants and staff;
- **A documented procedure** for the allocation of the equipment to participants, verifying how their activity links to existing ESF provision and documents the expectations of how the equipment will be treated once it is handed out.

If your organisation is a private or voluntary and community sector organisation or a Further Education College, you must upload:

- Proof of existence - Certificate of Incorporation, Charities Registration, VAT Registration Certificate or alternate form of incorporation documentation.

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 applicant guidance published alongside this call.

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	23 April 2021
Deadline for submission of Full Application via the ECLAIMS IT System	23:59 04 June 2021

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