



England ERDF and ESF Programme 2014-20:

Questions & Answers for Greater Birmingham & Solihull (GB&S) applicants

The Government has launched the Calls for Proposals across England for the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This includes the Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GB&S) area.

The 2014-20 ESF and ERDF programmes are single, England-wide programmes. There are no GB&S specific rules and guidance for applicants. All guidance and rules can be found via the Government's website www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding

This Q&A document is updated on a regular basis to reflect the latest position on the 2014-20 ERDF, ESF and EAFRD programmes, known collectively as the ESIF Growth Programme for England.

If you require further guidance relating to the latest August 2015 Calls for Proposals, please email esif@solihull.gov.uk or go to the GB&S LEP website.

- [Overview](#) (Q1-5)
- [Applying for Funding](#) (Q6-42)
- [Governance](#) (Q43-47)
- [ERDF specific](#) (Q55-67)
- [ESF specific](#) (Q48-54)
- [Match Funding](#) (Q68-70)
- [Further advice / General Q&As](#) (Q71-91)
- [Additional Information Inc. hyperlinks to key documentation](#)

Overview

1. Where can I find the Greater Birmingham and Solihull European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) strategy?

The GB&SLEP's strategy can be found here. <http://centrefenterprise.com/european-funding-strategy-consultation/>

It sets out the types of activities that may be funded by ESF and ERDF and the element of EAFRD in the growth programme. The GB&SLEP area ESIF is expected to change as a result of the national Operational Programmes being signed off. The focus of the activities will remain mainly unchanged apart from Priority 5, which has been removed at the request of national Government. The refreshed ESIF is expected by Spring 2016.

2. Where can I find details of ESF and ERDF operational programmes?

The programmes launched on 20 March 2015.

The current versions of the Operational Programme are available on the Gov.UK website.

- [ESF Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020](#)
- [ERDF Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020](#)
- [EAFRD Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020](#)



3. How much ESF/ERDF money does the GB&SLEP programme have?

The Government has notionally allocated €258 million to the GB&S LEP across 2014-20. The allocation will vary as the Euro: Sterling exchange rate fluctuates.

4. I have received funding under the 2007-13 programme; can I obtain funding under the new programme?

No reason why not. However, this will not be automatically granted as there are no transition arrangements; the 2007-13 and 2014-20 are separate programmes. Although an organisation may have previously received funding under the 2007-13 programmes, either directly as a Grant Recipient or as a partner, it does not mean the organisation will be successful under the new 2014-20 programme.

5. Will there be a gap between my 2007-13 funding coming to an end and applying for funding under 2014-20?

Yes, this may well arise. The delay in approving the programmes will have a knock-on effect for some organisations. The ERDF programme launched in March 2015, Funding Agreements are unlikely to be issued before Autumn 2015, with first ERDF payments made to organisations probably early in 2016

Applying for funding

6. What funding is available?

Only certain types of activities can be funded by ESF and ERDF. Details about the funding available can be found in the 'Calls for Proposals' documents at <https://www.gov.uk/england-2014-to-2020-european-structural-and-investment-funds>

The high-level basis for deciding which activities can be supported are set out in the ESF and ERDF Operational programmes:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-european-regional-development-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020>

7. Am I eligible to apply for ESF and ERDF funding?

Please refer to the National Eligibility Rules, available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents

ESF and ERDF is not awarded to individuals.



European Union

European Structural and Investment Funds



8. How do I apply for funding?

ERDF and ESF

Funding opportunities covering the LEP areas in England for all of the European Regional Development Fund, part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and part of the European Social Fund are available.

Apply through the [Funding Finder](#)

ESF only:

The GB&SLEP area (apart from the transitional are Cannock, Lichfield, East Stafford and Tamworth) have decided not to opt in to national provision. Calls for ESF will be published on the national website and applicants will provide their own match funding.

Calls covering the transitional areas through Co-financing (European Social Fund only)

Also known as opt-in, means that European Social Fund can cover up to 100% of an approved project's eligible costs.

Read details on this approach, the opt-in organisations and how to apply through this route on our [partner page](#)

Guidance and forms for provision procured by the ESF Opt-in organisations (DWP, SFA and Big Lottery Fund) will be found on the websites of the relevant organisations. For some youth provision and the majority of adult activity procured under the Skills Funding Agency organisations must be registered on the [register of training organisations](#).

9. How much ERDF or ESF can an organisation apply for?

ERDF: For the Calls for Proposals launched in March 2015, there was a £500,000 minimum ERDF threshold; this is in line with the Governments recommendation. This means that the minimum value of a project will be £1million, as the applicant organisation must provide an equivalent amount in match-funding. Information on match funding can be found in the National Eligibility Rules.

ESF: There was a £50,000 minimum ERDF threshold. This means that the minimum value of a project would need to be £100,000.

The lifecycle of a project can be accessed by following the link below

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/448495/ERDF_and_ESF_Lifecycle_of_a_Project_270715_v2_final.pdf

10. Will applications for ESF and ERDF be made electronically?

Yes, the Government is establishing a new IT system which we understand will be available in late summer 2016.



11. Where can I find an application form?

Details on how to apply are available from each call specification

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-outline-application>

12. Will there be one application form for both directly-funded ESF and ERDF projects?

Yes. Applications will be made online. We understand that an applicant will be able to select 'ESF', 'ERDF' or both, and the relevant, tailored questions will appear on the screen.

13. When can I submit an application for funding?

The first calls for applications were launched on 20 March 2015 and the second round of calls was launched in August.

Details on all open calls are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds>

14. Will I be able to apply for funding retrospectively?

In other words, seek funding from a 'start date' prior to the date of the funding agreement? For ERDF projects and ESF directly-funded projects, it is unlikely that any expenditure prior to approval of an Outline Application by the Managing Authority will be considered as eligible and such expenditure will be 'at risk' until a Funding Agreement is in place. Further guidelines are set out in the eligibility rules which are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents>

15. If my project is successful in being awarded ERDF when should I plan for it to start?

A project can safely start to disburse funds once a Funding Agreement is in place.

Given that there is a two stage process of appraisal. The first Call was launched in March with a deadline for Outline Applications in May. If successful, Applicants were invited to submit a Full Application in early September. Funding Agreements are unlikely to be issued for successful projects until autumn and first payments most likely in early 2016 if not later. Full details including firm dates for submissions are issued with the first Call for projects.

16. How are the 2014-20 programmes different from 2007-13?

The ESF and ERDF programmes are both England-wide programmes for 2014-20. For 2007-13, the West Midlands had its own ERDF programme, as did other English regions.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (including the GB&SLEP) and partners are playing a role in the new programmes. LEPs have been allocated notional sums of ERDF/ESF money for 2014-20.

The activities that will be supported by the new programmes are not a straight read-across from 2007-13; the activities are based on the LEP's key objectives for the GB&SLEP.



17. What outputs and results are projects required to deliver in return for receiving funding?

A key requirement of any organisation receiving ESF and ERDF is the delivery of targets. The Government has worked through its proposals on the suite of Outputs and Results, including targets, with the European Commission as part of its negotiations.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/462724/ERDF_Output_Indicator_Definitions_Guidance_230915.pdf

For ESF there will be a suite of Output and Result indicators. The primary indicators for ESF are not expected to largely be different from the previous programming period. The core results will look at the number of participants into education, employment and/or training. Note: we are awaiting guidance from Government on Outputs, Results and definitions which may change.

18. If the European Commission is now more interested in a results orientated, output measured programme, will applicants be encouraged to reference payments-by-results models for ERDF projects?

We are not expecting the Government to introduce payments-by-results-type methods for ERDF.

19. How can I work out my output targets as the Call for Proposals documents don't provide any numbers or benchmarks?

The Government has not yet agreed local-targets across England. However, the national-level targets are included in the draft ESF and ERDF Operational Programmes.

Applicants should forecast likely outputs based on the level of ESF or ERDF they are seeking, and taking into account discretionary factors. Applicants will need to demonstrate value for money. Applicants must be realistic with their target levels; don't over or under-pitch the numbers in the Outline Application form.

20. Can a single Outline Application cover more than one Priority Axis?

No. A separate application must be completed for each Priority Axis.

21. Can a single Outline Application cover more than one Investment Priority?

Yes, this is allowable. But applicants should ensure their proposals remain focussed.

22. Can a single Outline Application cover both ESF and ERDF?

No. Separate application forms are required for ESF and ERDF.

23. If my application is successful in being awarded ERDF when should I plan to start activity?

Funding Agreements are unlikely to be issued for successful projects until late autumn 2015 at the earliest. On average, it takes about nine months from launching a Call to issuing a Funding Agreement. If an application reaches the Full Application stage, the Managing Authority (DCLG) will discuss the timings for project start dates with applicants.



24. Will I be able to apply for funding 'retrospectively'?

The earliest date from which activity can start is the date an Outline Application is approved by the Managing Authority (DWP for ESF and DCLG for ERDF). So the applicant could eventually claim ERDF and ESF from that point, before a Funding Agreement is signed; at the applicant's own risk.

25. What is the deadline for submitting my application form?

The Calls for Proposals documents for the GB&S LEP specify the dates. Applications submitted after these dates will be rejected. There is no appeals process.

26. What happens to my application once I've submitted it?

The Managing Authority (DWP for ESF and DCLG for ERDF) will assess the Outline Application against the national Selection Criteria. The advice of the GB&S ESIF Committee will be sought.

27. Are there similar programmes available for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales?

Yes, there are similar programmes (high level information only).

Details of Scottish Programme:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404>

Details of Welsh Programme:

<http://wefo.wales.gov.uk/programmes/post2013/?skip=1&lang=en>

Details of Northern Ireland Programme:

http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/finance/european-funding/content - european_funding-future-funding.htm

28. What happens when an Outline project is appraised?

At Outline stage, there are staff funded by current-programme Technical Assistance who can provide advice, first point of contact is esif@solihull.gov.uk and DCLG will also advise where suitable.

We do recommend that you contact the ESIF mailbox as staff will be able to direct you to useful resources and put you in contact with the Thematic Leads for the GB&S LEP area for each Priority Axes.

At full application stage, DCLG's Growth Delivery Team (GDT) for the Midlands will be the lead contact, though there will not be a 'Project sponsor' or other dedicated project development support as there was in the previous programme as resources do not allow for this.

For most calls, applications will not be assessed until the call has closed. The ESIF Committee will provide comments on strategic fit, and the DCLG GDT team will assess the Outline based on the published gateway criteria and selection criteria. Projects that pass Outline assessment and are selected will be invited to proceed to Full application, subject to budget availability. There is no appeals process.



29. Will feedback be provided for unsuccessful applications?

DCLG will co-ordinate this

30. Will applicants be able to resubmit failed but improved Outlines in future calls?

Yes

31. Will there be an ERDF partner search form?

Yes. This will be published on the [GB&SLEP website](#) once available

32. I am based in the GB&S area, but wish to apply for ESF or ERDF elsewhere in England. Is this possible?

Yes. The 2014-20 ESF and ERDF programme is a single, England-wide programme. Details about Calls for Proposals throughout England can be found at www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding

33. I am not based in the GB&S area, but wish to apply for ESF or ERDF in there. Is this possible?

Yes. The 2014-20 ESF and ERDF programme is a single, England-wide programme. However, activity delivered in the GB&S area is expected to benefit the Greater Birmingham and Solihull region. It is recommended that you contact the ESIF team at Solihull MBC if you are thinking of applying to the GB&SLEP area funding

34. I am unclear under which ESF or ERDF Priority Axis and/or Investment Priority should I apply?

It is the applicant's decision under which Priority Axis and/or Investment Priority it submits an Outline Application.

35. The Priority Axes and Investment Priorities don't align with the GB&S ESIF Strategy.

No, they don't. The ESIF Strategy (which sets out how the GB&S Enterprise Panel wishes to use ERDF and ESF) was drafted prior to the publication of the English ESF and ERDF Operational Programme documents – which themselves remain in draft.

Applicants must submit applications against the ESF and ERDF Operational Programmes. The GB&S ESIF Strategy provides context for the types of activities sought for the Greater Birmingham & Solihull region, which applicants should reflect in their Outline Applications.

36. Where can we get advice on legal and state aid matters?

DCLG recommends that professional advice is sought for legal, state aid and procurement matters. The new Outline Application form has more onus on these aspects than in the previous programme as they are key to project eligibility in the long term.

It is likely that all ERDF funding for businesses will form a state aid. It is up to the individual applicant to determine what exemption they wish to apply in their application. Many applications will fall under Block Exemption or 'de minimus'. For further information please see the [BIS website](#)



DCLG have also published a state aid guidance note for applicants:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-project-requirements-and-publicity-materials>

37. How is the LEP supporting the Community and Voluntary Sector to access the funds?

We have held a specific road-show for the CVS and they are invited to all the roadshows – happy to work with the sector on this.

38. Are project outputs limited to the West Midlands?

No, as it is a national programme, project outputs could occur across the country, as long as the LEPs funding are aware, it may be that LEP strategic fit is satisfied by this e.g. sector supply chain support or increasing use of a local demonstrator by national SMEs

39. What do I do if my project covers more than one LEP area?

To come forward an application must respond to a specific call. In the March round, the majority of calls are at LEP level. The applicant will need to ensure that the activity they wish to support is included within the calls relating to the LEP areas they wish to cover. They will need to submit an application to each of the LEP level calls setting out the finances and deliverables relating to delivery in that area.

If approved this will lead to an over-arching funding agreement with annexes re delivery in each relevant LEP area.

In the future, LEPs may also choose to collaborate on joint calls. In the case of a joint call, a single application could be submitted, although the finances and deliverables would still need to be split by LEP area.

40. If I have a cross-LEP project will I need to apportion management and administration cost?

Yes, you would be likely to need to apportion costs, although this can be looked at on a case by case basis.

41. Do beneficiaries (SMEs) have to be within the GB&SLEP area?

In terms of eligibility, ERDF / ESF allocations are national and projects are not bound by (post code) location. However, in reviewing applications within its area the GB&S LEP will be mindful of its priorities and will wish to see impacts within the GB&S LEP area.

Projects could potentially be delivered across LEP areas, in which case GB&S LEP is also open to work across boundaries on a single bid. However, the project should focus on the GB&SLEP area because the indicative allocation is for this LEP area. There is some distinction between categories of region. For instance, the GB&SLEP area contains two categories of region: transition (Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth) and more developed (every where else). Activity in these two areas needs to be accounted for separately.



42. Can an application be across more than one LEP area?

Yes, and this may well produce a more natural fit and deliver a more cohesive project.

Partner applicants need to think realistically about the workable geography when considering a cross-LEP application

Governance

43. Briefly, who's who?

The Government is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the ESF and ERDF programmes in England.

The Government tasked Local Enterprise Partnerships with setting up bodies for overseeing the ESIF programme in their areas. The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership area ESIF Committee has been established.

44. What is the role of LEPs for ESF and ERDF?

Government states that Local Enterprise Partnerships (including the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP) will provide strategic oversight of the ESIF strategy's implementation and delivery. Government has tasked each LEP with establishing a sub-group of the national, EC-regulatory Programme Monitoring Committee, the Growth Programme Board. This is known as the ESIF Subcommittee. It brings together a balanced representative cross-section of the Programme's stakeholders

45. Who will decide which projects in the GB&SLEP area receive funding?

The Managing Authorities (DCLG for ERDF, DWP for ESF and DEFRA for EAFRD) decide which projects receive funding and it is the Managing Authorities who will enter into contract with successful applicants. The GB&S ESIF Committee will play an important advisory role in identifying the strategic 'fit' of Outline and Full applications to support the decision-making process.

46. Will there be an appeals process if an application is unsuccessful?

The Government has decided that there will be no appeals process at the Outline or Full Application stage. If an applicant is unsuccessful then, providing a similar call for proposals is launched in the future, it is conceivable that an applicant can re-apply.

47. Do you envisage any change in status or role of LEPs as preferred partners of Government if there is a change of Government in May 2015?

We assume that the LEP role will continue; but cannot predict possible governance changes by any incoming Government.



ESF-specific questions

48. Is the LEP position on Opt Ins having a negative effect on the ability of the voluntary sector to utilise ESIF Funds?

No. The agreed approach is to have an open call for applications with applicants bringing their match funding to an application. It is possible that partnership based bids may come forward utilising eligible match such as talent match. It is also possible that lead applicants will sub contract delivery activity to others.

49. What ESF programmes are being developed and what groups will be targeted?

The ESF programme is currently being developed; progress to date has established that it will be split into 3 broad areas; provision for young people with a specific focus on 15-24 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), adult employment provision and adult skills provision.

50. What is the Youth Employment Initiative?

In addition to the main ESF allocation, Birmingham and Solihull has received an additional allocation for the EU-wide Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) targeted at areas that have a youth unemployment rate of 25% or above

51. How much ESF can an organisation apply for?

For ESF the minimum value is £50,000 ESF (£100,000 total). This applies to the first round of calls in March. Values may be revised in later calls.

Financial assessments of applicant organisations are carried out find out if a business will have the necessary match required to deliver the project, and check they have the resources to cash flow the project without threat to the financial viability of the organisation.

52. If I want to apply for funding, do I have to provide match funding?

Yes

53. How long can an ESF project last for?

3 years

54. I am an ESF supply chain provider delivering services to unemployed under old scheme would we come to you concerning transition arrangements if any.

There will be no 'transition arrangements'; the 2007-13 and 2014-20 programmes are separate.



ERDF-specific questions

55. Can you explain the rationale for the split of the budget across each of the ERDF investment themes described in the ESIF strategy?

It is based on similar allocations to the 2007-13 ERDF programme. But, dependent on Government and European Commission negotiations, the amounts are subject to change.

56. Can charities be beneficiaries of ERDF if they are also registered companies and meet SME criteria?

Applicant organisations for ERDF don't have to be SMEs themselves; for example local authorities and universities are likely to apply for ERDF. To be eligible to apply, an organisation must be a legal entity and have enough resource to cashflow the project, and cover clawback in the event of default. The applicant body is not able to make profit directly from the project.

Generally, the applicant body is an intermediary body, such as University or local authority, which use the ERDF to provide support to small and medium sized enterprises as the end beneficiaries. Charities and social enterprises can be end beneficiaries of ERDF projects.

57. Which organisations can apply for ERDF?

Please refer to the National Eligibility Rules, available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents

It is worth noting that ERDF does not fund organisations directly; rather it funds organisations which can, in turn, provide support (such as business, technical, finance (loans/equity)) to SMEs to help them grow i.e. 'intermediary bodies'.

To be eligible to apply, an organisation must be a legal entity and have enough resource to cashflow the project, and cover clawback in the event of default. The applicant body is not able to make profit directly from the project. Individuals cannot apply for ERDF or ESF.

58. Can ERDF projects support SMEs that are social enterprises?

Yes.

59. How much ERDF can an organisation apply for?

For ERDF, projects must be a minimum of £500,000 ERDF (£1,000,000 total) and for ESF the minimum value is £50,000 ESF (£100,000 total). This applies to the first round of calls in March. Values may be revised in later calls.

Financial assessments of applicant organisations are carried out to find out if a business will have the necessary match required to deliver the project, and check they have the resources to cash flow the project without threat to the financial viability of the organisation.



60. Is there a minimum turnover limit for an organisation aiming to bid as a lead partner?

An organisation will have to provide evidence of whether they would be able to repay the grant in the event of any claw back situation – which could include the whole of the grant.

Financial Due Diligence checks will be undertaken on non-public sector applicant organisations during the application process. These checks happen at outline stage.

61. How long can an ERDF project last for?

The period is flagged up as 2014-2020 but the funding is actually available to be spent up to 2023. We have a three year 'overhang' period because the Commission accepts that the majority of projects will start late. We expect most projects to deliver for three years.

62. Can I extend my 2007-13 ERDF project to bridge the gap with my 2014-20 project starting?

No. Projects cannot be extended because 2007-13 funding is already 100% committed or no longer available. Also, there should be no assumption from applicants that 2007-13 activity will be repeated/extended/continued for 2014-20 as they are separate programmes.

63. When will the first Priority Axis 5 (Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management) and 6 (Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency) calls be issued?

The LEP will have the option to include a budget for these Priority Axes in the next set of calls expected in June / July this year.

64. When will the Financial Engineering Instruments call be issued?

This is not yet known.

65. Is Priority 2 'Enhancing Access To, And Use And Quality Of, ICT' not supported by ERDF in the GB&SLEP area?

This activity was not prioritised in the GB&SLEP Strategy. Consequently, it has no ERDF budget set against it and there will be no calls for activity for this priority within the GB&SLEP area at the present time. This area will be reviewed and people will be informed if this priority comes back on stream later this year. However, Priority Axis 3 (Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)), can support ICT improvements as part of SME expansion/modernisation. Though Priority 3 is not particularly for laying broadband, if businesses need greater/faster access, this could form part of their project.

66. How can a small businesses access funding if their project does not meet the minimum ERDF/ESF amounts?

For ESF they can complete a Partner Search form, which is available at the road show or can be obtained by emailing the esif@solihull.gov.uk mailbox. This will enable organisations to get in touch with the intention of finding project partners. This Partner Search document will be posted on the GB&SLEP website, as will an ERDF one once available. In the meantime for ERDF, enquires can be emailed to esif@solihull.gov.uk.



67. Can large businesses (not SME) make an application for ERDF / ESF?

The whole ERDF programme is primarily targeted at SMEs, Priority Axis 3 is only for SMEs. If a large company wants to deliver a scheme which supports SMEs, they can do this on a not-for-profit basis (no ERDF applicant can profit from a project) However, there is more availability for access for funding for larger businesses under Priority Axis 1 (Research & Innovation) and there is also some flexibility available for larger businesses under Priority Axis 4 (Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors). Again, if applying to lead a project, this must be on a not-for-profit basis.

Matching funding

68. If I want to apply for funding, do I have to provide matching funding?

Yes. It is a prerequisite for receiving ERDF and ESF (non Opt-in) that match funding is available and confirmed. Applicants will need to secure eligible match funding. Usually half of a project's funding comes from ERDF, the other 50% from other sources.

ESF can contribute up to 50% of the total eligible project costs, subject to State Aid regulations. The remaining 50% must come from other eligible sources. A lower rate will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances, and only when it has been agreed in advance by the Managing Authority.

Evidence of match funding by the applicant (and any Delivery Partners) must be submitted with the Full Application.

69. Can matching funding be in-kind or cash money only?

For ERDF, 'Contributions in kind' are ineligible as match funding, except for the donation of land and buildings subject to certain conditions which are outlined in the ERDF Eligibility Rules.

Exceptionally, volunteer time can be used as match funding in the European Social Fund but it is traditionally an area where organisations have struggled to meet the evidence requirements. Organisations proposing to use volunteer time as match must satisfy the Managing Authority during the appraisal process that they have the resources to keep and provide the necessary evidence supporting the use of this form of match funding. Details are provided in the ESF Eligibility Rules.

Contribution of staff time as match funding may be included for ERDF or ESF but only if the employing organisation is either the lead applicant or a named delivery partner in the application.

For more details see the eligibility rules for ERDF and ESF which are available from the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents>

70. Can projects be match-funded with fees from the businesses its supports?

Please refer to the National Eligibility Rules at www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents



Further advice and guidance

71. Is there a formula to work out the admin resource requirement for an ERDF project? Is it based on project volume or types of outcomes?

No, as this depends on the complexity of the project, the outputs, the resources of the lead applicant and delivery partners.

But based on the existing experience of projects we strongly recommend there is a dedicated 100% project manager and dedicated 100% admin resource as a minimum.

72. For ERDF, are there any excluded sectors e.g. retail?

Please see the National Eligibility Rules, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-assessment-documents

73. Government's rules don't provide definitive answers.

Where the rules do not give a definitive answer, applicants will need to make a judgement. As the 2014-20 programme is a single, England-wide programme, the Managing Authority (MA) will be following Government's rules; the MA cannot interpret the national rules.

If, for example, applicants are in doubt about the eligibility of a proposal, refer to the GB&S ESIF Strategy. This may shed light on the types of activity that can be funded. But remember: it is the activities in the Calls for Proposals (which mirror the ESF and ERDF Operational Programmes) which should be adhered to.

If, for example, applicants are unclear about technical or process issues (for example, the eligibility of match funding, or eligibility of costs) please contact esif@solihull.gov.uk.

74. Does a capital project have to have planning permission in place prior to submitting a project proposal?

Applicants will ideally have full planning permission and funding in place prior to submitting an application for ERDF. Projects may still be considered if project applicants have recently applied for planning permission or have outline planning permission in place; it will depend on the nature and complexity of the scheme proposed.

If it will be many months before permissions are likely to be in place, applicants may decide that ERDF is not an appropriate source of funding. Likewise the Managing Authority may deem that funds shouldn't be ring-fenced for a project that may not go ahead.

75. Can projects be co-financed with fees from the businesses its supports?

This depends how the project is structured. It is possible to include SME contributions as match funding provided that the contributions do not come in directly to the applicant body as income. Where it is seen as income, then the fee will be deducted from the eligible project costs.



76. How might other funds under the scope of the LEP be used to match fund ERDF applications?

Other funds under the scope of the LEP could be used as match funding subject to a project meeting the relevant funding criteria; more details on these other LEP funds

77. Will guidance to help applicants calculate value for money (VFM) be available?

We understand the Government is currently reviewing VFM principles and that details will be available in due course.

78. How strong is the focus on linking Horizon 2020 with ERDF?

The European Commission has suggested that European Structural and Investment Funds and other Commission Funds (e.g. Horizon 2020 – funds which are accessed direct to the EC) can be linked in the new programming period 2014-20. However, it appears that different EU funds cannot be used as match against one another, so the linkage could only be at the strategic level. Projects using Structural Funds and Horizon 2020, for example, would have to be careful not to cross fund elements of their project.

79. Can you explain how might the SME equity / loan fund work?

If we make ERDF funding available for equity and/or loan funds, this will be done through professional fund managers, which we will procure. Once the fund managers are in place they will receive and assess applications for funding directly from SMEs.

80. Are there any current businesses that are willing to work with SMEs in securing small contracts?

We have supported supply chain projects under the 2007-13 programme, the project managers of these projects may be able to support in this regard.

81. Are the disadvantaged urban areas (for the Infrastructure investment priority) defined?

There are no specific disadvantaged urban areas defined in the GB&S ESIF strategy.

82. Can you expand on what elements you are looking for in workspace and incubator projects?

We are awaiting confirmation from Government that workspace/incubation projects will be eligible for ERDF. European Court of Auditors report on incubators, sets out recommendations to the EC for incubator projects for the 14/20 programming periods.

83. For an incubator centre, what can be used for matching funding? Can rental income be used? Will existing buildings introduced be based on valuation of the building or the discounted rent...or any other?

We await guidance from Government, but the kinds of activities that are likely to be used as matching funding are: Purchase of land capped at 10% of project eligible cost, independent assessed value of the land/building, lead applicant cash funds, time of 100% project manager, private sector partner cash funds



84. Does a Capital project have to have planning permission in place prior to submitting a project proposal?

Until the ERDF Operational Programme is agreed by the European Commission it is unclear what capital activities will be allowable in the new programme. However, as an example, if incubator space was allowable those projects would ideally have full planning permission and funding in place and ready to go prior to submitting an application for ERDF. Projects may still be considered if project applicants have recently applied for planning permission or have outline planning permission in place; it will depend on the nature and complexity of the scheme proposed.

The application and claims process will be online. Certified true copies of claims / financial documentation is acceptable and will be stored on the ERDF online IT system.

85. What is the Audit Authority?

The designation of an Audit Authority (AA) is an EU requirement. In England, it comprises auditors within Government who provide an additional check on projects' expenditure after it has been incurred; and also check other aspects of project eligibility.

86. Will Community Led Local Development and Integrated Territorial Investment instruments be available in GB&S LEP Area?

The ESIF strategy states "...models of delivery including direct bidding, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) will be considered by the LEP. ITIs and CLLD are not currently foreseen as delivery mechanisms in GB&S LEP Area."

87. I have an idea for a project, but I'm not sure if it's eligible for funding?

To apply for funding, you will need to ensure your idea fits with the Call/specification. Anecdotally, lots of good ideas are not eligible for ESF or ERDF because they don't meet the call/specification criteria. Applicants are advised to

a) study the Call/specification criteria; and

b) work out what their organisation can deliver to support it. Ideas shouldn't be squeezed to fit ESF or ERDF; sometimes they just don't fit, and other sources of funding may be more appropriate.

The European Commission has devised an online checklist for identifying possible suitable sources of EU funding. Feel free to email ESIF@solihull.gov.uk. We are not able to advise which projects will/won't be successful, but can provide some pointers.

88. How long should projects be?

It is anticipated that projects should cover at least a three year programme of activity.

89. Where can I get help and support for accessing European funds?

All information will be posted on the [GB&SLEP website](#) as it becomes available. For advice / guidance please contact the esif@solihull.gov.uk Inbox and your query will be directed appropriately



European Union

European Structural and Investment Funds



90. How can I get experience of ERDF or managing EU projects?

One of the best ways to gain experience is by speaking to existing or previous recipients of ERDF funding. A list of organisations funded under the 2007-13 ERDF programme can be found here; you may like to approach one or more of them.

91. Where can third sector organisations receive support?

In the first instance, email ESIF@solihull.gov.uk

Links to key documentation and additional information

The details of all calls for proposals (open and closed) can be found on the Gov.UK website, where it is possible to search for calls by location, funding source, type or priority.

It is possible to sign up for information on the calls through dedicated email alerts from Gov.UK and the GB&S LEP web site.

[Programme guidance documents on selection criteria, eligibility rules, publicity requirements, funding agreements and state aid law](#) for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund can be found on this link.

Guidance and forms to apply for funding through the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund - [Outline Application](#) and [Full Application](#)

[Useful Resources](#) - Publicity materials, regulations and a glossary for organisations running European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund projects.

There are newsletters from GOV.UK and the GB&SLEP website that can be subscribed to which will give details on the nature and timing of the calls for funding applications.

Attendees at the roadshows/workshops will also be given updates on the above items as and when more information becomes available.

Additional Information

Solihull Council (SMBC) has set up a new dedicated mailbox to help people develop ESIF eligible projects or direct them to the relevant thematic groups. Whilst SMBC are not able to advise which projects will/won't be successful, it can provide some pointers. The mail box address is esif@solihull.gov.uk.

Further information relating to ESIF can be found on the following links:

GB&S LEP website - <http://centreofenterprise.com/european-funding-strategy-consultation/>

GOV.UK website - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-2014-to-2020-european-structural-and-investment-funds-growth-programme-handbook>.

Each LEP area has an 'ESIF committee' Chaired by the LEP and including HMG and representatives from across relevant sectors. Details of the management and governance arrangements can be found at www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding



European Union

European Structural and Investment Funds



Contact Details for Thematic Leads

Thematic Lead	Priority Axis (PA)
Pam Waddell	ERDF PA 1: Research and Innovation
Mark Reed	ERDF PA 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
Tara Verrell	ERDF PA 4: Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors ERDF PA 6: Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency
Rachel Egan	ESF PA 1 – Inclusive Labour Markets ESF PA 2 – Skills for Growth