



**European Union**

European Structural  
and Investment Funds

## **2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme**

### **Call for Proposals**

### **European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund**

## **Priority Axis 9 & 3: Technical Assistance**

<b>Managing Authority:</b>	<b>Department for Communities and Local Government Department for Work and Pensions</b>
<b>ESI Fund:</b>	<b>European Regional Development Fund European Social Fund</b>
<b>Priority Axis:</b>	<b>Priority Axis 9: Technical Assistance Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance</b>
<b>Call Reference:</b>	<b>OC00R15P 0027 (Priority Axis 9) OC00S15P 0028 (Priority Axis 3)</b>
<b>Call Open:</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> March 2015</b>
<b>Call Closes:</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b>  <b>Review Points:</b> <b>27<sup>th</sup> April 2015</b> <b>30<sup>th</sup> June 2015</b> <b>1<sup>st</sup> September 2015</b>

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# 1. Call Context

The 2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds bring the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development together into a single European Union Structural Investment Funds Growth Programme for England supporting the key growth priorities of innovation, research and development, support for small and medium enterprises, low carbon, skills, employment, and social inclusion.

The Funds are managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government for European Regional Development Fund, Department for Work and Pensions for ESF and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs for European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. These Departments are the Managing Authorities for each Fund. In London, the Greater London Authority acts as the 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. 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 European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy to aid the Managing Authority’s assessments at outline and full application stage.

This call responds to the needs as defined in the Operational Programmes for European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund and invites applications for projects which are looking to operate on both a local or national basis.

## 1.1 National Context

Technical Assistance funding is available to specifically support the administration and delivery of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Operational Programmes, ensuring that the activities which fall within the scope of these Programmes are managed, monitored and evaluated in line with the Common Provision Regulation, European Regional Development Fund and European Social

Fund regulations and the European Commission's delegated and implementing regulations.

The guidance note for external Applicants on applying for European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance can be found at in the [Technical Assistance guidance](#).

### **Specification for Outline Proposals for Technical Assistance Projects**

The regulatory framework for Technical Assistance is set out in both Article 59 of the Common Provisions Regulations (European Union No 1303/2013) and Commission Delegated Regulation 240/2014 (Chapter 6, Article 17).

The Operational and Delivery vehicles for both European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance Programmes are (i) Priority Axes 9 and 3 of the relevant Operational Programmes and (ii) the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance Strategies.

The objective of Technical Assistance is to support the efficient and compliant management and implementation of European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Programmes, as well as support robust governance, accountability and partnership engagement. This will help to ensure that Programme performance targets are achieved and that the delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds projects, comply with applicable law.

Through the calls for proposals and appraisals the Managing Authorities will ensure that only relevant projects are supported with Technical Assistance.

The examples set out below give an indication only of the type of projects which could be eligible for support:

### **Project Development and Capacity Building (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund (non-Opt-In)).**

Technical Assistance will support project development and ensure that management bodies, staff, partners, Applicants and suppliers are aware of their responsibilities and what's required of them.

- European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund advisory support to project Applicants on an organisational or sector led basis, to promote the design and development of compliant projects during the outline application stage of the business process model. This can, relate to part funding promotional material, resources and activities and the salary costs of individual(s) where added value can be demonstrated (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund);
- Where appropriate, offer continued advisory support for projects which have passed the outline application stage and are moving to the full application

stage of the business process, where it can be clearly demonstrated that the activities to be undertaken would not duplicate the functions of the Managing Authority, be eligible for funding and add value. This can relate to part-funding promotional material, resources and activities and the salary costs of individual(s) who are supporting the Managing Authority in ensuring that projects continue to be compliant i.e. that they have the correct systems in place (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund);

- Start-up costs for Financial Instruments (European Regional Development Fund);
- Undertake feasibility work which looks at the viability of activities (possibly those which will have an impact at Local Enterprise Partnership area level/Programme level) across a particular thematic and/ or geographical area – this will be in exceptional circumstances only, Applicants will need to clearly demonstrate why this activity cannot be supported through the relevant Thematic Objective/Priority Axis (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund);
- Support for Civil Society networks to support participation of voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the programme (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund);
- Preparatory support for Local Action Groups for Community Led Local Development (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund); and
- For Opt-In organisations, Technical Assistance can be used to support those additional activities which are over and above those already in place to meet the selection criteria for the award of Co-Financing Organisation status e.g. new management information system applications, relating to the new reporting requirements (on top of minimum regulatory requirements) or activities not identified at the start of the programme which require specific guidance or training (European Social Fund).

### **Promotion and Publicity - (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund).**

Publicity is an integral part of the programming strategy and the Managing Authority will ensure that the benefits of the funds are communicated to the wider public. To help achieve this Communication Strategies will be established for both the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Programme to be approved by the Growth Programme Board (Programme Monitoring Committee). The delivery of the strategies will be led by the Managing Authorities with support from the Intermediate Bodies, Opt-In organisations', the National Offender Management Service and other national and local partners (who will have a key role

to play in contributing to the strategies implementation). All projects will be required to comply with the publicity requirements of the European Union regulations.

Technical Assistance will be used to support Programme information and publicity through:

- Supporting partners in raising awareness and communicating programme and project activities through in-person network exchanges, newsletters, case studies other means of communication and across Local Enterprise Partnership area boundaries;
- Promoting cooperation, networking and exchange of best practice which could include sharing of best practice between Local Enterprise Partnership areas as well as other European Union funding programmes and
- Use of promotional events such as seminars, conferences and road shows to publicise bidding rounds, showcase European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund achievements and disseminate best practise.

All Technical Assistance projects will be assessed on their own individual merits against the core selection criteria used for all European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund applications submitted for support across the Programmes and against the appropriate regulations.

**Technical Assistance projects will initially be funded for a maximum of three years.**

**The Technical Assistance budget available during this round is £60 million for both the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund combined (subject to exchange rate).**

## 2. Call Overview

All applications are competitive. For this specific call, applications will be processed on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and 1st September 2015 to manage the flow of applications.

- Proposals can only contain activities which are eligible for European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund support;
- Proposals should fall within the scope of the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance guidance;
- Applicants will need to have eligible match funding in place for the balance of costs which must be from a source other than the European Union;
- Projects will initially be considered for a maximum of three years;
- Projects can cover either the whole or more than one Local Enterprise Partnership area or operate on a national basis;

- European Structural and Investment Funds Technical Assistance cannot be used to duplicate existing activities; and
- European Structural and Investment Funds can only be used to achieve additional activity. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that what they are proposing is additional to what would already have occurred.

#### **Activities which cannot be supported through Technical Assistance:**

**The list of activities which will not be supported is not exhaustive but gives an indication of the type of Technical Assistance activities which the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Managing Authorities would not look to support.**

- Activities which are not directly related to the delivery of the European Regional Development Fund or European Social Fund funds;
- General organisational administrative support;
- The co-ordination and management of European Regional Development Fund or European Social Fund activities through Local Enterprise Partnerships / European Structural and Investment Funds committees; and
- Using European Regional Development Fund Technical Assistance for European Social Fund related activities and vice versa.

### **3. Required Outputs and Results**

Projects will be expected to contractually deliver against agreed outputs and results for activities which contribute to the successful delivery of the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Operational Programmes. The outputs and results can be viewed in the [Technical Assistance Guidance](#) document.

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate how they will deliver the targets committed to within the proposal. Applicants will also need to ensure robust systems are in place to capture and record the targets. Target performance will be measured using data collected from funded projects. All projects will be required to collect this data and report progress on a claim by claim basis.

There must be a fully evidenced audit trail for all contracted targets.

### **4. General Information**

Essential information to support the drafting of an application and delivery of a successful European Regional Development Fund 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 and Investment Funds are governed by European regulations and national rules. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant documentation listed in the 'key documents' section prior to submitting an Outline application. 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**

The contribution from European Regional Development Fund or European Social Fund, finances only part of the eligible costs of a project. The funding for the remaining eligible costs (known as match funding) must come from the Applicants and any delivery partners own resources, or from a range of organisations.

The maximum European Structural and Investment Funds intervention rate for the project is dependent on which category of region the project falls within i.e. less developed, more developed or transitional which means that the intervention rate can vary between 50% to 80%. For projects operating on a national basis the average intervention rate to be used is 50%.

European Structural and Investment Funds funding 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 bankroll the project.

The funding for eligible staff costs can be included as match funding but only where the employing organisation is the Applicant or a delivery partner included in the funding agreement. The use of unpaid work or a valuation of staff time, as a contribution in kind is not allowed to count as match funding match funding for European Regional Development Fund Technical Assistance projects. However for European Social Fund Technical Assistance projects volunteer time will be considered as match funding on an exceptional basis.

## **4.3. Applicants**



Public and voluntary sector bodies who are legally constituted and able to enter into a legally binding contract can apply for Technical Assistance funding. Applicant organisations include, but are not limited to:

- Local Authorities;
- Statutory and non-statutory publicly funded organisations/bodies;
- Universities;
- Voluntary / community organisations;
- Registered charities; and
- Not for profit organisations.

Individuals are not eligible to apply for European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance.

It is not envisaged that private sector Applicants would be eligible to apply for Technical Assistance on the basis that no profit can be made from the fund.

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 European Structural and Investment Funds funding and will not have a track record.

#### **4.4. Cross Cutting Themes/Horizontal Principles**

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 European Regional Development Fund are 'equality and anti-discrimination' and 'sustainable development'. Further information is available in the [European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme](#).

#### **4.5. State Aid & Revenue Generation**

Applicants are required, in the Outline 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.<sup>1</sup> Grant funding to any economic undertaking which is state

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<sup>1</sup> 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."

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

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

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

#### **4.6. Funding Agreement**

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

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

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

#### **4.7. Procurement**

All costs delivered by the Grant Recipient (the Applicant) and/or delivery partners must be delivered on an actual cost basis. Other costs must be procured in line with European Union 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.

## 5. Application Process & Prioritisation Methodology

There are two stages to the European Regional Development Fund application process; Outline Application and if successful, Full Application. Applicants must fully complete the Outline Application via LOGASnet (section 9 refers). Guidance is available on the [European Growth Funding](#) website pages. **If Applicants are applying for support from both European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Technical Assistance budgets, two separate applications will be required and the associated costs, outputs and results apportioned accordingly. In addition, applications covering more than one category of region will also need to apportion the relevant costs, outputs and results.**

Applications will be assessed by the Managing Authority using the following criteria:

- Applicant eligibility;
- Activity and expenditure eligibility; and
- The fit with the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme and the call.
- Fit with the Technical Assistance guidance; 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 & control;
- Deliverability;
- Procurement / tendering; and
- State Aid compliance.

### **Single Local Enterprise Partnership Area, Technical Assistance Applications (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund (non-Opt-In))**

Individual Outline and Full Applications relating to a single Local Enterprise Partnership area will be assessed by the Managing Authority. The local European Structural and Investment Funds committee will be asked to provide advice on local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of Operational Programmes and the local European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy to aid the Managing Authority's assessment at Outline and Full Application stage. The Managing Authorities will make the final decision and if successful a formal offer of grant will be made.

If the outline application covers more than one Local Enterprise Partnership area (but not the whole of England) a response across Local Enterprise Partnership area European Structural and Investment Funds committees will be coordinated by the Managing Authorities.

### **National Technical Assistance Applications (European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund (non- Opt-In))**

If the outline application is a national application (i.e. covers the whole of England) the Technical Assistance Advisory group will be asked to provide an opinion to aid its assessment. The Technical Assistance Advisory group will liaise with all of the Growth Delivery Teams and European Social Fund teams to ensure that the proposal is not duplicating any existing activities and adds value. The relevant sub-committee of the Growth Programme Board (Programme Monitoring Committee) may also be asked for an opinion. If the Managing Authority decides to invite the Applicant to submit a full application, this will be formally appraised by the relevant Managing Authority and if successful a formal offer of grant will be made.

## **6. Support**

Please note that this is a competitive call and to preserve impartiality we are unable to enter into correspondence with Applicants over their Outline application. Details of where guidance can be found are contained throughout this calls document. In exceptional circumstances, if there are issues with accessing this guidance, please contact [sharon.shattock@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.shattock@communities.gsi.gov.uk).

Local Growth Team Delivery Teams contacts for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund contacts covering Local Enterprise Partnership areas can be viewed in the [Technical Assistance Guidance](#) document.

## **7. Key Documents**

- Outline Application Form;
- Outline Application Form Guidance;
- Technical Assistance Guidance;

- Local Enterprise Partnership area's European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy;
- Eligibility Guidance; and
- Target Definitions.

## 8. Document Checklist

Failure to provide the following documentation will result in the application being rejected

Outline Stage:

- Fully completed Outline Application;
- Financial Tables;
- Outputs, Results and Indicators Tables; and
- Three years financial accounts (if private or voluntary and community sector).

## 9. Document Submission

Completed Outline Applications must be submitted via the [LOGASnet system](#).

**Please note that Applicants will require a user ID and password in order to access the LOGASnet system. Details on how to register on the system can be found on the GOV.UK website [European Growth Funding](#) website pages.**

**Please allow up to 10 days to receive your login details.**

## 10. Timescales

20 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Launch of Call advertised on GOV.UK
27 <sup>th</sup> April 2015	First review point where applications received will be assessed and progressed.
30 <sup>th</sup> June 2015	Second review point where applications received will be assessed and progressed.
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2015	Third review point where applications received will be assessed and progressed.
30 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	Call closes

Outline Application forms not received by the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015 will not be assessed. Outline Applications which are not fully completed will be excluded.

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 Outline Application form will be notified on the [European Growth Funding](#) website pages.

## 11. Formal Agreement of the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme

The information and references in the call are based on the latest version of the [European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme](#) and are correct at the time of publishing. The Operational Programme may be subject to further amendment during its final negotiations with the European Commission, and subsequent calls will reflect any changes, to the extent that they may affect the terms of calls, that are made. In relation to the present call, the Managing Authority will take the possibility of relevant changes to the Programme into account when assessing outline and full applications, and where such changes occur will notify Applicants of any issues that arise, and propose a method of dealing with them.