Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme

Call for Applications to support investments in visitor attractions, tourism information, recreational and small scale infrastructure in rural areas

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Managing Authority	**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	**The Marches LEP**
Call Reference	**36RD15TO0001**
Deadline for the submission of applications	**Friday 30 October 2015 at 1700 hours**

Read the Growth Programme guidance. This explains what applicants must do to apply for a grant, how grant applications are assessed and how to meet the terms of a grant funding agreement if an application is successful.

Contents

1. Call Context
2. Call Overview
3. Outputs to be delivered
4. How to apply
5. Information to consider before making an application
6. Support
7. Submitting applications

1. Call Context

1.1. Background

A single European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme has been set up to combine three separate European Funds. These are the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

ESIFs are managed by the Department of Communities and Local Government (ERDF), Department for Work and Pensions (ESF) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EAFRD). These are known as the Managing Authorities (MAs).

The Government has allocated £177 million of rural development funding from EAFRD for delivery through the Growth Programme. DEFRA has identified types of activity for support using rural development funding. These are:

- funding and developing micro, small and medium-sized rural businesses including food processing;
- funding for small scale tourism infrastructure and tourism co-operation.

1.2 Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are private sector-led partnerships between local authorities and businesses. Each LEP has set out in its ESIF strategy the local priorities for this funding the aim of which is to achieve economic growth in its area. There are 39 LEPs covering England, 37 have an allocation of rural development funding. To apply for this funding the project must be located in a rural area in England.

1.3 Other Rural Development Funding

Other rural development support for agricultural and forestry businesses will be available through LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), the Countryside Productivity Scheme and Countryside Stewardship.

1.4 Local Context

This call invites applications for investments that will support the development of visitor attractions, tourist information, recreational and small scale infrastructure.

The tourism sector in the Marches LEP area makes a significant contribution to the economy generating over £1 billion per year in Gross Value Added (GVA) and employs over 33,000 people.

The Marches ESIF Strategy identifies tourism as a key sector for growth and the creation of new jobs. Local Visitor Economy Strategies in the Marches LEP area seek to support investments to:

- develop and enhance leisure, heritage and cultural sites, visitor activities and attractions to extend their offer to outside of peak season;
- develop new festivals and events attracting overnight as well as day visitors;
- improve the information provided for visitors;
- recreational infrastructure such as trails and bridleways;
- enhance the offer to visitors in market towns;
- promotion of local food and drink, trails and rural crafts;
- sustainable tourism activities such as eco-trails.

The Marches' ESIF Strategy is available at http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/Marches%20Final%20Strategy%20040914-3.pdf

Other relevant documents include:

- A Tourism Strategy for Herefordshire 2010 – 2015 http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/tourism/herefordshire_tourism_strategy_final_3910.pdf
- Destination Shrewsbury http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/tourism/Shrewsbury%20Visitor%20Economy%20Strategy%20FD.pdf
- Telford & Wrekin Destination Management Plan http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/tourism/Telford-Tourism-Partnership-Destination-Management-Plan-LR.pdf
- Sustainable Tourism in the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/tourism/A%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Sustainable%20Tourism.pdf
- North Shropshire and Oswestry Visitor Economy Strategy http://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/european_structural_and_investment_fund/tourism/Aug%2012%20Visitor%20Economy%20Strategy%20for%20North%20Shropshire%20Oswestry.pdf

2. Call Overview

2.1 Purpose of the Call

Theme – Supporting tourism in rural areas

This call seeks applications that support investments in the tourism sector in rural areas.

The rural tourism sector offers a significant opportunity for growth by developing the all year round destination offer and improving the quality of tourism products. This can benefit the wider rural economy by facilitating visitor spend on rural attractions and accommodation as well as generating an increase in tourism based enterprises resulting in new job opportunities.

The Marches LEP aims to support the creation of distinctive and high quality destinations based on what each individual destination can offer. This call provides support for:

- Rural businesses and communities seeking to invest in recreational and small scale rural tourism infrastructure.

2.2 Support Available

Applications are sought from businesses, communities, farmers and landowners in rural areas that are seeking grant assistance for investment in visitor attractions, tourism information, recreational and small scale infrastructure

Applicants must demonstrate how their project will develop the tourism offer in the Marches LEP area and deliver value for money. They will need to show how their project:

- fits with the key priorities of the local Visitor Economy Strategies and destination plans where one is in place;
- will not displace activity from elsewhere and make a contribution to the destination as a whole.

This call seeks to encourage investments that create new jobs and will lead to an increase in the number of overnight and day visitors. Applications that provide the greatest contribution to these outputs relative to the amount of grant requested will be a priority for this call.

Project activities will need to:

- demonstrate that the project will improve the range and quality of tourism products in the rural area;

- demonstrate in a well-evidenced business plan that there is a demand for the project or have a plan to create that demand;
- enable rural areas to take advantage of defined market trends and growth areas.

Examples of support include:

- Developing infrastructure to help visitors access places or sites of interest, such as paths, cycle ways, or sustainable transport solutions;
- Supporting the development of new events and festivals promoting local heritage, culture and food that will attract overnight as well as day visitors;
- Visitor attractions and activities that encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more; and
- Innovative ways of providing information to visitors.

2.3 Size of grants available

Grants will be available for this call from £35,000 up to £100,000. State aid rules will apply which may affect the amount of grant offered. Further details on state aid rules are available from gov.uk.

Applicants can apply for a grant to cover up to 40% of the project's total eligible costs for commercial investments in profit-making operations. The minimum total eligible cost of a project for this call would therefore be £87,500.00.

Applications for community projects that may generate some income can apply for a grant up to 80% of the project's total eligible costs. Limited grants are available to cover up to 100% of the project's total eligible costs for small capital investments that do not generate any income.

The applicant must pay for any eligible costs not covered by the grant with private funding, such as savings or a commercial bank loan. If private funding is not used, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) can reclaim any money already paid and withhold future grant payments.

2.4 Total Funding Available

The total grant funding available for this call is **£500,000.** Funding will be offered to a maximum of 14 projects, but the actual number of projects supported may be lower, dependent upon the scale and range of the projects coming forward. All applications are competitive and for this specific call applications will be assessed after the close of the deadline.

3. Outputs to be delivered

Project proposals will be expected to show how they will contribute to the achievement of the following outputs in their application:

- Number of new full time jobs created
- Increase in wage bill
- Additional number of day visitors
- Additional number of overnight visitors
- Number of people benefiting

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate how they will deliver the outputs, committed to within the proposal along with any methodology used. Further details on the evidence requirements for each output will be available at full application stage.

Applicants will also need to ensure robust project management systems are in place, that will capture and record the outputs. A detailed description of the systems will need to be provided at full application stage. All projects will be required to collect evidence to show that outputs have been achieved and report progress with each claim.

4. How to apply

There are two stages to the application process. Applications will be assessed at both stages and only the strongest will be successful. The 2 stages are:

- Stage 1: an outline application
- Stage 2: a full application

Further details on how to apply for a grant and an outline application form are available from gov.uk. The applicant will only be invited to submit a full application if their outline application is successful.

Work must not start on any part of a proposed project before the applicant has received and signed a grant funding agreement from the RPA. This includes ordering or paying a deposit on materials or equipment.

5. Information to consider before making an application

5.1 Eligibility

There will be standard eligibility requirements for each type of grant offered. Applicants will need to refer to gov.uk for further information on each of the types of grants available.

5.2 Register with Rural Payments

Before applicants can submit an application for a grant from the Growth Programme, they will need to register on Rural Payments. If the applicant is already registered on Rural Payments, they will not need to do this again.

5.3 Cross Cutting Themes

All applications received under this call must demonstrate how the Cross Cutting Themes have been addressed in the project design and development. The cross cutting themes for all projects are sustainable development and equality and diversity. Further details on these can be found in the Outline Application form.

5.4 Quotes

Applicants must ensure that they obtain best value for money when buying goods or services. Important information on the number and format of the quotes required to demonstrate best value are available from gov.uk. Applicants will be required to submit these if invited to develop a full application.

5.5 Publicising the Grant

When a project is successful in obtaining rural development funding through Growth Programme, the grant beneficiary will be required to publicise the grant. The RPA will provide beneficiaries with further information with the grant funding agreement but they may expect beneficiaries to:

- mention it in any press releases or when communicating with customers, for example in newsletters and on their website (if applicable); and
- display a poster, plaque, or billboard, including EU logos, depending on the amount of funding received and the type of investment.

If the applicant does not do this, the RPA may apply a penalty by deducting payment from the grant.

6. Support

Guidance on how to apply for a Growth Programme grant is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/growth-programme-grants-for-the-rural-economy. Applicants can call the Rural Payments helpline on 0300 0200 301 or Email GPEnquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk for further support if required.

7. Submitting applications

Send the completed outline application form to growthapps@rpa.gsi.gov.uk. The RPA will email to confirm that they've received it.