



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 and
recreational and small scale infrastructure**

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Managing Authority	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	Gloucestershire First (GFirst)
Call Reference	11RD15TO001
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.

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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 government departments are 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 develop visitor attractions, tourist information and recreational and small-scale infrastructure in the GFirst LEP area.

Tourism in Gloucestershire is a key part of the local economy and there is considerable potential to develop a year-round offer. GFirst ESIF Strategy identifies tourism as a key sector for growth and the creation of jobs. GFirst hosts two destination organisations for the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean. The activities and priorities in the destination plans of these organisations are the focus of this call.

Over 16 million people visit the Cotswolds each year and almost 3 million visit the Forest of Dean. Both places are popular with day and overnight visitors and appeal to a range of different people. The tourism sector employs 15% of the workforce in the Cotswolds and 8% in the Forest of Dean.

Extending the visitor season in the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean is a key objective for GFirst. Tourism activities are limited at certain times of the year with festival and events taking place during the high season. The destination plans have identified the following activities to help the sector extend the offer:

- Festivals and events promoting, heritage, food and drink
- Activities that attract new visitors to the Cotswolds and challenge the perceptions that the Cotswolds appeals to older people;
- Activities that promote the Forest of Dean as a key tourism destination and appeal to new visitors. For example, signage and events can provide visitors with key information about places to visit.

GFirst LEP ESIF Strategy is available at <http://www.GFirstlep.com/GFirst-LEP/Our-Priorities/Our-Vision>.

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 in developing the all year round destination offer and improving the quality of tourism products. This can benefit the wider economy of rural areas through high spend on rural attractions and accommodation as well as an increase in tourism based enterprises and job opportunities.

GFirst 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 and communities in rural areas that are seeking grant assistance for investments in visitor attractions, tourist information and recreational and small scale infrastructure.

Applicants must demonstrate how their project will help develop the tourism offer in the GFirst LEP area and deliver value for money. Applications that provide the greatest contribution to achieve the outputs below relative to the amount of grant requested will be a priority for this call.

The aim of this call is to grow the tourism sector by supporting investments that extend the visitor season. Grants will be available to develop both existing and new tourism activities and attractions. In particular, the call will prioritise support for sustainable events and festivals that attract overnight visitors and small scale tourism infrastructure and signage. The local destination plans identify the key themes of television and film, heritage, outdoor activities and food and drink.

Examples of activities include:

- .Signage for specific campaigns to raise awareness of the destination;
- Festivals and events that raise awareness of the destination.

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 £200,000. Funding will be offered to a maximum of 7 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 FTE 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.