



2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment
Funds Growth Programme

Call for Proposals
European Regional Development Fund

Priority Axis 6: Preserving and Protecting
the Environment and Promoting Resource
Efficiency

Managing Authority:	Department for Communities and Local Government
Fund:	European Regional Development Fund
Priority Axis:	Priority Axis 6: Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency
Call Reference:	OC01R15P 0207
Local Enterprise Partnership Area:	Black Country
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1. Introduction

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 and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England supporting the key growth priorities of innovation, research and development, support for Small and Medium sized 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 European Social Fund 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 an Intermediate Body for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund programmes. Unless stated otherwise, the term “Managing Authority” will apply to all these organisations. 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; and
- Advice on local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of the Operational Programme and the local European Structural Investment Fund Strategy to aid the Managing Authority’s assessments at outline and full application stage.

This call is issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and invites Outline Applications in respect of the European Regional Development Fund for England 2014 to 2020.

2. Call Context

On behalf of the national Growth Programme Board, the Department for Communities and Local Government (the Managing Authority) invites applications seeking European Regional Development Fund support under:

Priority Axis 6 Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency

Investment Priorities:

- 6d** Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure

- 6f** Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution

The **European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020** sets out how the European Regional Development Fund will focus on investment to support economic growth and job creation. **Priority Axis 6** of the Operational Programme which aims to help reverse the decline in, restore and enhance degraded ecosystems, to halt overall biodiversity loss, and to help businesses optimise the use of resources in ways that improve business performance and contribute to the protection and preservation of the environment

Any application for funding will be required to clearly demonstrate that it meets the requirement of, and makes a meaningful contribution to, the delivery of the relevant Priority Axis of the [European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme](#).

In addition, applications will be expected to meet identified local development need, as expressed in the scope of this call and as set out in the [Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership](#) European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy.

Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the detail of the Operational Programme, local European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy and the relevant documentation listed in sections 5 through to 8 **prior to** submitting an Outline Application.

3. Scope of the Call

3.1. Scope

This call invites Outline Applications which support the delivery of **Priority Axis 6** of the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme and responds to the local development need set out in the [Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy](#).

Indicative Fund Allocation:	Indicatively, through this call the Managing Authority expects to allocate up to £5,000,000. The Managing Authority reserves the right to increase or decrease the indicative allocation, or support more or fewer projects subject to the volume and quality of proposals received. There is no indicative allocation of European Regional Development Fund funding between capital and revenue activity, both capital and revenue is eligible dependent on the nature of activities/Investment Priorities set out in the call.
Minimum application level	European Regional Development Fund investment is intended to make a significant impact on local growth. Applications are expected to demonstrate appropriate scale and impact. The Managing Authority does not intend to allocate less than £500,000 European Regional Development Fund to any single project. Consequently projects with a total value of less than £1,000,000 will not be supported under this call.
Duration of project approvals	Projects should be for a maximum of three years, however the Managing Authority reserves the right to vary the maximum duration in exceptional circumstances.
Geographical Scope	All interventions are confined to activity and beneficiaries within England. Revenue projects should predominantly support businesses based within Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership area.
Specific call requirements	Applicants should note that financial instrument activity (i.e. where the project involves the provision of loans or risk finance investment) is <u>excluded</u> from this call.
Call Deadlines	For this specific call, applications will be assessed after the close of the single deadline. Applications received after the published call close date will not be considered. All applications will be assessed following closure of the call.

3.2. Local Development Need

Projects must deliver activity which directly contributes to the objectives of Priority Axis 6 of the Operational Programme, one or more of the relevant Investment Priorities and meet the **local development need** expressed in the table below.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT NEED
<p>Local Economic Context :</p> <p>The Black Country is made up of the boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and the City of Wolverhampton. It is an area strongly shaped by its industrial base, which is reflected in the nature of its business stock and the skills and occupations of its people. Less well recognised is the area's cultural heritage, including its canal network and historic buildings.</p> <p>Detailed analysis has been undertaken in the Black Country to identify key opportunities for growth, and has identified five transformational growth sectors, including environmental technologies which are anticipated to create £1.3bn Gross Value Added and create 7,000 new jobs. The focus on environmental technologies cuts across the priority sectors, with all advanced manufacturing sectors well placed to exploit the opportunities for product and service innovation arising from climate change legislation, the need to reduce carbon emissions, and the need to address increasing pressures on natural resources.</p> <p>Historic low levels of investment in environmental infrastructure have held back the development of a low carbon economy in the Black Country. Although the Black Country currently performs well against the national levels of carbon dioxide emissions (5.5 tonnes per capita in the Black Country, compared with 6.6 tonnes per capita nationally¹), this figure is rising, and intervention is needed to reverse this trend.</p> <p>There are opportunities to invest in green and blue infrastructure in the Black Country, to improve quality of environment and quality of life, as well as supporting the use of more sustainable transport such as walking and cycling eg through improved canal path infrastructure.</p> <p>Poor environmental quality is impairing the Black Country's economic success by presenting a negative image which deters inward investment, attraction and retention of skilled workers, and development of the visitor economy. Investment is needed to address partial public good and positive externality failures that have seen under-investment in green and blue infrastructure.</p>
<p>Local Priorities:</p> <p>Proposals should demonstrate alignment with local development need and priorities</p>

¹ DECC Carbon Dioxide Emissions data (2012), cited in Black Country Consortium (2013). 'State of the Sub Region 2013'.

including:

- Black Country Strategic Economic Plan
- Black Country Green Growth Plan
- Black Country Low Carbon Economy Strategy

3.3. Operational Programme Investment Priorities

Applications must specify the activities to be delivered and are expected to directly contribute to **one or more** of the following Investment Priorities:

Investment Priority	6d – Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.
Specific Objectives	Investments in Green and Blue infrastructure and actions that support the provision of ecosystem services on which businesses and communities depend to increase local natural capital and support sustainable economic growth
Indicative Actions	<p>Activity supported to achieve this specific objective will focus on investment in Green Infrastructure; definitions are set out in the National Planning Policy and in Natural England’s Green Infrastructure guide². Blue Infrastructure is a sub-set of this and refers to the water-related features (rivers, ponds, lakes etc) that play a crucial role in providing benefits to people and wildlife.</p> <p>Activity can include site clearance, soil desealing, decontamination and land remediation, but only where these directly contribute to an area’s Green and Blue Infrastructure/ natural capital which are the primary objective of the interventions.</p> <p>Sustainable drainage can be a design function incorporated within Green Infrastructure. It can also make a contribution to the provision of Green Infrastructure, where natural solutions are used to provide such a function. Furthermore the volume and quality of water that flows into blue infrastructure, such as rivers, ponds and lakes, has a fundamental impact on their health and condition. Sustainable drainage can help improve this.</p> <p>Under this investment priority, indicative actions to be supported by European Regional Development Fund may</p>

² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35033?category=49002>

	<p>include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in green and blue infrastructure such as green corridors in urban areas and waterways • Sustainable drainage to improve water quality and in some cases local air quality. <p>Programme. Investments may target the creation/refurbishment of urban infrastructure through urban regeneration operations.</p>
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Investment Priority	6f – Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution.
Specific Objectives	Investment to promote the development and uptake of innovative technologies, in particular in resource efficiency, in order to increase the resilience and environmental and economic performance of businesses and communities.
Indicative Actions	<p>The aim is to help businesses optimise the use of resources in ways that improve business performance in terms of resilience, profitability and competitiveness while at the same time contributing to the protection and preservation of the environment.</p> <p>Under this investment priority indicative actions to be supported by the European Regional Development Fund may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of support and advice for businesses in the adoption of innovative technologies and processes for the management and reuse of energy, materials, water and waste (including recycling and recovery) • Provision of support for the piloting and demonstration of innovative technologies to promote resource efficiency in order to encourage their greater take-up.

4. Required Outputs under this Call

Projects must deliver against the Priority Axis 6 outputs and results of the European Regional Development Fund 2014 to 2020 Operational Programme. For projects coming forward under this call the expected outputs and results are:

ID	Output Indicator
C1	Number of enterprises receiving support
C5	Number of new enterprises supported
C22	Total surface area of rehabilitated land
C23	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status
C29	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products

Applicants will need to demonstrate how the eligible activity, funded by the European Regional Development Fund, will achieve the deliverables committed to within the proposal. The application should clearly state the methodology used to determine the levels of outputs proposed.

All operations will be required to report regularly on progress toward achievement of targets. This will need to include both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the appropriate geographical areas. Applicants will need to explain how they will collect and record this information to maintain a fully evidenced audit trail. It should be noted that if an operation fails to deliver contracted deliverables, a performance penalty may apply.

5. Application Process & Prioritisation Methodology

There are two stages to the European Regional Development Fund application process;

- (i) Outline Application and, if successful
- (ii) Full Application.

Acceptance of an Outline Application to progress to full application stage does not in any way indicate or constitute an offer of European Regional Development Fund grant.

Applicants must fully complete the [Outline Application](#) which will be assessed by the Managing Authority against the national [Selection Criteria](#).

Outline Applications will be assessed in two stages, Gateway assessment and Core assessment.

Gateway assessment considers:

- applicant eligibility;
- activity and expenditure eligibility; and
- fit with the National Operational Programme and the local development need set out in section 2.

Proposals that fail the Gateway assessment will be rejected. Proposals which pass the Gateway assessment will then be assessed against the Core assessment criteria:

- Strategic Fit
- Value for money
- Management and control
- Deliverability
- Compliance
 - Procurement
 - State Aid
 - Publicity requirements
- Cross cutting themes
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Equal Opportunities

Having assessed projects against these criteria the relevant Local Economic Partnership area European Structural and Investment Fund Sub-Committee will advise the Managing Authority on the contribution to local economic growth conditions and opportunities within the context of the Operational Programme and local European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy to aid the Managing Authority's assessments (at outline and full application stage).

Please note that the Managing Authority's decision is final and there is no appeals process. If you wish to complain about the calls and application process, please follow the procedure set out at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/complaints-procedure>

For calls under Investment Priority 6d, please note:

All Green Infrastructure projects are required to make a contribution towards biodiversity priorities (especially relating to national objectives to increase the

provision of water, grass and woodland habitats) and in addition proposals will need to clearly show how they deliver at least one of the socio-economic benefits of Green Infrastructure below to deliver:

- Flooding alleviation and Water Management.
- Pollution management/ control/ regulation (water and air)
- Economic growth and Investment (new market opportunities)
- Health, Well-being, Recreation and Leisure (linked to a growth benefit).
- Provision of products from the land.
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation

In determining which projects should be eligible for funding reference should be made to the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework relating to the environment and Green Infrastructure; Green Infrastructure priorities set out in Local Plans; the Natural Environment White Paper (2011); Biodiversity 2020 (2011); and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance.

The UK's National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to "set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure".³ Investments in Green Infrastructure should look to complement the priorities for multi-functional green space as set out in the relevant Local Plans.

Where an investment is planned for a site that is designated as part of the Natura2000 network, or sits in proximity to such a site, reference should be made to the Prioritised Action Framework to ensure any proposed interventions complement the designated site's objectives.

6. General Information

6.1. National Eligibility Rules

When developing an application, Applicants must refer to the [National Eligibility Rules](#) setting out the requirements of the 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund Programme. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the Rules are adhered to both at application stage and following approval. Failure to do so can lead to financial penalties leading to recovery of up to 100% of grant. Applicants are strongly advised to seek specialist advice if in doubt on any requirement.

European Regional Development Fund eligibility rules apply to **all** project spend within the eligible costs, including match funding.

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60777/2116950.pdf

The European Regional Development Fund is governed by European regulations and national rules. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant documentation, (Section 8 Key Document refers) prior to submitting an Outline Application. If successful, Applicants will enter into a 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 are 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 30 days, unless otherwise agreed with the Managing Authority.

6.2. Eligible Applicants

Section 4 of the [National Eligibility Rules](#) sets out who is eligible to apply.

Applicants must be legally constituted at the point of signing a Funding Agreement. If the application is approved the Applicant organisation will enter into a legally binding Funding Agreement and therefore will carry the liability for ensuring that the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement are met.

If there is more than one organisation applying for the funds, a lead organisation must be selected to become the Applicant with the remaining organisation(s) acting as Delivery Partner(s). In this situation the Applicant would be responsible and liable for the Delivery Partner(s) and ensuring the project is operating compliantly.

During the application process 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 have been identified, the Managing Authority will expect to see how and what steps have been taken to ensure that the risk of further irregularities in the future is mitigated. It is acknowledged that some organisations will be new to European Structural and Investment Funds funding and will not have a track record.

6.3. Contribution Rate & Match Funding

European Regional Development Fund is normally expected to intervene where no other funding can be obtained (i.e. the funder of last resort). The level of European Regional Development Fund awarded will be the minimum in order for the project to proceed.

The maximum Contribution Rate is 50% of the total eligible project costs subject to State Aid regulations.

The remaining 50% or more must come from other eligible sources as specified under section 6 of the National Eligibility Rules. Applicants will need to demonstrate

that they have eligible match funding in place for the balance of costs. Other European Union funds cannot be used as a source of match funding.

European Regional Development Fund investment is limited by State Aid regulations and where the award of European Regional Development Fund would constitute State Aid the European Regional Development Fund grant rate may fall below the 50% maximum.

European Regional Development Fund is paid quarterly in arrears and expenditure must be defrayed prior to the submission of any Grant claims. Applicants may be asked to demonstrate how they are able to cash flow the operation.

6.4. Project Timescales

European Regional Development Fund funding will normally be approved for three years, however the Managing Authority reserves the right to extend the contract term in exceptional circumstances.

Projects approved through this call are expected to:

- Submit a detailed and complete full application within three months of formal selection at outline stage. Projects which fail to meet this deadline may be deselected,
- Commence delivery (defraying European Regional Development Fund eligible costs) within three months of formal approval. Projects which fail to meet this deadline may be deselected, and
- Be completed by June 2023.

6.5. Capital Projects

Applicants seeking European Regional Development Fund to support a capital project (i.e. land and/or property) will need to meet Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method or Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment 'Excellent' for new builds and 'Very Good' for refurbishments.

Applicants will need to provide evidence of how they will achieve the rating required (unless otherwise agreed with the Managing Authority).

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the rights and permissions to undertake the project and must provide:

- Proof of current interest in the land and/or property, which includes evidence of the freehold ownership or any lease arrangements that may be in place; and
- Evidence of the approval of any planning permission, or in certain circumstances a clear statement on the process for securing such consents and any risks to the project.

Royal Institute of British Architects Stage D costs must be supplied with the Full Application and be certified by an independent Quantity Surveyor and Land/Property contributions certified by a Real Estate Valuation expert who are current and chartered members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors/ Chartered Institute of Builders or equivalent body.

Successful Applicants will be required to provide security to the Managing Authority in the form of a Legal Charge and/or Deed of Covenant over the land and/or property. Applicants will be responsible for registering the charge at their own cost.

6.6. 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](#).

6.7. Additionality, Duplication and Displacement

Additionality is a core principle of European Regional Development Funding. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the activity paid for out of European Regional Development Funding adds value to new or existing activity. Projects need to demonstrate that without the support of European Regional Development Funding the activity would not have taken place.

European Regional Development Funding cannot support activities that duplicate existing provision/services within the region.

Applications need to identify and evidence the beneficiaries will use the service and demonstrate that the project does not displace other activity available in the market place.

6.8. 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.⁴ Grant funding to any economic undertaking which is State

⁴ 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. 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. This revenue should be taken into account in calculating eligible expenditure. The details of this will be tested at the full application stage.

6.9. 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 relevant advice to ensure that they would be able to enter into and abide by the terms of the Funding Agreement.

Applicants are advised that additional provisions and securities may be included within the Funding Agreement to protect the investment. Detailed advice will be given if appropriate at the Full Application stage.

Failure to meet any of the conditions of the Funding Agreement or the commitments within the application will result in claw back of the Grant (which may include interest).

6.10. Procurement

All costs claimed by the Applicant (Grant Recipient and/or Delivery Partner(s)) must be recovered on an actual cost basis. Other costs must be procured in line with National (including [Public Procurement Regulation 2015](#)) and European Union regulations. Procurement will be subject to audit and verification and any irregularity will result in financial penalty of up to 100% of the grant paid. 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 **strongly recommended** that Applicants seek and follow legal advice in respect of procurement requirements. Procurement irregularities remain the most substantive cause of error and clawback of grant.

7. 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: WM.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk

8. Key Documents

- European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme;
- Outline Application Form;
- Outline Application Form Guidance;
- Local Enterprise Partnership area's European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy;
- Eligibility Guidance;
- Target Definitions; and
- Funding Agreement (Revenue and/or Capital).

9. Document Checklist

Incomplete applications will be rejected. Please ensure the following information (documents) are submitted.

Outline Stage:

- Fully completed Outline Application;

- Financial Tables;
- Outputs, Results and Indicators Tables.

10. Document Submission

Completed Outline Applications must be submitted via **email** to the address in Section 7.

Outline Application forms not received by the deadline 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 Funding Agreement.

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