



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, tourist information and small  
scale tourism infrastructure**

**European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**

<b>Managing Authority</b>	<b>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</b>
<b>Local Enterprise Partnership Area</b>	<b>South East Midlands LEP</b>
<b>Call Reference</b>	<b>31RD15TO0002</b>
<b>Deadline for the submission of applications</b>	<b>Friday 27 November 2015 at 1700 hours</b>

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:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The Growth Programme provides funding to help projects in England that create jobs and economic growth. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has responsibility for managing EAFRD. Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages these grants on behalf of Defra.

Government has allocated £177 million of rural development funding from EAFRD for grants in the Growth Programme. These grants are available for:

- 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 contribute to growth and productivity in the recreation, leisure and tourism sectors within South East Midlands.**

[SEMLEP Economic Plan](#) and [ESIF Strategy](#) identify tourism and leisure as important sectors for economic growth. The location, scenery and culture of the SEMLEP area offer potential for growth in leisure, recreation and tourism. This call seeks to grow these sectors to improve the tourism offer for visitors. It seeks to increase the number of day and overnight visitors to the area by:

- providing support for existing attractions to expand both the quality and range of their offer
- developing new attractions
- developing and promoting local food and drink
- improving existing or creating new leisure and recreational activities

This call encourages projects that demonstrate:

- efficient use of resources such as water or energy
- links to the natural environment
- methods for reducing waste

Applications that meet one or more of the following criteria, in order of importance, are a priority for this call:

- create new jobs
- increase the wage bill of the business
- increase number of day and overnight visitors
- increase visitor spend

## 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.

SEMLEP 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 visitor attractions and recreational and small scale rural tourism infrastructure

## **2.2 Support Available**

This call seeks applications from micro and small businesses and community groups in rural areas. Grants are available for capital investments in small scale tourism infrastructure including development of visitor attractions.

The aim of this call is to support growth in SEMLEP's rural tourism sector. The call seeks to support projects that will lead to an increase in both overnight and day visitors.

Examples of support include:

- developing existing and new visitor attractions
- developing culture, leisure and heritage visitor activities
- developing access infrastructure to help people connect to the natural environment, such as paths and cycle ways
- development of small scale tourism infrastructure for example linking local attractions together
- annual events that support local heritage, culture and food
- ways of providing information that improve the visitor experience
- events which bring local businesses together to increase sales of local products that encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more

Applications for tourism accommodation will not be supported under this call.

## **2.3 Size of grants available**

Grants will be available for this call from £35,000 up to €200,000 (approximately £140,000). 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 for commercial projects can apply for a grant to cover up to 40% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of these projects would therefore be £87,500. Projects that have some income but are not expected to make a profit (semi-commercial projects) can apply for a grant to cover up to 80% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of these projects would therefore be £43,750. Projects that have no income (tourism enhancing projects) can apply for a grant to cover up to 100% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of these projects would therefore be £35,000.

Applicants must pay for any costs not covered by the grant with private funding, such as savings or a bank loan, not other public funds. If private funding isn't used, RPA may ask the applicant to repay any grant money already paid and may cancel any future payments.

## **2.4 Total Funding Available**

The total grant funding available for this call is **£535,000**. Funding will be offered to a maximum of 16 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 call, RPA will assess applications after the close of the deadline.

## **3. Outputs to be delivered**

Applicants need to show how their project will contribute to the achievement of the following total outputs for the call:

- 26 full time jobs created
- increase in wage bill
- additional number of day visitors
- additional number of overnight visitors
- number of people benefitting from the project

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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/growth-programme-grants-for-the-rural-economy). Applicants can call the Rural Payments helpline on 03000 200 301 or Email [GPEnquiries@rpa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:growthapps@rpa.gsi.gov.uk). The RPA will email to confirm that they've received it.