



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

Managing Authority	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP)
Call Reference	16RD15TO0001
Deadline for the submission of applications	Friday 8 January 2016 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:

- 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 support the development of visitor attractions, tourist information and small-scale tourism infrastructure in the Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP area.

The [Strategic Economic Plan](#) for the HotSW LEP has the following aims:

- to create the conditions for growth
- maximise productivity and employment opportunities
- develop the distinctiveness of the rural areas

The [HotSW LEP ESIF strategy](#) sets out the priorities for the LEP. These include:

- improve the competitiveness of micro and small businesses
- reaching new markets

The ESIF strategy identifies tourism as an important sector for employment in the local economy. It shows that compared to other areas of England, the HotSW area has the greatest number of overnight visits each year. The number of tourism businesses in the LEP area is above the national average but the sector isn't growing as fast as others. The strategy highlights the need to extend the tourism season to help grow the sector and create year round jobs.

The strategy identifies opportunities to grow and attract more visitors to the area by developing:

- the area's natural and cultural assets, such as Dartmoor and Exmoor
- visitor awareness of artisan food and other local producers - these are important in making the HotSW area distinctive
- creating new and improving existing attractions, infrastructure and visitor information

The focus of this call is to help tourism businesses target new markets by:

- making the most of the area's natural and cultural assets to attract more visitors to stay outside of the normal summer season
- encouraging more visitors to stay for longer and spend more, particularly beyond the normal summer season

[Visit England Statistics](#) for the sector may provide a useful source of information for applicants to support their project proposals.

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.

By providing EAFRD investment, HotSW 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

This call seeks applications from rural businesses, communities, farmers and landowners in rural areas. Grants are available to develop new and existing visitor attractions, recreational and small scale infrastructure.

The aim of this call is to attract more visitors to stay in the HotSW LEP area for longer and spend more money in the local economy. Applicants must demonstrate how their project will improve the range and quality of the tourism offer in rural areas and create new, year round jobs.

The call encourages applications that:

- don't displace activities provided by existing attractions
- demonstrate sustainable growth
- provide evidence of demand for the project or have a plan to create the demand
- support the aims of [The South West Tourism Alliance Principles for Success](#) - destination plans and wider south west initiatives for the area

Projects that demonstrate the following are a priority for this call:

- create new, year round jobs
- create economic benefits to a number of businesses
- increase the number of overnight stays in rural areas
- attract more visitors, particularly outside the normal tourist season

This call will not support:

- tourist accommodation projects
- projects that only deliver benefits to a single business
- projects that update an existing product without any expected growth

- projects that update an existing product without any forecast growth in visitor numbers

Examples of support include:

- developing new and existing visitor attractions
- developing access infrastructure that connects visitors with the natural environment and places of interest, such as paths, trails, long distance routes and cycle ways
- developing new sustainable events and festivals that attract overnight as well as day visitors
- promotion of local food and drink, trails and rural crafts
- supporting the development of innovative new rural tourism products and services
- applications that extend the visitor season by developing and enhancing the quality of the rural environment, such as cultural and heritage sites and products, leisure products and visitor activities

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, Rural Payments Agency (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 **£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 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:

- 5% annual increase in the number of day visitors as shown in the [Strategic Framework Growth Target for Tourism in England](#)
- 5% annual increase in the number of overnight visitors*
- number of people/business benefitting
- number of jobs created
- increase in wage bill

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.