



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 local co-
operation and partnerships to improve the
attractiveness of the rural tourism sector in the Marches**

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Managing Authority	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Local Enterprise Partnership Area	The Marches LEP
Call Reference	36RD15TO0002
Deadline for the submission of applications	Friday 8 January 2016 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:

- 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 to support local co-operation and partnerships that improve the attractiveness of the offer for visitors in the Marches rural areas.

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area covers Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire and Herefordshire.

The [Marches LEP ESIF strategy](#) identifies the Marches area as having a distinctive offer for visitors. It has an attractive environment that includes the Wye Valley and Shropshire Hills and heritage assets such as Ironbridge Gorge, a world heritage site. The Marches LEP 'Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 2011' recognises that tourism plays an important role in the area's economy including:

- generating an income of £856 million each year
- supporting 17,000 full-time equivalent jobs
- hosting 19 million day trips and 6 million overnight stays each year

The objectives of the Marches LEP for the tourism sector are to:

- develop a year round visitor offer
- improve the range and quality of rural tourism products

The aim of the LEP is to create new jobs and economic growth. It recognises that there is a need for a new Destination Plan (DP) for Herefordshire to fulfil these objectives. The existing DP is out of date. The new plan must:

- develop and support the quality of the visitor experience in Herefordshire
- help rural tourism businesses to grow and develop by providing evidence for local tourism priorities
- help stakeholders to manage the destination offer to visitors

The ESIF strategy recognises the diversity of the rural visitor offer in the Marches area. The strategy also acknowledges that the sector needs to improve co-ordination and planning between partners and stakeholders. This call seeks applications from tourism groups and organisations seeking to develop existing cooperative and partnership working. The aim is to make visiting the Marches area an easy and enjoyable experience for visitors.

The 3 areas that make up the Marches LEP each have their own local priorities for the tourism sector. However, there are a number of common themes including:

- increasing the number of day visitors, overnight stays and visitor spend
- raising awareness – to make the area better known as a quality, easy to get to and accessible rural destination offering rewarding outdoor and indoor experiences
- maximising the potential of market towns, villages and rural assets
- opportunities to encourage the use of local food and drink
- improving connections between existing visitor attractions and tourism businesses to create packages linking up accommodation, activities and places to eat and drink
- improving knowledge and experience of the area amongst those working in the tourism sector so they work together to provide local information for visitors during their stay

- encouraging visitors to use sustainable transport such as public transport and cycling
- support marketing and promotional activities that will help attract more visitors to the area to stay for longer

Applicants will need to demonstrate how their project will help to implement the objectives of local tourism plans and strategies. Local tourism plans and strategies include:

- [Telford Tourism Partnership](#)
- [Bridgnorth Area](#)
- [Shropshire Borderlands](#)
- [Shropshire Hills & Ludlow](#)

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, 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, charities, trusts and public bodies seeking to promote co-operation in the tourism sector to develop a better local rural tourism offer

2.2 Support Available

This call seeks applications from businesses, charities, trusts and public bodies in rural areas. Grants are available for investments in co-operative projects including local networks that promote the rural areas of the Marches as a visitor destination.

This call will support:

- the development of a new DP for Herefordshire

- new marketing and promotional activities that meets the aims and objectives of existing tourism strategies and plans

The new DP for Herefordshire must:

- explain how partners and stakeholders can co-ordinate activity to improve the offer for visitors
- develop and support the quality of the visitor experience in Herefordshire
- recommend ways in which stakeholders can manage and monitor the impact of tourism projects
- prioritise projects and show what options are available to support these projects
- provide an evidence base for local tourism priorities that includes research of need and demand

Examples of support for new marketing and promotion activity include:

- marketing the destination offer to visitors in a new way using digital and new communication channels, including websites, applications and electronic media
- new co-operation between tourism businesses and visitor attractions that encourages visitors to stay for longer e.g. local speciality food tourism, arts and craft based tourism initiatives
- new co-operative activity between festivals and events and tourism businesses to target new visitors and encourage existing visitors to stay for longer
- new marketing activity to promote to visitors local food and drink, trails linked to leisure and heritage and new events and festivals
- support for partnerships to develop and market new products and packages

Applications for marketing and promotional activity that demonstrate one or more of the following are a priority for this call:

- groups of operators working together to promote the offer of the area to visitors
- an increase in the amount of time visitors stay in an area, particularly encouraging more visitors to stay overnight
- an increase in visitor spend

2.3 Size of grants available

Grants will be available for this call from £35,000 up to £60,000. 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 50% of the project's total eligible costs. The minimum total eligible cost of a project for this call would therefore be £70,000. Non-profit making organisations can apply for a grant to cover up to 100% of the project's total eligible costs.

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 **£150,000**. Funding will be offered to a maximum of 4 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, the 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:

- create a new DP for Herefordshire
- increase number of day visitors by 5%
- increase number of overnight visitors by 5%
- number of co-operation projects supported

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, which 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](https://www.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.