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# Building Better Opportunities

Programme guide

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### Accessibility

Please contact us to discuss any particular communication needs you have.

### Our equality principles

Promoting accessibility; valuing cultural diversity; promoting participation; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting inclusive communities; reducing disadvantage and exclusion. Please visit our website for more information.

### We care about the environment

The Big Lottery Fund seeks to minimise its negative environmental impact and only uses proper sustainable resources.

### Our mission

Helping communities and people most in need.

### Our values

We have identified three values that underpin our work: being supportive and helpful, making best use of Lottery money and using knowledge and evidence. You can find out more about us, our values and the funding programmes we run by visiting our website

[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

The Big Lottery Fund is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity, both as a grant maker and employer. The Big Lottery Fund will aim to adopt an inclusive approach to ensure grant applicants and recipients, stakeholders, job applicants and employees are treated fairly.

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## Introduction

Building Better Opportunities brings together funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF) to help tackle the poverty and social exclusion faced by the most disadvantaged people in England.

By joining up with ESF, we'll be able to double the impact of Lottery money at a local level and offer a route to European funding for organisations that may have found it difficult to access it in the past.

As a consequence, there are delivery and monitoring requirements that are more extensive than other Big Lottery Fund programmes you may have experience of. We'll help where we can to simplify and explain these requirements as you move through the application process. If successfully awarded a grant, we will also offer daily support to projects together with all of the tools that will be needed to report to us.

This guide gives only an overview of the detailed information we've given on our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf)

### What is European funding?

The money from Europe comes from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme 2014 to 2020, of which the European Social Fund (ESF) is one part.

The purpose of the ESIF Growth programme is to improve local growth and create jobs by investing in innovation, business, skills and employment.

ESF specifically contributes to this by:

- ✓ supporting and sustaining quality employment without barriers to participation
- ✓ encouraging social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination
- ✓ developing the potential and existing workforce by investing in education, training and vocational skills.

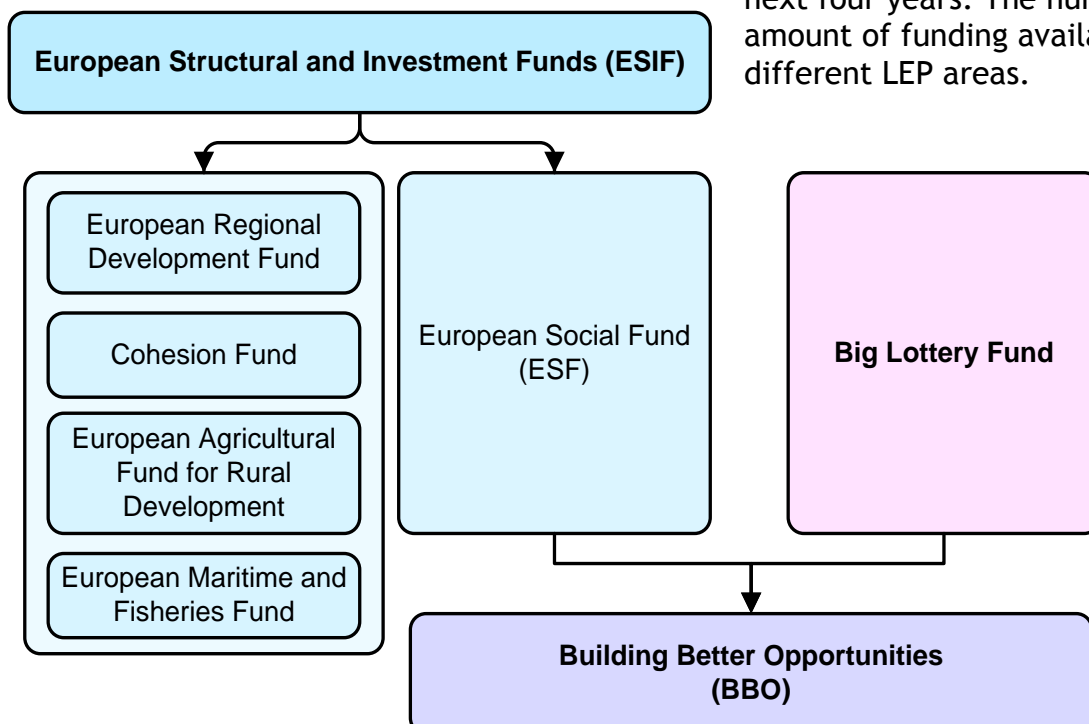
The Department for Work and Pensions is the Managing Authority responsible for administering ESF in England. The Big Lottery Fund is delivering a portion of this through Building Better Opportunities.

We will provide funding under ESF Thematic Objective 9 (promoting social inclusion and combating poverty), with a specific focus on addressing the root causes of poverty that create barriers to work, so that people who are most social excluded move towards or into employment.

### Where is the funding going to be available?

In England, ESIF money is divided between 39 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas and each LEP has a strategy for how it will be spent. A LEP area ESIF sub-committee has been established in each of these to take forward the strategy, and it has determined the priorities that projects funded in its area must deliver.

Funding will be available through Building Better Opportunities in most areas of England over the next four years. The number of projects and the amount of funding available varies across different LEP areas.



## What are we looking for?

To apply to Building Better Opportunities, you will need to respond to one of the project outlines we'll publish on our website.

Project outlines describe each specific funding opportunity that is available through the programme and set out what we want each project to achieve and the areas or groups of people that it needs to target. We'll only fund one project per project outline.

Although each project outline is different, there are five key principles that unite them. Projects must:

### ➤ **Help the most disadvantaged**

As the economy strengthens and the labour market becomes more competitive, people who are out of work or not 'job-ready' could find it increasingly difficult to find employment.

Some groups of people are more disadvantaged than others when it comes to finding work and it is these individuals that Building Better Opportunities aspires to help.

### ➤ **Tackle social exclusion**

Social exclusion profoundly affects people's physical and mental health. This lack of wellbeing can have a significant impact on an individual's confidence and motivation to engage fully with support services, preventing them from seizing opportunities to improve their personal circumstances.

Social exclusion contributes to disadvantage and can also lead to people being out of work. So rather than just treating the symptoms, projects must help address the root causes of poverty and exclusion that are barriers to an individual seeking work.

### ➤ **Be focused on the capabilities of each individual**

We expect projects to build on people's strengths by developing their skills and talents to help them overcome the challenges they face. To achieve this, activities need to be focused on the needs of each individual through tailored packages of support that go far beyond simply providing advice. Key to this will be ensuring the people who'll benefit have a genuine and ongoing role in how the project is designed and delivered.

Getting people into work will be just one of the measures we'll use to track the success of the project. An individual's progression, resulting from this targeted support, will be just as important.

### ➤ **Lead to better coordinated services**

In the main, services will need to be delivered in partnership between organisations that already have expertise in working with those most in need.

There is a range of services across England that can support people in difficulty, but they can sometimes lack clear coordination at a local level. Facilitating connections and joining up such services would help address this gap and foster stronger working relationships that can help remove the key barriers to employability for the most disadvantaged people.

### ➤ **Create new opportunities for work**

The success of Building Better Opportunities is constrained, in part, by the work available, so it's just as important to think about creating new opportunities as it is to improve an individual's work readiness. It is therefore essential that there is engagement with employers to ensure there are pathways for people to progress into work.

We'll also consider funding projects that directly support new employment or volunteering opportunities, such as activities that help people who are out of work to gain the skills they need to become self-employed or set up new social enterprises.

## Who can benefit?

We call anyone who will directly benefit from the project a 'participant'. We can only fund projects where all of the participants are:

- ✓ legally resident in the UK and able to take paid employment in European Union member states and
- ✓ unemployed or economically inactive.

We'll need to understand how the projects we fund will add value, so they do not duplicate provision that can be arranged locally through existing mainstream institutions and statutory bodies.

### Participants who are disadvantaged

On the majority of the project outlines, we'll specify that particular target groups are benefiting from activities. These relate to the groups of people that are considered a priority by the European Commission:

- ✓ people with parental or carer responsibilities
- ✓ women
- ✓ people with health issues and disabilities
- ✓ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME)
- ✓ refugees and recent migrants
- ✓ people aged over 50 with few or no qualifications and not in employment
- ✓ low-income, single-earner households with children where one partner is not working
- ✓ disabled people
- ✓ those out of contact from the labour market
- ✓ ex-offenders and offenders
- ✓ homeless people
- ✓ workers with low or no skills.

### Participants who are unemployed

If someone is unemployed then they are usually actively searching for employment but are unable to find work. Participants will be registered unemployed and may be in receipt of unemployment benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance.

### Participants who are economically inactive

If someone is economically inactive then they are not registered as unemployed but are also not in work. Participants may be in receipt of certain benefits (such as incapacity benefit or Employment and Support Allowance) and could also be in training or education of some kind.

Part or full-time students and people on full-time parental leave (where this does not fall under the category of maternity or paternity leave) are considered inactive unless they are registered as unemployed.

### Participants who are young people

We can only pay for activities working with young people who are aged 16-29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and young people aged 15-18 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Young people below the age of 15 are ineligible. Unless the project is specifically aimed at young people, those aged 29+ remain eligible participants.

### People in employment

We cannot fund activities working with people who are already in employment. This includes people that:

- × are aged 15 and over and have performed work for pay or profit
- × are in work but on maternity or paternity leave, even if this is unpaid
- × are self-employed, including those helping family members
- × are in subsidised or incentivised employment.
- × have a job or business from which they are temporarily absent because of illness, holidays, industrial dispute, or education and training.

Our 'Guide to delivering European funding' gives more information about who is and isn't eligible to benefit from this funding. There's a link to it on the last page of this programme guide.

## Which organisations can apply?

Most of the project outlines that will be available through Building Better Opportunities will be better suited to partnership working.

We will still accept applications from organisations working on their own, but it is unlikely that a single organisation will have the breadth and depth of experience needed to tackle the complex multiple issues that the people who'll benefit face on a daily basis.

### The lead organisation

Whether an applicant is working with other organisations or not, we call the organisation that submits an application form the 'lead organisation'.

This lead organisation will have legal responsibility for all funding we award and be financially accountable for money that is distributed to any partners.

Lead organisations should have:

- ✓ a clear vision for responding to the priorities of the local area, backed up by appropriate expertise
- ✓ a proven track record of managing complex projects, relative to the size of any partnership and the amount of money involved
- ✓ good connections for ensuring a wide cross-section of organisations are able to get involved
- ✓ strategies for managing and coordinating any partnership throughout the planning, set-up and delivery of the project.

We will not consider applications made by:

- ✗ individuals or sole traders
- ✗ branches that don't control how they're run and how money is spent
- ✗ applications made by one organisation on behalf of another.

We've published 'A summary of our partnership requirements' on our website. There's a link to it at the end of this programme guide.

## What does European funding involve?

Choosing to apply to this programme is a big commitment. Projects will need careful planning to deliver the specific monitoring and delivery requirements that European funding brings. Failure to comply with these requirements could have serious financial repercussions.

We will offer support to help grant holders to comply with these requirements, including providing the tools and templates that will be needed to capture, record and report information to us. If you are considering applying, it's crucial that you read our 'Guide to delivering European funding' before making a start on your application. This explains what's required throughout the lifetime of the project and the types of evidence that need to be retained for a minimum of 10 years after the final payment from us. These include:

- ✓ purchase invoices and receipts for all items of expenditure, together with job descriptions, time sheets and payroll information for anyone employed on the project
- ✓ copies of any lease or rental agreements for buildings used on the project
- ✓ an up-to-date record of all participants on the project, including their equality characteristics and around 30 other specified indicators, supported by entry and exit forms signed by individual participants
- ✓ robust and transparent performance measures, linked to clear progression routes for learners and the newly employed
- ✓ evidence of learning achievements or progression to employment, including certificates or letters of appointment
- ✓ evidence that the delivery requirements are being met.

Any partners involved in delivering the project will need to provide the same information to the lead organisation, as they will then collate this to report to us. It's therefore extremely important that all organisations involved understand and are committed to these requirements from the outset.

### How will we make payments?

Before delivery of a project can start, we will work closely with successful applicants to ensure the right systems are in place to support the collection and provision of the evidence we need.

We will pay grant instalments up to three months in advance with an initial payment at the start of the project to cover the first three months of project activity. The evidence submitted during each quarter will then form the basis of further claims for grant instalments. Payments will be made on the basis of the actual costs you incur - not on a unit costs or payments by results basis.

We will monitor the delivery of the project to ensure the targets are being met over its lifetime. We may withhold payments if progress towards these targets is limited or unclear. We'll also withhold payments if the correct documentation is not retained or submitted to us as part of the claim process.

Every project will be subject to rigorous audit reviews to ensure the expenditure and participants are eligible. If errors are discovered, we may have to recover funding that's already been paid or spent. Where possible, we will seek to recover any overpayment by reducing future payments or through any contingency we've set aside.

In serious cases, the European Commission can 'clawback' all of the money paid to a project. Clawback is a significant risk to projects and could even take place after the project has ended. Putting the right systems in place before the project begins is the only way to minimise this risk.

### **What are the delivery requirements?**

All organisations involved will need to:

- ✓ publicise that services being delivered are supported by us and ESF, taking every opportunity to include references and logos
- ✓ ensure any activities clearly add value and do not duplicate any provision that can be arranged locally through existing mainstream institutions or statutory bodies
- ✓ collect information relating to the evaluation of the project so key learning can be used more widely to influence the planning of similar provision
- ✓ implement detailed policies to ensure sustainable development in all areas of work so they will, wherever possible, protect and improve the environment
- ✓ promote and integrate equal opportunities within every facet of the project's delivery, with a particular focus on gender equality.

### **What is the application process?**

The application process consists of two stages. Stage one is fully open and competitive and from this we'll select a shortlist of applicants to take through to stage two. An invitation to stage two does not, however, guarantee that the project will be funded.

#### **Project outlines**

We will publish a project outline for each specific funding opportunity that's available through Building Better Opportunities. These will be published in two rounds during 2015. The scope of each project outline will be based on the activities included in the LEP area plan and the local ESIF strategy, and developed with the LEP area ESIF sub-committee.

There is only one grant for each funding opportunity and we won't consider applications that do not clearly respond to a project outline.

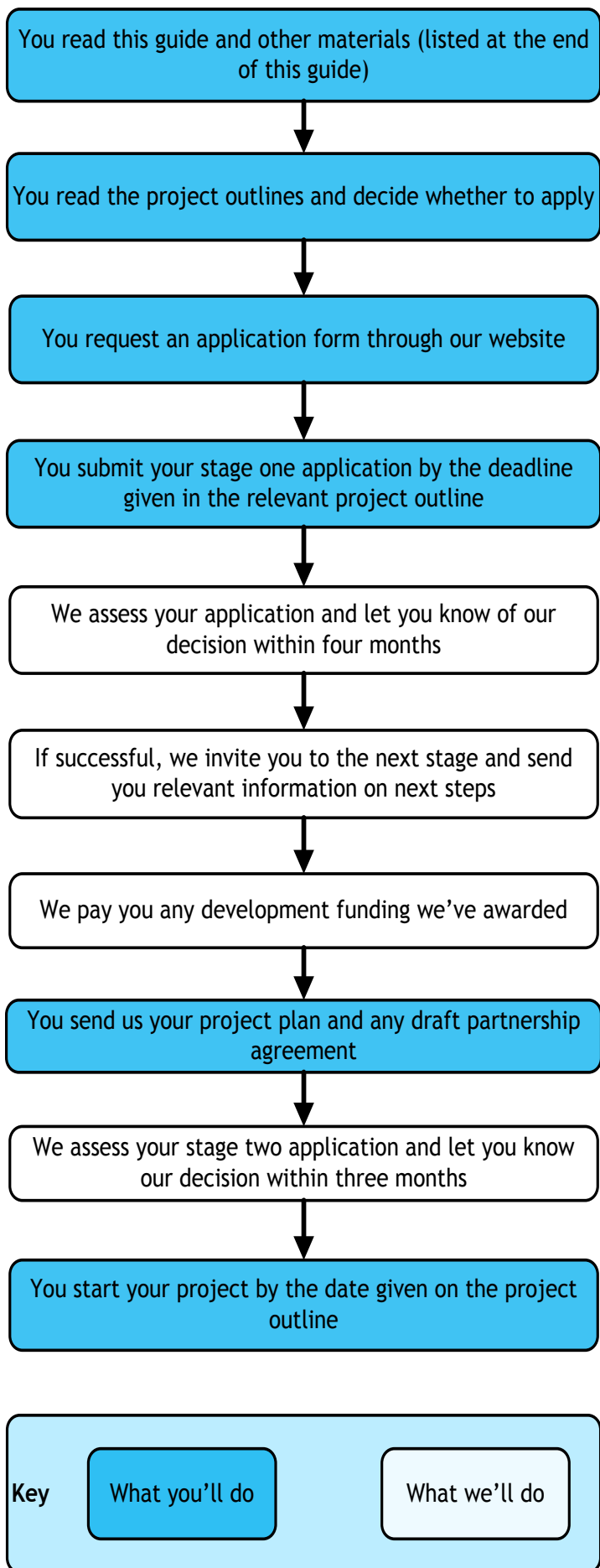
A project outline will typically include:

- ✓ the geographical areas where the project must be delivered
- ✓ the funding available and deadline by when all funding must be spent and claimed by
- ✓ relevant background information, including the fit with existing provision or local, regional and national strategies
- ✓ a description of what the project must achieve and any specific skills or experience applicants must have
- ✓ the minimum level of ESF outputs and results that the project must deliver during its lifetime
- ✓ who the project must work with
- ✓ the deadline for applications.

#### **Requesting an application**

If after reading the project outlines you identify an opportunity that your organisation can deliver, whether in partnership with others or on your own, you can request an application form on our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf)

Once we know who you are and you've registered your interest, you'll be able to download a stage one application form. You can apply to deliver more than one project outline, but you'll need to request a separate application form for each opportunity you are interested in.



### Stage one application

The stage one application form includes further guidance that will help with completing the form. We also tell you how we will assess your application.

We must receive the application by the deadline given on the project outline. We'll only look at the information provided on the form, so please don't send us any additional documentation.

Once we receive your stage one application, we will check the lead organisation is eligible before starting our assessment. We will also talk to the relevant ESIF Committee and our own local officers for the area, as their feedback will help inform our assessment.

Our funding officers will make a recommendation to our Decision Making Panel, which will then decide which applications to take through to stage two. We'll let applicants know our decision within four months from the deadline for applications.

### Development funding

As part of the stage one application form, applicants are able to request up to £50,000 to help with developing detailed project plans if they are invited to stage two. This funding is in addition to the amount available for your project.

### Stage two application

The organisation that submitted the stage one application to us should continue to lead any partnership in developing a detailed project plan. We'll also need any organisations that will be involved in a partnership to sign up to a draft partnership agreement. Full guidance on writing these documents will be made available to the successful applicants from stage one.

We'll give applicants up to six months to submit their detailed plans, depending on the size and complexity of the project. Once we receive all the stage two applications relating to a specific project outline, it'll take us around three months to make our final decision.

### Support and development

We have put a support team in place that will work with organisations as they develop their stage two plans. Our funding officers will be available to provide direct support and may also visit applicants to discuss their proposals. We will also be working with a partnership of Baker Tilly and Ecorys to provide advice to applicants on the various requirements of European funding.



## How do I find out more?

There is a lot more guidance about Building Better Opportunities on our website [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/esf)

We have produced other publications that you should be familiar with before making a start on your application. You must read the:

- **Project outlines** to decide whether your organisation can deliver one of these.
- **Guide to delivering European funding** as this provides a detailed explanation of the monitoring and delivery requirements involved.
- **Summary of our partnership requirements** as it is likely you'll be working with other organisations.
- **Frequently Asked Questions.**

If you decide to apply, register on our website to request an application form.

If you can't find what you're looking for, email us at [esf@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:esf@biglotteryfund.org.uk)

## Glossary of terms

### **Building Better Opportunities**

Also described as the “programme”, it brings together funding from the Big Lottery Fund and the European Social Fund to help tackle the poverty and social exclusion faced by the most disadvantaged people in England.

### **European Social Fund (ESF)**

One part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme 2014 to 2020, which aims to improve local growth and create jobs by investing in innovation, business, skills and employment.

Our programme is just one strand in a range of funding opportunities that will be available across England through the ESIF Growth Programme. To find out more, go to the Government website [www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding](http://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding)

### **Lead organisation**

The organisation that submits an application form. They will have legal responsibility for all money we award.

### **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

ESIF money is divided between 39 LEP areas across England. These are partnerships, between local authorities and businesses, set up to help determine economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within local areas.

### **LEP area ESIF sub-committee**

Has determined the priorities that projects funded locally must deliver. The project outlines respond to these priorities and we will report to them on the progress of each project in their area.

### **Managing Authority**

The Department for Work and Pensions. It is responsible for administering the European Social Fund in England.

### **Outputs**

Collected when a participant first joins the project, recording things like employment status, age, education and household situation. For example, if the participant is: long-term unemployed; below 25 years of age; without qualifications; in a single parent household.

### **Participants**

An individual who is benefiting directly from the project.

**Project outcomes**

A description of the wider changes the project will bring about. They can occur at several levels, including individual, community or organisation-wide.

**Project outlines**

Describes each specific funding opportunity available through the programme and sets out what we want each project to achieve. We'll only fund one project per outline. Applicants must respond to one of these when submitting a stage one application form.

**Results**

Results are what the participant achieves due to them being engaged on the project. They are recorded on the last date the participant took part in an activity.

**Targets**

Made up of the outputs and results that are listed on the project outline. They must be achieved during the lifetime of the project.