



Sector Support Funding (SSF) Revenue Programme

Application Guidance Notes

1 Background

- 1.1 On 9th June 2017 the SELEP Board approved the use of the Growing Places Fund (GPF) Revenue grant to fund a programme of works to support the sector focussed activities that are being undertaken on a pan-LEP basis and predominantly led by the SELEP working groups.
- 1.2 The Board agreed the programme of total funding available in each year would be up to £500,000 of revenue grants per annum for three financial years, beginning 2017/18.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 Since its inception, SELEP has enabled a number of sector based working groups that function across the LEP area. At time of writing those groups are:

- Transport
- Coastal Communities
- Creative
- Housing
- Growth Hubs
- Rural
- Skills
- Universities
- Tourism
- Social Enterprise

These groups are subject to change and there are many other groups that are working across the SELEP area, focussed on sector or common issues on a more informal basis.

- 2.2 The working groups are made up of representatives of any number of different organisations who give their time on voluntary basis as the benefits of cross-working have been clear. However, as these groups have matured, it has become clear that there is additional work or projects that the group could put into place that would bring further benefits but finding funding for these projects is increasingly difficult.
- 2.3 When the Growing Places Fund (GPF) grant was originally awarded, a proportion of the fund was earmarked as revenue. The intention had been to transfer this revenue into a wider property fund; but as the decision was made to not take forward that fund; the revenue funding became available to be used elsewhere.

2.4 The purpose of the SSF is therefore to support one-off, discrete pieces of work of a pan-LEP nature with a sector focus that brings demonstrable benefits and has support across the LEP. All applications must meet the criteria detailed in section 3 and be submitted in line with the process in section 4.

2.5 Further guidance on Value for Money can be found in Appendix 1 and copy of the application form can be found at Appendix 2.

3. Criteria

3.1 All funding applications must meet the following criteria:

Criterion	Notes
Scope must be pan LEP	The project must be able to demonstrate impact in at least three of the SELEP federated areas, preferably all four
Federated areas must support the project	Project sponsors must discuss the project with Federated Boards or their lead officer/Director for every federated area impacted
The outcomes must align with SELEPs overarching objective to <i>create the conditions</i> for increased jobs and homes , safeguarding existing jobs and raising skill levels	Given the low investment levels of this fund, it is not expected that the projects will directly deliver greater numbers of jobs and homes but applicants must be able to demonstrate how the project will be part of creating the conditions for greater numbers of jobs and homes
The project must align with the SELEP priorities as defined in the Strategic Economic Plan	Applicants should highlight which objective(s) that their project supports. If you are unable to identify an objective to align to, this would suggest your project is not suitable for this funding
The project must be for a discrete piece of work, not ongoing or business as usual (BAU) costs Minimum application value is £25,000 and maximum application value is £200,000	This funding is project based, that is a stand-alone piece of work, with defined start and finish dates and clearly identified inputs and outputs. Bids outside of this range will not be considered
Funding will be awarded as a grant to support revenue spending only	Capital bids will not be considered
Match funding of 30% must be demonstrated	Applicants must be able to evidence at least 30% of match funding at time of application. This match can be either cash or non-cash. The source of this match must be identified and other SELEP funding or SELEP resource (including SELEP working group time) cannot be submitted as match
Projects are expected to be a maximum of 12 months duration. Exceptions will be	Funding can be provided in more than one financial year if the 12 month period straddles two financial



considered on a case by case basis	years
The project must demonstrate Value for Money and comply with the SELEP Assurance Framework	Further guidance on demonstrating Value for Money in a proportional manner can be found in Annex A
The project must be supported by a lead County/Unitary Authority or equivalent	The preferred route of contracting would be with one of the County/Unitary authorities. Other contracts will be considered on a case by case basis

4. Process for Applications

- 4.1 The process that applicants need to follow is detailed below. Applicants should make contact with SELEP Secretariat before submitting an application to discuss their bid. In the first instance this should be via the SELEP lead for the relevant working group. If there isn't a working group for the particular sector focus of the bid, please use the general contact form hello@southeastlep.com and the most suitable contact will respond.
- 4.2 Bidding Period: the fund works on an open call basis. The fund is open for bids each year until the allocation for that year is depleted. Information on the current value of funds available in each year can be found via your SELEP contact, see page - southeastlep.com/growth-deal/sector-support-fund, or by emailing the Secretariat using the link above at 4.1. The total allocation value for each year is £500,000.
- 4.3 Prioritisation: the fund will be deployed on a first come first served basis for those projects that meet the criteria above. It should be noted that projects are expected to complete within 12 months of application so it is not advisable to submit applications far in advance of need.
- 4.4 Submission: all applications should be made using the application form at Annex B and submitted via the hello@southeastlep.com email address, and your SELEP contact should be copied in.
- 4.5 Appraisal: bids will be appraised by the SELEP Secretariat and the SELEP Accountable Body. This is to ensure that the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework to ensure that all investments are independently evaluated are met. The appraisal will be proportionate to the value of the investment. The appraisal will be made to ensure the bid fits with the criteria as laid out in section 3. If your project does not meet all of the criteria, it is not suitable for this funding. In this case, please discuss further with the SELEP Secretariat who may be able to help you identify other, more suitable funding sources.
- 4.6 Approval: following a successful appraisal, SELEP Secretariat will recommend your project to SELEP Strategic Board for approval. SELEP Strategic Board meets on a quarterly basis and the timing of Board meetings should be considered when you submit your application. Applications must be submitted at least six weeks in advance of a Strategic Board meeting in order to be considered at said meeting. If your project requires confirmation of funding before the next available Strategic Board, please contact the Secretariat. Approval can be sought through other routes, but only where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.



- 4.7 Post Approval: the grant will be paid to the recipient by Essex County Council, who acts as Accountable Body for the SELEP. A grant agreement between the recipient and ECC must be in place before any funds are transferred. Payment terms and spend reporting arrangements will depend on the organisation selected as recipient. If the recipient is one of SELEPs county or unitary authorities, arrangements will be similar to those in place for LGF and GPF but other arrangements made be necessary if the recipient party is not a local authority, for example.
- 4.8 Monitoring and Evaluation project sponsors will be expected to report on the progress of the project and to provide information to allow the evaluation of the effectiveness of the project. Again, this will be proportionate to the size of the investment made. The requirements of monitoring and evaluation will be included in the grant agreement. Project progress and impact, and any changes to project scope will be reported to the Strategic Board.
- 4.9 All projects and all recipients must comply with the SELEP Assurance Framework at all times. It is strongly suggested that any potential applicant spends time familiarising themselves with the Framework before submitting any bid. **The current Assurance Framework can be accessed [here](#).**

Annex A – Value for Money Guidance

1. The Sector Support Funding (SSF) scheme is intended to provide low value revenue support to those key areas of SELEP work that are cross cutting across the SELEP Federated areas. This annex focusses on the requirement for all projects requesting investment to demonstrate Value for Money (VfM).
2. It is recognised that any VfM appraisal undertaken should be proportionate to the investment requested and be limited to a consideration of the public sector financial contribution. Bids made via the SSF programme will not be in excess of £200,000 and therefore will not be subject to a full economic appraisal that would be used to assess Local Growth Fund or Growing Places Fund projects, but project sponsors should take a best endeavours approach to monetise the benefits expected from the project and make a comparison to the investment requested to ensure that the benefits do exceed the cost of the project.
3. It is not expected that this level of investment would result in large economic benefits such as jobs or homes, but the investment MUST relate to some kind of output or outcome. As laid out in the criteria, projects submitted for funding should not be Business as Usual (BAU) type activity or to support operational costs. If you are struggling to identify direct outputs that are linked to your project it is likely that the costs are therefore operational/BAU and not applicable for funding.
4. Where outputs are identified, efforts must be made to translate these into financial terms. This could include the unlocking of further or additional funding, the bringing forward of financial benefits (such as the earlier realisation of fees/income or taxation such as Business Rates). Another example might be the avoidance of cost where a cross border piece of work can be undertaken thus preventing this being duplicated across the LEP.
5. Given the wide nature of the types of projects that are able to come forward it is difficult to provide definitive advice as to how benefits should be calculated, but the Secretariat can offer individual advice to any potential project sponsors. All calculations of benefit valuation should be provided as part of the application.
6. When benefits that can be directly linked to the SSF investment have been converted into financial terms – i.e. pounds sterling, they should be compared to the requested investment as a ratio. That is, benefits divided by costs. This will give a Benefit/Cost Ratio value. A high VfM project will have a BCR in excess of 2:1,; a borderline project will have a BCR of 1.5:1, but will still be considered given the low financial value of the projects in projects where additional benefits are anticipated, but can't be readily quantified.
7. If your project does not meet the lowest BCR threshold of 1.5:1, and you believe this is due to the difficulty in converting benefits into financial terms, then please provide as much narrative around this as possible and an assessment will be made before a recommendation is made to Strategic Board.
8. SELEP is keen that a VfM assessment can be made in a light touch and proportionate way but in a way that ensures that any investment made by the Partnership gives benefit to the tax payer who ultimately funds these investments.