

Agenda item 6

Sector Support Fund (SSF) submissions

Background

- The *SELEP Sector Support Fund (SSF)* is a revenue grant funding pot to support one-off, discrete pieces of work of a pan-LEP nature with a sector focus. It uses Growing Places Fund (GPF) Revenue Grant to fund a programme of works to support the sector-focussed activities being undertaken on a pan-LEP basis, predominantly led by the SELEP Working Groups. Each SSF project must be hosted by an upper-tier authority which acts as the Local Accountable Body (responsible for the grant agreements). Each project must also have endorsement from the relevant Federated Board of the lead upper-tier authority, normally sought according to the geographic location of the project lead/promoter. To date twelve SSF project applications have been successful.
- At the last SELEP Board meeting on 17 Apr 2020 it was agreed that the remaining £206,500 in the SSF pot would not be diverted to a specific Covid-19 recovery project, and SSF would instead remain open.

Current SSF submissions

- Since the last SELEP Board meeting, three SSF bids have been submitted: ***Buy Local Southeast*** (bid for £69,510), ***Teaching for Growth*** (£74,000) and ***South East Export Development (SEED)*** (£129,860). Summary information on all three bids is given in Appendix 1. Note that the Teaching for Growth project has already been endorsed by TES on 16 Mar 2020 prior to its submission to SELEP.
- Note also that the total combined ask of these three projects is £273,370, *meaning that the fund is now oversubscribed*. The projects will be taken to the SELEP Board meeting on 12 Jun 2020 for a funding decision, but as SSF is oversubscribed, SELEP will not be able to approve funding for all three projects.

TES endorsement and recommendation

- As usual for SSF bids, TES members are asked to consider the ‘strategic fit’ of the projects in helping to deliver SELEP’s strategic objectives. In this instance however, *we cannot endorse all of the bids*, so TES members are also asked to consider the wider issues in regard to the Covid-19 crisis – i.e. can the projects truly deliver and achieve their outputs in light of the crisis, and could they possibly provide any additional benefits in terms of the wider economic recovery.
- From discussions at Senior Officer level it seems clear that the *Buy Local* and *Teaching for Growth* projects are very much favoured by all of the federated areas, ticking all of the SSF criteria whilst also providing wider recovery support. Buy Local is clearly a good project supporting a vital sector across the whole LEP area, and stands out as a true Covid-19 recovery scheme. It also provides the opportunity to link into local tourism through collaboration with established brands such as Sussex Modern. Teaching for Growth, already endorsed by TES before the crisis began, is an excellent project as Skills will always be a key area for us to support. The project could indirectly promote recovery by helping the industry over the coming months through digital skills and online learning to support remote learning delivery.
- The *SEED* project is not so well supported, as officers have expressed real concerns about its overall viability. Issues have been raised around the cost breakdown, VFM is difficult to justify, and the timing is difficult given we won’t know what the tariffs will be until the end of the year (EU exit isn’t mentioned). But those issues have actually been superseded by the current crisis; this is very obviously pre-Covid-19 bid, and even though it makes reference to the crisis, the project is essentially built on trade fairs and exhibitions so simply doesn’t work in the current (and ongoing) circumstances – it’s just not viable. If the SEED bid could be scaled right down so that the ask doesn’t exceed the overall pot, and if the project could be reimagined somehow to provide ‘virtual’ trade fairs and exhibitions, then it *may* be more viable, but even in that circumstance we’d want to view it with caution.
- **TES members are asked to endorse up to two of the SSF project bids, and to give our SELEP Directors a clear steer on which projects to support at the SELEP Board meeting on 12 Jun 2020. It is recommended that TES members support the *Buy Local* and *Teaching for Growth* projects only.**

Buy Local Southeast – supporting the food and drink sector during and post Covid-19 <i>Total project cost: £99,300</i> SSF ask: £69,510 <i>Match: £29,790</i>	
Summary and Aims	Outcomes and Value Added
<p>The Food & Drink sector is moving up on the regional government agenda. In past years, food tourism has been growing in the southeast, British food (Buy British) – in particular its wine – has become hugely popular in and outside of the UK and customers have grown more environmentally aware, shifting their attention to local and sustainable food.</p> <p>Covid-19 has brought the role of the Food & Drink sector in our regional rural economy into sharp focus. The forced shutdown of pubs, restaurants and cafes has had a disastrous effect on the hospitality sector and its supply chain of growers, producers and distributors. Now is the moment to capitalise on a renewed focus on local buying to support all businesses in the Food & Drink sector to weather the Covid-19 storm and rebuild a sustainable business in the recovery period.</p> <p>The project proposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regional website and portal to signpost customers to local Food & Drink businesses showing the SELEP region, which is a centralised Food & Drink platform for the area aimed at consumers (B2C page) and businesses (B2B page) looking to buy local in the southeast. • A SELEP area wide Buy Local Food & Drink marketing campaign focussed on local producers, retailers and followed by hospitality and tourism experiences. • Central database for Food & Drink businesses in the SELEP area. • A series of business recovery support activities for Food & Drink businesses based on a sector Covid-19 impact and recovery survey. This could include training, 1-2-1 support, connecting suppliers with buyers, and knowledge exchange conference. <p>This work is supported by the need from local producers to develop business relations with local wholesale, retail and hospitality sectors to build their businesses. Additionally, a bespoke business support programme is required as expressed by the participants of the Good Food Growth Campaign (another SSF project 2019-20).</p>	<p>The project has a BCR of 48/1 and highlights the significant potential for the development of SELEP’s Food & Drink sector.</p> <p>Outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the wealth of local produce regionally available • Increased B2C and B2B trade for businesses listed • A more joined-up business sector network and community, improving communication, information-sharing and collaboration • Buy Local campaign builds confidence and encourages businesses in recovery, bringing new drive, creativity and energy into the sector • Business recovery support will lead to at least 10 new products/services developed and taken to market. • Additional employment – target of 30 FTE posts (existing and start-ups). <p>The Buy Local marketing campaign will drive customer and business traffic to the regional website, as well as the County sites it feeds into, and ultimately to the businesses listed on there. A regional map will attract a larger (UK, London and international) audience, which opens up regional, national and potentially international export opportunities, as well as the attention of the large UK retailers looking to provide a ‘local’ offering to their customers.</p> <p>Covid-19 has seen a surge in businesses taking up home delivery or takeaway services, or pivoting in other (often very innovative) ways. Project training provided on developing and further building these services with available digital technologies and successfully adapting one’s brand and business strategy in line with this operational change, will lead to at least 10 new products developed and taken to market.</p> <p>Increase in trade across the Food & Drink sector in the SELEP region will lead to an increase in FTEs (the estimate above is a very conservative one).</p>

Teaching for Growth – delivering skills of the future through teaching: (EXTENSION PROPOSAL)*Total project cost: £124,000***SSF ask: £74,000***Match: £50,000*

Summary and Aims	Outcomes and Value Added
<p>The SELEP Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) confirms skills as a top priority for the SELEP area. It's been identified as a cross-cutting theme and priority for the LIS. Through the Skills Strategy, a shortage of tutors aligned to growth sectors was identified.</p> <p>In Nov 2018 the Skills Advisory Group (now Skills Working Group) submitted a successful SSF proposal to address this. Due to SSF availability at this time, a scaled-down version was agreed. This has been very successful and illustrated the high need. Therefore, an extension is proposed. The project is being delivered by FE Sussex (working with counterparts in Essex and Kent).</p> <p>The project has already delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99 bursaries to suitably qualified participants to train as teachers in the post-16 sector by studying for teacher training qualifications at Level 3, 4+. • 45 of these have been awarded to East Sussex colleges/ providers. Sectors include agriculture and land based (34), IT, digital & creative (2), health and care (5), professional, scientific & technical (1), education (1). • The establishment of www.becomealecturer.org to answer generic questions regarding post-16 teaching as a career and signpost enquirers to vacancies. • The development and implementation of a high-profile publicity campaign using web, social media and radio to raise the awareness of opportunities the post-16 sector provides for a second career to industrial practitioners. • The production of videos featuring industrial practitioners who have become teachers, available via www.becomealecturer.org covering digital, finance, catering, construction, engineering, health and social care, and including East Sussex colleges such as the digital video featuring East Sussex College Group here. 	<p>The lack of tutors represents one of the biggest barriers and bottlenecks in the skills system. The project represents a constructive, effective and proactive approach. It is also an opportunity for SELEP to be a national leader in tackling the issue and influencing government policy by having a proven model in place rather than simply raising this as a barrier. There has already been a lot of interest from other LEP areas with similar issues, viewing the project as best practice. This also supports adults who may wish to change careers or work more locally.</p> <p>An extension would specifically enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 new entrant teachers in skill shortage areas joining post-16 education & training providers, studying for Level 3, 4 and 5 teacher training qualifications. • 45 (of the 60) new entrant teachers qualified and being retained in the sector beyond one year. • 200 tutors recruited through the awareness raising campaign. • Increased reach of the project across a broader socio-economic range of teachers. • Greater reach to SELEP sector skill priority areas. • Overall 260 tutors each training 100 individuals would represent 26,000 individuals trained aligned to key sectors. This represents excellent value for money and scale. • 5 additional sectors featured in the video (i.e. food and land-based). • The further development and subsequent legacy maintenance of the www.becomealecturer.org website for a period of 12 months. <p>With specific regard to Covid-19 response, note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project focuses on attracting and supporting people from industry into sector relevant teaching. Supporting people into new careers such as teaching will become even more relevant in the recovery phase, particularly for those who have been made redundant. • The project provides opportunities to grow the digitally active teaching workforce and assessors of tomorrow thereby enabling greater online and remote delivery of technical education building upon lessons learnt during the Covid-19 outbreak. • A robust and effective skills system will be vital to recovery and ensuring that delivery is focused on the skills required for the economy post Covid-19. • The project can be adapted to address digital and online learning training requirements to ensure the skills system is as robust as possible in remote learning delivery.

South East Export Development (SEED)*Total project cost: £169,860***SSF ask: £129,860***Match: £40,000*

Summary and Aims	Outcomes and Value Added
<p>Exporting helps businesses grow, become more innovative and productive, but export levels in the SELEP area have tended to be quite low. Now more than ever, exporting will be a key way for firms to become more resilient as spreading sales across a range of international markets can help to reduce business risk and aid recovery as the Covid-19 crisis begins to abate.</p> <p>SEED will seek to address the issues and challenges around exporting, such as a lack of access to international contacts and a lack of internal capacity to focus on export activity, whilst considering how best to ensure that SELEP companies can be best supported to take advantage of opportunities to export their products and services as different international markets begin to open up again.</p> <p>The project will deliver the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business engagement: a series of communication activities to recruit companies from the target sectors wishing to expand into international markets. • Export preparation: working to help selected companies get 'export-ready' through 1-2-1 and group training activities. • A SELEP stand at an international trade show: dedicated space for 20 companies at a major international trade show allowing them to showcase their products/services to global audiences from the right industry sectors. • A SELEP trade mission: to enable a further 30 companies to visit the same show to carry out market research and participate in presentations. <p>Although most international trade fairs have been cancelled in 2020, it is anticipated that such activities will resume in 2021 and it is important that companies from the SELEP area are at the forefront of such opportunities to promote their products to an international audience to aid economic recovery.</p>	<p>As a pilot, the project will support companies from a priority industry sector (either Life Sciences, Agri-Food, Environmental Technology or Digital & Creative) which is of strategic importance to the SELEP area and with significant export potential. The project will focus primarily on manufacturers of products within the chosen sector (as it is easier to display products at a trade show), but companies offering services will also have the opportunity to participate, especially through a trade mission.</p> <p>SEED will deliver a tailored programme of support to businesses which are 'new to export' or which have significant potential to internationalise and expand activities into different export markets.</p> <p>The project will provide intensive support to 50 businesses from the SELEP area with an estimated split per federated area as follows: Essex 12; South Essex 8; Medway 5; Kent 16; East Sussex 9.</p> <p>Expected outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills and knowledge gained by participating SMEs (50 SMEs with new knowledge and boosted internal export capacity). • International exposure for SMEs (50 SMEs exposed to new international markets). • Sales leads generated for companies (20 leads per exhibiting company gained at the trade shows). • New international business contacts made (200 new contacts made by companies participating in trade mission leading to international partnership or cooperation agreements). • Export orders/contracts secured (new export orders in the year following the project implementation). • Increased turnover for exhibiting companies (10% increase in turnover between the start of the project and 6 months after the end of the project).