

Project Change Request

Section A – Details

Project Name	South East Export Development (SEED) Project
Lead Officer	Steve Samson
Lead Authority	Kent County Council
Date Submitted	11 August 2021

Section B – Justification

Description of Change	Extension request to end of October 2022
Reason for Making Change	<p>The partnership has been facing challenges with implementing the project around business engagement. We have struggled to secure interest in participating in the project due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and Brexit which has affected the ability of small businesses to focus resource on export activity at the present time. We have 22 companies signed up to the project to date, but this is lower than anticipated. The main business-facing partners, Sussex and Kent Invicta Chambers have highlighted the following issues that are affecting the appetite and capacity of SMEs to engage with the project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Import/export activity has significantly reduced in the last year and continues to be slow (including low take up on export documentation, customs declarations, and other related core export support services). 2. Global supply chains have been badly affected by the pandemic - many sectors are experiencing challenges with sourcing goods which are in short supply (microelectronics, components, rubber, wood, cement, steel, chemicals, raw materials, etc). Suppliers are reporting significant delays and companies are facing significant increases in costs. 3. There are now added complications of customs declarations/ VAT changes which firms are still struggling to deal with. 4. There are also problems with logistics (shortages of HGV drivers and increased shipping costs) and skills (e.g. in the food and drink sector). 5. Many businesses are still having to deal with the current issues linked to the pandemic such as a lack of income in the last year, people still on furlough, starting to pay back loans, etc and also changes linked to Brexit. <p>Ultimately, these factors have led to a low appetite to be involved in the SEED project given the current challenges businesses are facing and internationalisation has certainly become much less of a priority for many companies.</p> <p>We are of course continuing to implement the project with good progress being made with ‘in-market’ contacts to discuss the planned market insight activities and virtual trade missions as well as good progress on promotional videos being made. We will soon be in a position to promote tangible activities with dates etc. that should result in attracting more interest from SELEP-based firms, along with some more targeted ‘top-down’ SME</p>

	<p>selection activity based on advice about demand for products and services from our international in-market contacts.</p> <p>In the last month SEED partners have also been able to arrange the delivery of a virtual / hybrid programme with the Department for International Trade in Hong Kong for the HOFEX food & hospitality tradeshow (7-9 Sept 2021).</p> <p>Given that the issues highlighted above are likely to continue affecting businesses for a while yet, we wanted to raise the question of whether extending the project end date might be a possibility to give the partners more time to engage with companies over the coming months and perhaps deliver individual activities such as each trade mission over a longer period of time to maximise company involvement and project impacts.</p> <p>We know that this is not a unique situation, and that other business support organisations and programmes are also experiencing low engagement at the moment, but we wanted to assure you that the partnership is doing all it can to promote the project and deliver what we set out in the original application.</p>
Alternative Options Considered	Continue with delivery of project as planned but with support for fewer companies than originally anticipated.
Stakeholders Consulted	SEED project partners and business support organisations.
Working Group Consulted	N/A
Federated Board Approval	N/A

Section C - Impact

Impact on total project cost	No impact on total project cost.
Impact of project delivery timescales	If a further extension were to be granted, elements of the project would be delivered after May 2022 giving more time for the partners to engage with companies over coming months and deliver activities such as the various trade missions over a longer period of time to maximise company involvement.
Impact on project outputs	We could lower the risk of falling short of supporting the target number of businesses (100). To date, we have got 22 companies signed up (Kent – 14, East Sussex - 4, Essex – 3)
Impact on project Value for Money	Possible impact on project Value for Money if we are unable to connect around 100 SELEP SMEs with potential buyers / distributors / customers in-market by the current project end date (May 2022).
Impact on SELEP objectives	No impact on SELEP objectives.

Section D - To be completed by SELEP

Change Request Number	SSF009
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SELEP SSF Change Request Template

Has review of Business Case been completed?			
Has the change been considered by Strategic Board or Chief Executive?	Chief Executive Officer		
Change agreed with SELEP CEO:		Date	
Comment			

Guidance

1. When is a change request required?

The types of scheme change to be reported include, but are not limited to:

Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change to how the SSF will be spent - Change to total cost of a project - Delay to the spend of SSF by 6 months
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change to project from original scope as agreed in the application form - Change to intended scheme benefits
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change to the expected outcomes agreed in the approved project Business Case

This change request must be agreed between the scheme promoter and lead county/unitary authority for the project, prior to submission to SELEP.

If you are unclear whether a change request is required or not please speak to the SELEP Capital Programme Manager.

When the SELEP Secretariat or Accountable Body advises that the completion of a change request is required, it will be at the discretion of the SELEP Secretariat and Accountable Body to agree whether the change requires Strategic Board approval. SELEP Strategic Board will be made aware of all change requests as part of the SSF update. Additional information can be found in the original Grant Agreement.