ERDF and ESF in London 2014-20: Questions & Answers
(Updated 12 February 2015)

In 2013 the Government invited Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) across England to submit a strategy for using the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), known as a European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) strategy, for the 2014-20 programme period.

This Q&A is updated on a regular basis to reflect the latest position on the 2014-20 ERDF and ESF programmes.

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Overview

1. Where can I find the London draft European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) strategy?

   London’s strategy can be found [here](#). It sets out the types of activities that may be funded by ESF and ERDF. The strategy may change; it hasn’t been signed-off by the Government as it is dependent on the Government first reaching England-wide agreement with the European Commission; this isn’t expected until the first part of 2015.

   Access to ESF funds will be, for the most part, co-financed by national ‘Opt-in’ organisations including the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Big Lottery Fund.

   Access to ERDF will follow an open, competitive bidding process.

2. Has the LEP consulted on the 2014-20 strategy?

   Yes, during autumn 2013, [consultation took place](#).

3. NEW: When will the new ESF and ERDF programmes launch?

   The Government is currently planning for the ESF and ERDF programmes to launch in [Mid-March 2015](#).
However, this date may slip, depending on the progress of the Government/European Commission negotiations on the content, budget, outputs, results and governance of the England-wide ESF and ERDF ‘Operational Programmes’.

Calls for Proposals for ESF and ERDF can only be formally launched following the Government’s green-light.

4. Why are the programmes starting late?

This is due to the lengthy negotiations between the Government and European Commission. But London is not alone. All programmes in England, in fact across all Member States are starting late.

The funds allocated for 2014 will be rolled forward, but it means there will be less time overall to commit the funds to projects and less time for projects to spend it. It is likely that all funds will need to be spent by the end of 2022.

In December 2014, the European Commissioner for Regional Policy said – for ERDF - that quality will not be sacrificed for speed of approving programmes: “The adoption of an Operational Programme is a lengthy, thorough process, in order to achieve the best results with the interests of the citizens at heart.” By the end of 2014, across the EU, 148 ERDF Operational Programmes out of the 311 received by the European Commission have been adopted.

5. Will the pre-election period preceding the General Election on 7 May 2015 impact on the start and/or implementation of the programmes?

We are awaiting guidance from the Government.

What is the pre-election period (also known as ‘purdah’)? It is the period of time from when an election is announced until after the election is held. Guidance is issued to civil servants on the principles that they should observe in relation to the conduct of Government business in the run-up to elections. The period will start on 30 March and run up until election day on 7 May.

6. How much ESF/ERDF money does the London programme have?

The Government has notionally allocated €791 million (about £678 million) to the London Enterprise Panel, but until agreement is reached between the Government and European Commission the amount is subject to change. Also, as the programme operates in Euros, the Sterling amount will vary as the exchange rate fluctuates.

The LEP has proposed that most of the funding (about 75% - about £502m) supports ESF activity; with about 25% (about £176m) allocated to ERDF.

7. I have received funding under the 2007-13 programme; can I obtain funding under the new programme?

There are no transition arrangements; the 2007-13 and 2014 programmes are separate.
For ERDF, all applicants will need to follow the same England-wide application procedures. For ESF programmes delivered through Opt-in organisations, applications will go through the organisation’s own procurement procedures.

All applicants will need to ensure proposals fit with the 2014-20 ERDF and ESF programmes. The new programmes are not a straight read-across from 2007-13.

The track record of previous recipients of ERDF/ESF in London will be taken into account. This includes management and delivery performance.

Applicants in previous receipt of ERDF or ESF funding will be expected to illustrate the results of any evaluation for comparative activity.

8. **Will there be a gap between my 2007-13 funding coming to an end and applying for funding under 2014-20?**

Yes, this may arise. The delay in approving the programmes will have a knock-on effect for some organisations.

Although an organisation may have previously received funding under the 2007-13 programmes, either directly as a Grant Recipient or as a partner, it does not mean the organisation will be successful under the new 2014-20 programme.

If the London ERDF programme launches in March 2015, Funding Agreements are unlikely to be issued before late summer 2015, with first ERDF payments made to organisations towards the end of 2015.

9. **Will there be minimal bureaucracy in the new programmes?**

Government is working to ensure that the rules and processes are clear for the new programme so that applicants know what to expect; it won’t necessarily be less complex. The GLA has been contributing to the Government’s work to clarify and streamline rules and processes.

For ERDF, Government has been working to simplify the way indirect costs are accounted for. At an ERDF workshop held at City Hall in November 2014, an officer from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) noted:

“In the 2014-20 ERDF programme the Managing Authority would be using the simplified costs option (SCO) of applying a flat rate of 15% of direct salary costs to calculate indirect costs, or overheads. The Managing Authority (for ERDF this is DCLG) was also considering using other SCO such as the 25% flat rate allowable for research, development and innovation projects, which meet the Horizon 2020 criteria.” (DCLG)

We are awaiting DCLG guidance on whether the latter will be possible.

Organisations interested in applying for ESF and/or ERDF funds may wish to speak with previous or existing recipients of funding, to discuss, first-hand, the ins and outs of
running a project. External training courses are also available on managing European funds, delivered by private organisations.

Applying for funding

10. When can I submit an application for funding?

Once the programmes have been given the go-ahead by the European Commission then we anticipate the Government will give us the green-light to launch. We don’t plan to delay launching. The Government is currently planning for March 2015 for ESF and ERDF, but this date may slip.

For ESF programmes delivered through Opt-in organisations, applications will go through the Opt-in Organisations who will be responsible for procuring ESF activity.

11. Will I be able to apply for funding retrospectively?

In other words, seek funding from a ‘start date’ prior to submitting an application? We are awaiting confirmation from Government if this will be possible. For ERDF projects and ESF directly-funded projects, it is unlikely. Separate rules are likely to apply for match funding used by ESF Opt-in Organisations.

12. NEW: If my project is successful in being awarded ERDF when should I plan for it to start?

There is a two stage process of appraisal.

Assuming the first call is launched in mid-March then it is likely that the deadline for outline applications will be the end of April, and if successful, applicants will be invited to submit a Full Application any time up to mid-July. Funding agreements are unlikely to be issued for successful projects until early autumn. Please note that these dates are subject to Government launching the first Call in March. Full details including firm dates for submissions will be issued with the first Call for projects.

13. NEW: Will applications for ESF and ERDF be made electronically?

Yes, the Government is establishing a new IT system which we understand will be available in late summer 2015. In the meantime an interim IT system will be used; applicants will submit applications online but will be required to submit some information manually outside of the IT system. Government will make instructions available to applicants.

14. Where can I find an application form?

These are not yet available. The Government is finalising the applications forms. Applying for ERDF will be done by completing fields online, rather than via a paper-based application form; and will be accessible via the Government’s website. We expect online access to the application forms to be available once the programme has gone live.
There will be two stages to the ERDF application process: Outline Application and Full Application.

However, if you would like to see a copy of the *draft* ERDF Outline Application or ERDF Full Application, please contact us. In so doing, note that the forms are subject to change and should not be filled in; and, as stated above, the final versions will be electronic. We regret we are not yet in a position to answer questions on the content, role or use of the forms.

Guidance and forms for ESF Opt-in organisations will be found on the websites of the relevant organisations. For the majority of activity procured under the Skills Funding Agency organisations must be registered on the register of training organisations.

15. **Will there be one application form for both directly-funded ESF and ERDF projects?**

Yes. Applications will be made online. We understand that an applicant will be able to select ‘ESF’, ‘ERDF’ or both, and the relevant, tailored questions will appear on the screen.

16. **How are the 2014-20 programmes different from 2007-13?**

The ESF and ERDF programmes are both England-wide programmes for 2014-20. For 2007-13 London had its own ERDF programme, as did other English regions.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (including the London Enterprise Panel) and partners are playing a role in the new programmes. LEPs have been allocated notional sums of ERDF/ESF money for 2014-20.

The activities that will be supported by the new programmes are not a straight read-across from 2007-13; the activities are based on the LEP’s key objectives for London:

- Skills and Employment
- Enhancing the competitiveness of London’s small and medium sized enterprises
- Strengthening science & technological development and fostering innovation
- Investing in London’s Infrastructure

17. **What outputs and results are projects required to deliver in return for receiving funding?**

A key requirement of any organisation receiving ESF and ERDF is the delivery of targets. The Government is working through its proposals on the suite of Outputs and Results, including targets, with the European Commission as part of its negotiations.

The European Commission and Government will be paying closer-than-ever attention to the achievement of Outputs. EC Regulations for 2014-20 state that a Member State’s ERDF and ESF allocations can be affected by under-performance of Outputs (i.e. funds taken away).

For ERDF it is expected that the suite of Outputs will be consistent across the 39 LEP areas, although each LEP area will deliver against the most appropriate Outputs. The
London ESIF Strategy (page 85) sets out the expected targets to be achieved, but these are not set in stone: the range of Outputs, definitions and target levels are likely to change. We are awaiting clarification.

For ESF there will be a suite of Output and Result indicators. The primary indicators for ESF are not expected to largely be different from the previous programming period. The core results will look at the number of participants into education, employment and/or training. Note: we are awaiting guidance from Government on Outputs, Results and definitions which may change.

18. If the European Commission is now more interested in a results orientated, output measured programme, will applicants be encouraged to reference payments-by-results models for ERDF projects?

We are not expecting the Government to introduce payments-by-results-type methods for ERDF.

19. What are the output indicators for the new ERDF programme?

Please find a link to the ERDF regulations from the European Commission. The Output indicators are listed on pages 11-12.

The Government is currently negotiating which of these common Output indicators should be used in the England ERDF programme. We are awaiting clarification on:
- Which of these ERDF outputs will be applicable in London (e.g. we expect that transport activities will not be supported in London, for example)
- How the output indicators relate to the ERDF Investment Priorities (page 6 of the regulations)
- The output evidence requirements and guidance

The list of outputs should not be seen as exhaustive as the Government may include additional outputs to those set out by the European Commission.

20. Are there similar programmes available for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales?

Yes, there are similar programmes (high level information only).

**Governance**

21. **NEW**: Briefly, who’s who?

The Government is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the ESF and ERDF programmes in England. It has delegated responsibilities to the GLA for the London programme. The GLA’s European Programmes Management Unit (EPMU) will undertake this role as an ‘Intermediate Body’. EPMU reports to the Mayor and to Government.

The Government tasked Local Enterprise Partnerships with setting up bodies for overseeing the ESIF programme in their areas. In London, the London ESIF Committee is being established.
The London ESIF Committee (LEC) is an advisory body which will advise on the implementation of the programmes led by EPMU. The LEC Secretariat function is managed by the LEP Secretariat. The LEC reports to the England Growth Programme Board (which oversees the England programmes and is chaired by Government).

Governance structures are not set in stone until the European Commission approves the ESF and ERDF Operational Programmes, as such the shadow LEC held its inaugural meeting on 22nd January. At this meeting the draft ERDF prospectus and the draft programme of ESF Opt-in provision was presented.

22. What is the role of the GLA?

The GLA will be an ‘Intermediate Body’. This means it will undertake some of the tasks that the Government will be performing across the rest of England. This includes selecting projects, awarding contracts, paying claims and monitoring performance. The GLA will manage, deliver and monitor the 2014-20 programmes.

23. What is the role of LEPs for ESF and ERDF?

Government states that Local Enterprise Partnerships (including the London Enterprise Panel, LEP) will provide strategic oversight of the ESIF strategy’s implementation and delivery. Government has tasked each LEP with establishing a sub-group of the national, EC-regulatory Programme Monitoring Committee, the Growth Programme Board.

In London the LEP sub-group (the London ESIF Committee, LEC) is expected to play a role in advising which applicants receive funding. The GLA will work alongside the LEC in this process.

The GLA, not the LEC, will enter into contract with successful ERDF applicants. The GLA will monitor the delivery of projects.

24. What is a LEP?

In London, the London Enterprise Panel is the Local Enterprise Partnership. Chaired by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, the LEP is the body through which the Mayoralty works with London’s boroughs, business and Transport for London to take a strategic view of the regeneration, employment and skills agenda for London. For further information, please see: London Enterprise Panel

Across England, Local Enterprise Partnerships are partnerships between local authorities and businesses. They decide what the priorities should be for investment in the area. There are 39 LEPs across England, including in London.

25. Who sits on the LEP and how we can engage with them?

You can view profiles of the LEP Members, but please note that a new sub-committee of the LEP is being established: the London ESIF Committee (LEC). The LEC, rather than LEP, will advise on the ERDF and ESF programmes.
The LEC will operate in shadow format until the Operational Programmes are approved. The shadow LEC will meet for the first time at the end of January 2015.

Questions about the role of the LEP may be addressed by visiting lep.london or emailed to londonenterprisepanel@london.gov.uk

The GLA's European Team (erdf@london.gov.uk or esf@london.gov.uk) should be your first point of contact for LEP ESF/ERDF engagement.

26. Who will decide which projects in London receive funding?

The London ESIF Committee (LEC) is expected to play an advisory role in helping the GLA decide which projects receive funding. The GLA will work alongside the LEC in this process. For ERDF projects, the GLA, not the LEC, will enter into contract with successful applicants. For ESF programmes delivered by the Opt-in organisations, the selection process will follow the Opt-in organisations own published selection criteria, which must comply with open and competitive tendering rules. The Opt-in organisation, not the sub-group, will enter into contract with successful applicants.

27. Will there be an appeals process if an application is unsuccessful?

The Government has decided that there will be no appeals process at the Outline or Full Application stage. If an applicant is unsuccessful then, providing a similar call for proposals is launched in the future, it is conceivable that an applicant can re-apply.

We will be happy to give feedback on unsuccessful Outline Applications to those applicants which request it. Applicants successful at the Outline stage will also receive feedback which should be taken on board for developing a Full Application.

28. Do you envisage any change in status or role of LEPs as preferred partners of Government if there is a change of Government in May 2015?

We assume that the LEP role will continue; but cannot predict possible governance changes by any incoming Government.

ESF-specific questions

29. Are there any plans for an ESF briefing session?

Unlike ERDF, where applications are appraised at City Hall, ESF is primarily accessed via open and competitive processes run by Opt-in organisations that provide match funding (Skills Funding Agency, Department for Work and Pensions, Big Lottery Fund). We intend to host joint ‘market warming’ events with the Opt-ins as part of their procurement processes. In addition there will be briefing events run with Boroughs and voluntary sector organisations through ESF Technical Assistance projects. On the 4th of December 2014, LVSC held an information and networking event based on the ESF 2014-20 London programme, for Third Sector organisations. The event included presentations from EPMU, Big Lottery Fund, the SFA and NCVO.
30. How can ESF providers prepare themselves for upcoming tendering rounds?

ESF providers are encouraged to enlist onto the Skills Funding Agency’s (SFA) Register of Training Organisations. Organisations that are eligible for funding from the SFA are listed on the Register. These organisations can be invited to compete in tenders by the SFA, but appearing on the register does not guarantee a contract. Any organisation wishing to provide education and training services on behalf of the SFA are required to apply to enter the register.

31. What contracting geographies will be used for ESF?

The LEP is committed to ensuring that contracts are let at the geographical level that allows the most effective delivery, as such, it is likely that most ESF contracts will be let covering grouping of boroughs.

NEW: The proposed sub-regions/groups of boroughs for the purpose of ESF commissioning is as follows, there are 4 groupings in total;

- Central – Camden, Islington, City of London, Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster
- North and East – Enfield, Haringey, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Greenwich, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney
- South – Richmond, Kingston, Merton, Sutton, Croydon, Bromley, Bexley
- West – Hillingdon, Harrow, Barnet, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Ealing

32. NEW: What ESF programmes are being developed and what groups will be targeted?

The ESF programme is currently being developed; progress to date has established that it will be split into 3 broad areas; provision for young people with a specific focus on 15-24 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), adult employment provision and adult skills provision.

i) The Young People’s programmes being developed are; Preventative NEET, NEET Outreach, Targeted NEET Interventions, Careers Guidance, Careers Clusters, Promoting Apprenticeships, Young BAME People, Gangs Prevention and Intermediate Labour Markets.

ii) The Adult Employment programmes being developed are; Employment Support for Parents, Employment Support for Families, Employment Support for People with Health Conditions and Disabilities, Employment Support for Older People, Employment Support for Carers, BAME Women, Low Pay & Progression Pilots for those cycling in and out of work, Heathrow Academy and Employment Support for those living in social housing.

iii) The Adult Skills programmes being developed are; Pre-employment and entry level skills, and in-work progression for low skilled unemployed people (sectoral approach), In-work progression for low skilled, low paid employed Londoners, Support for entrepreneurship, business start-up & self-employment.

Full details of all programmes being developed
33. What is the Youth Employment Initiative

In addition to the main ESF allocation, London has received an additional allocation for the EU-wide Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) targeted at areas that have a youth unemployment rate of 25% or above, Inner London is one such area. In the context of YEI Inner London is comprised of; City of London, Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlet, Wandsworth and Westminster. In London the entire ESF Youth allocation will be combined with YEI will in order to create a London-wide programme covering all boroughs.

34. NEW: If I want to apply for funding, do I have to provide match funding?

Opt-in organisations will provide the majority of match funding, similar to the role of co-financing organisations in the 2007-13 programme. In addition it is anticipated that there will also be an element of match funding being provided by local match funders e.g. London Councils and Greater London Authority and that a small element of match will be obtained by direct calls.

35. How long can an ESF project last for?

The LEP will agree with the Opt-in organisations the length that it wishes the provision to be contracted for.

36. I am an ESF supply chain provider delivering services to unemployed under old scheme would we come to you concerning transition arrangements if any.

There will be no ‘transition arrangements’; the 2007-13 and 2014-20 programmes are separate.

ERDF-specific questions

37. Can you explain the rationale for the split of the budget across each of the ERDF investment themes described in the ESIF strategy?

It is based on similar allocations to the 2007-13 ERDF programme. But, dependent on Government and European Commission negotiations, the amounts are subject to change.

38. Which organisations can apply for ERDF?

The ERDF Eligibility rules are currently being drafted by the Government and we expect they will be available in spring 2015. However, it is worth noting that ERDF does not fund organisations directly; rather it funds organisations which can, in turn, provide support (such as business, technical, finance (loans/equity)) to SMEs to help them grow i.e. ‘intermediary bodies’.
39. Can charities be beneficiaries of ERDF if they are also registered companies and meet SME criteria?

Applicant organisations for ERDF don’t have to be SMEs themselves; for example local authorities and universities are likely to apply for ERDF. We are awaiting guidance on which organisations can apply but we expect it to include:

- local authorities
- statutory or non-statutory public funded bodies
- voluntary/community organisations
- private sector organisations

40. Can ERDF projects support SMEs that are social enterprises?

Yes, as long as the social enterprises conform with the SME eligibility requirements, which will be published in due course by Government.

41. **NEW**: How much ERDF can an organisation apply for?

Following the shadow Local ESIF Committee (LEC) meeting on the 22\(^{nd}\) January London’s ERDF 14/20 programme will have a £500,000 minimum ERDF threshold; this is in line with the Governments recommendation for other LEP areas. This means that the minimum value of a project will be £1m.

42. Is there a minimum turnover limit for an organisation aiming to bid as a lead partner?

An organisation will have to provide evidence of whether they would be able to repay the grant in the event of any claw back situation – which could include the whole of the grant.

Financial Due Diligence checks will be undertaken on non-public sector applicant organisations during the application process. We are awaiting confirmation of the timing of these checks.

43. **NEW**: How long can an ERDF project last for?

Following the shadow Local ESIF Committee (LEC) meeting on the 22\(^{nd}\) January, there will be a maximum project duration of 3.5 years.

**Match funding**

44. If I want to apply for funding, do I have to provide match funding?

Yes. It is a prerequisite for receiving ERDF that match funding is available and confirmed. Applicants will need to secure eligible match funding. Usually half of a project’s funding comes from ERDF, the other 50% from other sources. Volunteers time (i.e. in-kind match funding) is likely to be ineligible.
45. Can match funding be in-kind or cash money only?

We are awaiting guidance from Government, but it is likely the rules will replicate the 2007-13 ERDF programme; namely that contributions in-kind such as the provision of volunteer time or the discounted sale of equipment will not be eligible to be used as match funding. However, where applicable, the donation of land and/or buildings can be eligible where specific conditions are met. The contribution of staff time as match funding may only be included if the employing organisation is either the lead applicant or a named delivery partner in the application.

46. Can projects be co-match funded with fees from the businesses its supports?

We await guidance from Government. High-level information has been published

47. How might other funds under the scope of the LEP be used to match fund ERDF applications?

Other funds under the scope of the LEP could be used as match funding subject to a project meeting the relevant funding criteria; more details on these other LEP funds

48. Will guidance to help applicants calculate value for money (VFM) be available?

We understand the Government is currently reviewing VFM principles and that details will be available in due course.

49. Is there a formula to work out the admin resource requirement for an ERDF project? Is it based on project volume or types of outcomes?

No, as this depends on the complexity of the project, the outputs, the resources of the lead applicant and delivery partners.

But based on the existing experience of projects we strongly recommend there is a dedicated 100% project manager and dedicated 100% admin resource as a minimum.

50. How strong is the focus on linking Horizon 2020 with ERDF?

The European Commission has suggested that European Structural and Investment Funds and other Commission Funds (e.g. Horizon 2020 – funds which are accessed direct to the EC) can be linked in the new programming period 2014-20. However, it appears that different EU funds cannot be used as match against one another, so the linkage could only be at the strategic level. Projects using Structural Funds and Horizon 2020, for example, would have to be careful not to cross fund elements of their project.

51. Can projects be developed to address each of the three ERDF investment themes described in the ESIF strategy; the most innovative and high impact projects may address more than one theme. How will the assessment of bids address this?

We are awaiting confirmation from Government whether applicants can submit an application that straddles more than one investment theme.
52. For ERDF, are there any excluded sectors e.g. retail?

Until the Government and EC conclude their negotiations, and the Government publishes its guidance or rules, we are unable to answer.

53. Can you explain how might the SME equity / loan fund work?

If we make ERDF funding available for equity and/or loan funds, this will be done through professional fund managers, which we will procure. Once the fund managers are in place they will receive and assessment applications for funding directly from SMEs.

54. Will those loans for SMEs have to be given at the same 50% intervention rate and the rest be counted as match from private sector?

No. If we set up a loan fund, the match funding will be secured before investments are made in SMEs.

55. Are there any current businesses that are willing to work with SMEs in securing small contracts?

We have supported supply chain projects under the 2007-13 programme, the project managers of these projects may be able to support in this regard.

56. In the ESIF Strategy, how are you defining "research infrastructure"?

We are waiting for further guidance from Government on this, including the outputs and evidence requirements.

57. Are the disadvantaged urban areas (for the Infrastructure investment priority) defined?

There are no specific disadvantaged urban areas defined in the London ESIF strategy.

58. Can you elaborate on what elements you are looking for in workspace and incubator projects?

We are awaiting confirmation from Government that workspace/incubation projects will be eligible for ERDF. European Court of Auditors report on incubators, sets out recommendations to the EC for incubator projects for the 14/20 programming periods.

59. For an incubator centre, what can be used for match funding? Can rental income be used? Will existing buildings introduced be based on valuation of the building or the discounted rent...or any other?

We await guidance from Government, but the kinds of activities that are likely to be used as match funding are: Purchase of land capped at 10% of project eligible cost, independent assessed value of the land/building, lead applicant cash funds, time of 100% project manager, private sector partner cash funds (where applicable, the
donation of land and/or buildings may be eligible where specific conditions are met which is considered contributions in kind).

60. **NEW**: Does a Capital project have to have planning permission in place prior to submitting a project proposal?

Until the ERDF Operational Programme is agreed by the European Commission it is unclear what capital activities will be allowable in the new programme. However, as an example, if incubator space was allowable those projects would ideally have full planning permission and funding in place and ready to go prior to submitting an application for ERDF. Projects may still be considered if project applicants have recently applied for planning permission or have outline planning permission in place; it will depend on the nature and complexity of the scheme proposed.

**ERDF administration**

61. Do you have any statistics on the bidding success rates from the last few Calls for Proposals?

If the 2014-20 ERDF programme follows a similar pattern to the 2007-13 programme, then there will be a lot of interest in the opening Call for Proposals. Seven Calls were launched under the 2007-13 programme between 2008 and 2013; it is conceivable that a similar pattern may follow for 2014-20.

In 2008, the first Call received over 170 Outline Applications, of which just under 70 Funding Agreements (contracts) were ultimately issued to applicant organisations. Subsequent Calls received fewer applications and the success rate was generally higher.

The scope of activity sought under the first 2014-20 Call (not yet confirmed) will likely determine the number of applicants eligible to apply, so a straight read-across from 2007-13 to 2014-20 is not clear-cut.

62. Will the GLA prioritise paying claims submitted on time over those which aren’t, and if not why not?

We will aim to review all claims within 20 working days.

63. Why can't the payment of claims be more efficient to help projects with their cash flow?

Claims are processed as quickly as possible, normally within 20 days. If a project is experiencing cash flow issues they should discuss this with the EPMU Project Manager/Officer to discuss timescales for submission of claims and processing; we do seek to prioritise projects who notify us of specific cash flow issues.

64. Given that there is a focus on promoting innovation, digitisation and efficiency - will the programme administration and management reflect this i.e. claims processes, record keeping?
The application and claims process will be online. Certified true copies of claims / financial documentation is acceptable and will be stored on the ERDF online IT system.

65. What is the Audit Authority?

The designation of an Audit Authority (AA) is an EU requirement. In England, it comprises auditors within Government who provide an additional check on projects’ expenditure after it has been incurred; and also check other aspects of project eligibility.

66. Will Community Led Local Development and Integrated Territorial Investment instruments be available in London?

The ESIF strategy states “…models of delivery including direct bidding, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) will be considered by the LEP. ITIs and CLLD are not currently foreseen as delivery mechanisms in London.” (Page 53)

67. I have an idea for a project, but I’m not sure if it’s eligible for funding?

To apply for funding, you will need to ensure your idea fits with the Call/specification (not yet available).

Anecdotally, lots of good ideas are not eligible for ESF or ERDF because they don’t meet the call/specification criteria.

Applicants are advised to a) study the Call/specification criteria; and b) work out what their organisation can deliver to support it. Ideas shouldn’t be squeezed to fit ESF or ERDF; sometimes they just don’t fit, and other sources of funding may be more appropriate.

The European Commission has devised an online checklist for identifying possible suitable sources of EU funding.

Feel free to email erdf@london.gov.uk. We are not able to advise which projects will/won’t be successful, but can provide some pointers.

Further advice

68. Where can I get help and support for accessing European funds?

Access Europe provides support for London based organisations for over 20 different streams of European Funding including Structural Funds, Horizon 2020, and Erasmus.

69. How can I get experience of ERDF or managing EU projects?

One of the best ways to gain experience is by speaking to existing or previous recipients of ERDF funding. A list of organisations funded under the 2007-13 ERDF programme can be found here; you may like to approach one or more of them.
70. Where can third sector organisations receive support?

London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) provides advice and runs workshops and briefing sessions for third sector organisations to help with performance management, partnership development and keeping up to date on funding opportunities.

71. When will more detailed information be available?

Once the Government publishes rules or guidance then we will be able to share it via lep.london and/or by referring to the Government’s own gov.uk website.

In the meantime, we will continue to update this Q&A regularly until the programmes launch in 2015.

The European Commission has produced a guide which explains how a) to access and use the European Structural and Investment Funds and b) how to exploit complementarities with other instruments of relevant EU policies.

72. Where can I find out more information?

On the London Enterprise Panel website lep.london

Emailing esf@london.gov.uk or erdf@london.gov.uk.

To join the ESF and/or ERDF mailing lists, please sign up here.

Organisations interested in applying for ESF and/or ERDF funds may wish to speak with previous or existing recipients of funding, to discuss, first-hand, the ins and outs. You can find a current list here.

The GLA recently hosted two ERDF workshops about the 2014/20 programme. The attendee list and presentations can be found here.

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