

Sector Support Funding (SSF) Revenue Programme

Guidance for Applicants

1 Background

- 1.1 The SELEP Strategic Board (the Board) has 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 which are 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 grant per annum for three financial years, beginning 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 subject to the availability of funding.
- 1.3 At the Strategic Board meeting of 12 June 2020, the Board agreed to a further amount of £1m GPF to be allocated to the sector support fund (SSF), for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22

2 Purpose

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

- Coastal Communities
- Creative (SECEN)
- Housing and Development
- Growth Hubs
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Rural
- Skills
- Universities
- Social Enterprise
- Clean Growth

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 a voluntary basis, as the benefits of cross-working have been clear. However, as these groups have matured, it has become apparent that there is additional work or projects that the groups could put into place that would bring further benefits but finding funding for these projects is increasingly difficult.
- 2.3 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 which have 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.

- 2.4 An independent assessment of the bid will be completed against the eligibility criteria.
- 2.5 Further guidance on Value for Money can be found in Appendix 1 and a copy of the application form can be found at Appendix 2.

3. Eligibility Criteria

- 3.1 All funding applications must meet the following eligibility criteria:

Table 1 Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility 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	The project proposal must be discussed with the SELEP lead officer/Director for every federated area impacted. Endorsement for the bid must also be sought from the relevant Federated Board of the lead Upper Tier Authority.
The outcomes must align with SELEP's overarching objective to <i>create the conditions</i> for increased jobs and homes , safeguarding existing jobs and raising skill levels. Projects should pay particular attention to how it will help with a post COVID-19 recovery and how the project will embrace the opportunities that will arise from BREXIT	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 Economic Strategy Statement (Smarter, Faster, Together).	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 funding must be for a discrete piece of work, not ongoing or business as usual (BAU) costs Minimum SSF application value is £25,000 and maximum SSF 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 the 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.

Eligibility Criterion	Notes
	<p>The certainty of this funding contribution must be stated, and evidence provided of the availability of the match funding contribution.</p> <p>The match funding should also be spent within the project timescales specified within the bid application.</p> <p>Exception to the requirement for 30% match funding will only apply where evidence is provided of substantial follow on investment.</p>
<p>Projects are expected to be a maximum of 12 months duration. Exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis</p>	<p>Funding can be provided in more than one financial year if the 12-month period straddles two financial years.</p>
<p>The project must demonstrate Value for Money and comply with the SELEP Assurance Framework</p>	<p>Further guidance on demonstrating Value for Money in a proportional manner can be found in Appendix 1.</p>
<p>The project must be supported by a lead County/Unitary Authority or equivalent</p>	<p>A grant agreement will be implemented between SELEP and the lead upper tier authority.</p> <p>Other contracting routes will only be considered on an exceptional basis.</p>

4. Process for Applications

- 4.1 The process that applicants need to follow is detailed below. **Applicants should make contact with the SELEP Secretariat before submitting an application**, in order 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 on the SELEP website or email hello@southeastlep.com and the most suitable contact will respond.
- 4.2 Bidding Period: Table 2 below sets out the timetable for a series of open calls for projects in the current year. If the annual allocation is not fully depleted through the first call for projects, then the remaining calls for projects will be launched until the annual funding has been fully allocated. The total allocation for 2020/21 is £1m. Information on the current value of funds available in each year can be found via your SELEP contact, on the website via this [link](#), or by emailing the Secretariat using the address above at 4.1.
- 4.3 During the Bidding Period, the opportunity to submit funding proposals will be advertised as an open call for projects on the SELEP website. Through this period, the project promoter must work with the relevant Federated Area to seek endorsement for the project and raise the profile of the project proposal with other Federated Areas. In the first instance, this engagement should be through contact with the relevant working group.

- 4.4 Bid Submission: all applications should be made using the application form at Appendix 2 and submitted via the hello@southeastlep.com email address, and your SELEP contact should be copied in.

Table 2 Timescales for 2020/21 Call for Projects

Strategic Board meeting	2 October 2020	11 December 2020	19 March 2021
Bid Submission	14 August 2020	23 October 2020	22 January 2021
Independent Review of bid by the SELEP Accountable Body	17 August to 4 September 2020	26 October to 13 November 2020	25 January to 12 February 2021
Strategic Board report to be published	25 September 2020	27 November 2020	5 March 2021

Note: all bids are subject to sufficient SSF being available

- 4.5 Independent Review: An independent review of the Business Case will be completed by the SELEP Accountable Body against the Eligibility Criteria set out in Table 1 and the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework. This review of projects is to ensure that the requirement of the SELEP Assurance Framework to ensure that all investments are independently evaluated is met. The appraisal will be proportionate to the value of the investment. If your project does not meet all of the eligibility 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 Prioritisation: Should the call upon SSF exceed the amount of funding available, the funding bids will be prioritised in accordance with the criteria set out in Table 3 below. The SELEP Strategic Board, or Investment Panel if Strategic Board agree the delegation of authority, will be asked to prioritise and endorse the applications. The consideration of the applications by the Strategic Board will be used to inform the final decision making and approval of the funding award by the SELEP Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.7 Approval: SELEP Strategic Board meets on a quarterly basis and the timing of Board meetings should be considered when you submit your application. The project application will be considered for endorsement by the SELEP Strategic Board, but the funding award will be made by the SELEP Chief Executive Officer under delegated responsibilities.
- 4.8 Post Approval: the grant will be paid to the relevant Upper Tier Authority for the Project by Essex County Council, who acts as Accountable Body for SELEP. A grant agreement between the recipient and Essex County Council must be in place before any funds are transferred.

- 4.9 The funding will be transferred as a one-off grant payment. Any increase to the cost of delivering the project must be managed locally.
- 4.10 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 and a template will be provided by the SELEP Secretariat. Project progress and impact, and any changes to project scope will be reported to the Board on a bi-annual basis. More detailed update reports or presentations about the projects may be sought by the Board.
- 4.11 All projects and all recipients must comply with the SELEP Assurance Framework and grant conditions. It is strongly suggested that any potential applicant spends time familiarising themselves with the SELEP Assurance Framework before submitting any bid. The current Assurance Framework can be accessed [here](#).

Table 3 Prioritisation of SSF bids

Prioritisation Criteria	Evidence	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic Fit	The bid should give specific reference to the SELEP Economic Strategy Statement, SELEP objectives and set out how the project will meet these objectives. The project should clearly show how it will help with a post COVID-19 recovery and how the project will embrace the opportunities that will arise from BREXIT	Weak alignment with SELEP objectives. Little or no reference to SELEP objectives. The intended objectives of the project are unclear.	The project objectives have been identified but little/no reference given to SELEP objectives.	The project objectives and SELEP objectives are stated but the links between the two are unclear.	Links between the project objectives and SELEP objectives have been provided.	Strong fit with SELEP objectives. There are clear links made between the intended project objectives and SELEP objectives.
Scale of the benefits	The bid should set out the benefits related to the project. These benefits should be quantified where feasible to do so. Additional qualitative information can also be provided in support. The project benefits should be specific to the SELEP area. Any geography within the SELEP area which will benefit from the project to a greater extent than others should be specified. The timescales for these benefits being realised should be detailed. Further advice on the value for money assessment is set out in Appendix 1.	The bid has failed to provide evidence of the benefits of the project to the SELEP area. The project is unlikely to represent high value for money.**	The project benefits are stated but the timescales for these benefits being achieved is unclear and/or these benefits are unlikely to achieve high value for money.**	The benefits to the SELEP area are clearly stated and these benefits are aligned with SELEP's strategic objectives. The timescales for these benefits being achieved is clearly stated. The project is expected to present high value for money but a quantitative assessment of the benefits has not been feasible or there is uncertainty around the value for money assessment.	The benefits to the SELEP area are clearly stated and these benefits are aligned with SELEP's strategic objectives. The timescales for these benefits being achieved is clearly stated. High value for money has been demonstrated through a quantified assessment. The benefits will take longer than 3 years to come to fruition.	The benefits to the SELEP area are clearly stated and these benefits are aligned with SELEP's strategic objectives. High/very high value for money has been demonstrated through a quantified assessment of the project benefits. Evidence has been provided to support this value for money assessment through quantitative data and/or benchmarking against other projects. It is expected that these benefits will start to be realised within 3 years of SSF investment.
Delivery	The bid should include a detailed list of project milestones. The approach to managing the project should be specified with a lead officer having been identified and the project governance arrangements having been defined. The bid should detail the project risks and dependencies.	Limited information has been provided to demonstrate the deliverability of the project or to demonstrate that arrangements are in place to oversee the delivery of the project. The main project risks and/or project dependencies have not been identified.	A list of project milestones has been provided but limited information is included about the specific activities to be undertaken or the project milestones seem unrealistic relative to the timing of the SSF contribution. A project manager has been identified but the wider project governance arrangements are unclear.	A list of project milestones has been provided but limited information has been included about the specific activities to be undertaken. The approach to the management of the project has been detailed, but requires further development. Project risks and dependencies have been identified but further consideration is required prior to the project commencing	Project milestones have been provided, including details of the specific activities to be undertaken and indicative timescales for completion. A thorough approach has been taken to the consideration of project risks and dependencies. No high risks have been identified to project delivery,	Strong evidence that the project will be delivered and the proposed benefits of the project will be achieved. Project milestones have been provided, including details of the specific activities to be undertaken and indicative timescales for completion.

Prioritisation Criteria	Evidence	1	2	3	4	5
	The approach to monitoring and evaluation of outputs, outcomes and benefits is set out.		The main project risks and/or project dependencies have not been identified or high project risks have been identified.	and/or mitigation action is required to address project risks owing to medium/high risks having been identified.	but some areas of medium risk have been identified.	An approach to project governance has been defined. A thorough approach has been taken to the consideration of project risks and dependencies. No substantive project risks have been identified.
Rationale for SSF investment	The bid should explain other funding sources which have been considered and provide justification as to why SSF is required.	Limited justification as to why SSF is required. SSF is not considered to be the most appropriate funding source.	There is limited rationale for SSF investment over alternative funding sources.	A case is made for SSF investment but other funding options have not been explored.	Alternative funding options have been considered and the case is made for SSF investment.	Strong case is made for SSF investment. Evidence is provided that other funding opportunities have been considered but are not viable.
Sector Support Fund available		There is insufficient SSF available to support the SSF ask for the project.*				There is sufficient SSF available to meet the SSF ask for the project.

* This criteria may be relevant in future rounds of SSF once the amount of SSF available has been depleted through previous funding commitments

** If a project fails to demonstrate high value for money then the project will not be considered for investment.

Appendix 1 – 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 appendix 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 will 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 to demonstrate high value for money, 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 taxpayer who ultimately funds these investments.

Appendix 2 Sector Support Fund (SSF) Application Template

1. Project Title	
2. Project Location	
3. Lead point of contact for Project	
Name	
Organisation	
Job Title	
Telephone	
Email	
4. Lead contact in County Council/ Unitary Authority (if different from above)	
Name	
Organisation	
Job Title	
Telephone	
Email	
5. Description of Project (No more than 300 words)	
<p><i>This narrative should include evidence of impact in at <u>least three</u> of the four SELEP Federated areas and links to sector based working groups</i></p>	

6. Federated Board endorsement

Please indicate which Federated Boards have endorsed the project, including dates of any relevant meetings.

7. Project links to SELEP Economic Strategy Statement

Please identify which objectives within the current Economic Strategy Statement that this project will assist in delivering. Applicants should pay particular attention to how it will help with a post COVID-19 recovery and how the project will embrace the opportunities that will arise from BREXIT

8. Total value (£s) of SSF sought (net of VAT)

9. Total value (£s) of project (net of VAT)

10. Total value (£) of match funding (net of VAT)

11. Funding breakdown (£s)

Source	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
SSF				
Other sources of funding (please list below, add additional rows if necessary)				
<i>Insert name of funding</i>				
Total Project Cost				

12. Details of match funding

Insert details of match funding, including who is providing match, at what value, on what terms and what assurances are there that the match will be provided



13. Expected project start and completion dates

14. Key Milestones

Key Milestones	Description	Indicative Date

15. Benefits created by 2025 (list benefits with number/amount and cash value if applicable)

Type of Benefit	Number of benefits created	Cash value of benefit (£)

16. Value for Money – Benefit/Cost Ratio

Please insert your Benefit/Cost Ratio (i.e total value of benefits divided by total costs). Please indicate how you have quantified your benefits and over what period those benefits are expected to be realised

17. Value for Money – Other Considerations

Please detail benefits that cannot be quantified or cannot be quantified without lengthy or expensive analysis. This narrative should include details on why the benefit can't be quantified. If your BCR does not meet the standard 2:1 – please use this section to set out why the investment should be considered

18. Dependencies and Risks

Please detail any scheme dependencies, risks and delivery constraints which may impact on the delivery of the project and/or the benefits achieved through SSF investment in the Project

19. State Aid Implications

Please indicate how your project complies with State Aid Regulations

NB: A declaration of compliance with EU or other State Aid Regulations will be required prior to any SSF being provided. If your project is awarded SSF it will be subject to a condition requiring the repayment of funding in the event that the European Commission or UK Government determines that the funding constitutes unlawful State Aid

20. Contracting Body

Please provide the name of the organisation to act as contracting body and give details of a contact within the organisation, including phone number and email.

*If the contracting body is **not** one of the SELEP County or Unitary Councils, please detail the organisation that has been chosen, why the organisation has been selected and the benefits this arrangement will bring to the project. Any known risks of this organisation acting as contracting party should be identified here. Essex County Council as Accountable Body will make the final decision on whether any organisation is a suitable contracting partner.*

21. Project Governance Structure

Please explain the project governance structure (ideally as a diagram with accompanying text), including the Project Manager, Senior Responsible Officer.

22. Declaration

Declaration

I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct



Signature (Lead applicant)	
Print Name	
Organisation	
Date	

A version of this document is available on www.southeastlep.com