

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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£1.4m Rural Business Grants for the West of England

The Rural Growth Programme for the West of England LEP is now open for applications. Although a national programme, each LEP has identified particular aspects of the calls they wish to focus on and these are reflected in the individual area specifications within the topic prospectuses which can be downloaded from; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme>

The rural business grants will provide funds for business projects in tourism, food and drink and the land-based and farming sectors. An initial open-ended round will run from January 2017 until January 2018 so we encourage businesses to apply, obtain and invest grants to support their start-up, expansion or growth plans.

This grant programme sits alongside the existing LEADER Programme and other European Union Funds.

The West of England Rural Growth Funds and Priorities

Food and Drink Processing

The West of England LEP area is recognised local **food and drink** system leader within the UK, with innovative food related businesses linking demand and supply at the local level.

Our local food credentials are strong with a concentration of sustainable food business in addition to a large number of nationally recognised businesses that use locally sourced produce. We also have a number of social enterprises focussed on growing the skills of mainstream and marginalised employees through





innovation in the local food supply chain which helps improve their quality of life, and boosts the local economy.

Through this **Food Processing** call the LEP is seeking to encourage applicants who can innovate within the food and drink sector, strengthen and develop local products, and link with the Junction 21 Foodworks Programme.

Tourism

The visitor economy in the wider West of England LEP area is a rich and varied ranging from the World Heritage City of Bath with its unique hot springs to the cultural vibrancy of Bristol and the traditional seaside attractions of Weston-super-Mare. However often overlooked are the rural attractions and villages of North Somerset, North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire as well as the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Through the **Tourism Infrastructure** call the LEP is seeking to develop rural tourism to maximise the economic and employment benefits. We are encouraging projects that support businesses to invest in facilities and infrastructure that develop tourism, raise quality and encourage longer stays and higher spend.

The rural tourism sector offers a significant opportunity for growth in developing the all year round destination offer and improving the quality of tourism products. This can benefit the wider economy of rural areas through high spend on rural attractions and accommodation as well as an increase in tourism based enterprises and job opportunities.

Business Development

The West of England LEP has identified that access to finance (including grants) is a barrier to growth for rural SME's. The call for **Business Development** funding will seek to address some of the specific issues and will allow diversification of farming businesses into non-agricultural activities, support creation of new product lines and processes and will support applicants to enter into new markets including new and/or increased export activity.

For more information please download the information handbooks along with the Expression of Interest Form and guide from;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rdpe-growth-programme>