



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
 European Regional Development Fund
 Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
 European Social Fund
 Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

Strategic Intervention Application Guidance

PLEASE NOTE: APPLICATIONS CAN ONLY BE RESUBMITTED ONCE. IF THE 2ND SUBMISSION IS REJECTED BY THE MANAGING AUTHORITY THE LEAD PARTNER CANNOT SUBMIT ANY FURTHER APPLICATIONS.

PLEASE CONTACT THE MANAGING AUTHORITY FOR CLARIFICATION ON ANY ASPECTS OF YOUR APPLICATION BEFORE SUBMITTING FOR APPROVAL.

Part 1 – Lead Partner Information

Applicants should ensure that all contact details are completed accurately – errors may lead to delays in processing your application.

Part 2 – Strategic Intervention Details

Thematic Objective and Investment Priority

Applicants should select the appropriate Thematic Objective and one of the corresponding Investment Priorities from the drop-down list.

Thematic objective	Investment priority
01 – Strengthening research, technological development and innovation.	1b - Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.

Thematic objective	Investment priority
02 - Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies.	2a – Extending broadband deployment and the rollout of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy.
03 - Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF).	3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes.
04 - Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors.	4e - Promoting low carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation relevant adaptation measures.
	4f - Promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies
06 - Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency.	6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
	6e - Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures.
	6g – Supporting industrial transition towards a resource efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors
08 – Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility.	8i - Access to employment for job seekers and inactive people, including the long term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility
08a – Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility (YEI).	8ii – Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people (YEI), in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee
09 - Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination.	9i - Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability
	9v - Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment

Thematic objective	Investment priority
10 - Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	10iv - Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes

Programme

Select the most appropriate answer from the following options contained in the drop-down list on the application:

- ERDF
- ESF
- Both

Programme Area

Select the most appropriate answer from the following options contained in the drop-down list on the application:

- H&I
- LUPS
- Both

Physical Start Date

Insert the date when the Strategic Intervention activity is due to commence. This date should be no earlier than 1 January 2015.

Physical End Date

This should be the date when Operation activity is due to finish – ESIF will make its final declaration to the EC on 31 December 2023, therefore all proposed physical end dates should be at least 6 months prior to this date e.g. 30 June 2023. See Financial End Date. All dates should be within the lifetime of the Strategic Intervention.

Financial End Date

This should be the date when all expenditure under the Strategic Intervention must be defrayed by - this date should be no later than 3 months after the Physical End Date e.g. 30 September 2023. All dates should be within the lifetime of the Strategic Intervention.

Part 3 – Financial Information

Appropriate financial information should be provided.

Intervention Rate Requested

The maximum for LUPS ERDF and ESF will be 50%. For H&I the maximum will be 80%. However higher intervention rates will only be considered in duly justified cases and if there is the available budget.

Expenditure Profile

The Expenditure Profile table should provide a breakdown of Total Eligible Costs by year. In addition, where appropriate, a split between H&I and LUPS should be detailed.

Part 4 – Rationale

Before completing these sections, Lead Partners should familiarise themselves with the relevant Operational Programmes in order to gain a firm understanding of the policy context, scope and vision of the 2014 – 2020 Structural Funds Programme. The Operational Programmes can be downloaded and accessed via the ESF website.

It is crucial that applicants fully justify all aspects of the Strategic Intervention in the Rationale sections - the application will be assessed based on the information recorded in these sections, together with the information provided in the Horizontal Themes (Part 5) and Management Structure (Part 6) sections.

Where specific evidence is referred to (e.g. reports, studies, strategies etc), all statistical information and research should be as up-to-date and relevant as possible. In addition, these documents must be retained for the auditable life of the project (particularly those documents accessed online).

Brief Overview of Proposed Activity

Using no more than 250 words, applicants must provide a succinct and concise overview of the proposed Strategic Intervention activities and targets.

Justification for Intervention

Applicants must provide a description of the existing problems, market failures and challenges faced and an explanation detailing how these will be addressed by the Strategic Intervention. Where appropriate, specific evidence should be referred to i.e. local or national studies, reports, strategies, government or independent research etc. Further, applicants should describe fully how the Strategic Intervention will complement these and achieve transformational change in this area.

In addition, this section should be used to outline precisely how the Strategic Intervention will contribute towards achieving the overall aims of the Programme, the appropriate Thematic Objective and Europe 2020 targets and how it links with other Strategic Interventions, if appropriate.

Aims, Objectives and Proposed Activity

A detailed summary of the proposed aims, objectives and potential achievements of the Strategic Intervention should be recorded in this section.

In addition, applicants should fully outline the proposed activities that will be delivered by individual operations i.e. training courses, financial inclusion activities, development of green technologies, support to SMEs etc. These activities should be within the scope of the Operational Programme and the National Rules on Eligibility of Expenditure.

Need for Grant

The application must establish precisely why Structural Funds assistance is necessary to enable the Strategic Intervention to proceed. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that:

- all other sources of finance have been explored and exhausted
- clear gaps in provision exist (in terms of other funders)
- the principle of 'gap funding' has been fully considered i.e. the minimum grant necessary to enable the Strategic Intervention and individual operations to proceed once all other sources of funding have been taken into account

Added Value

The additionality (in terms of new or additional activity) of the Strategic Intervention and its operations should be described in this section. The following key areas must be addressed:

- differences between the baseline / core activity figures and the additional activity that will be delivered with Structural Funds support
- clear, tangible evidence of added value i.e. additional outputs, increased number of participants, overall improvements to the quality of activity etc
- enhancing and / or complimenting linked local, regional, national and EU policies and strategies
- innovative activity or approaches
- evidence of synergy with competitive funds (e.g. ETC, EAFRD, EMFF, Horizon 2020 etc.) or other Strategic Interventions. Further direction on synergies between funds is available from the European Commission guidance:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/synergy/synergies_en.pdf
- a description of improvements to the Strategic Intervention locality i.e. providing services currently unavailable to disadvantaged individuals to overcome their barriers to employment, education or training.

Target Indicators and Milestones

Applicants must complete the relevant Annex in line with the definitions within the Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance, this can be accessed via the ESF website.

Justification of target selection

The ability to achieve agreed milestones, is an important element of the 2014 – 2020 Programme and, in this section, clear justification should be provided to outline why and how targets have been selected – both in terms of total figures and on an annual basis. This should complement the information provided in the appropriate annex, detailing the targets to be achieved by the Strategic Intervention.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that targets are realistic, relevant, achievable, represent value for money and are consistent with the targets and expected results in the Programme. If a Strategic Intervention intends to set and monitor additional relevant indicators, in particular those that would aid evaluation of the Strategic Intervention, these should be added below the Operational Programme indicators in the Annex and justified in the application form. In addition, reference should be made to any long-term outcomes, benefits or other anticipated measures of success i.e. outcomes which will be achieved, but not recorded as an official outcome. Where appropriate, baseline information should be referenced to support the targets selected. ***Details of any supporting documentation***

In this section, applicants should list all supporting document referred to in previous sections e.g. feasibility studies, local Labour Market information, evaluations, ex-ante evaluations, local development plans etc. Where these documents are not in the public domain, copies should be provided.

Part 5 – Horizontal Themes

The three themes which should be reflected in all ESF and ERDF Strategic Interventions and Operations are Sustainable development, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination and Equality between men and women. All Strategic Interventions and Operations should demonstrate through the application process how they will support each of these three strands in addition to the delivery of the operation to achieve the goals of the specific thematic objective which the operation is focussed on.

Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination

The principles of Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination are outlined in the Common Provisions Regulation, which requires that programmes “shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes”¹.

All Strategic Interventions and Operations seeking funding through the Scottish ESF and ERDF programmes should demonstrate that they have considered the impact of the supported activities on the groups within society, which are outlined in the regulation and ensure that the operation application includes a description of specific actions which intends to take to actively prevent discrimination.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 – Article 7

Alongside this, applicants should consult Scottish Government guidance, policies and news on equalities: <https://beta.gov.scot/equality-and-rights/>.

Equality Between Men and Women

The principle of Equality Between Men and Women is outlined in the Common Provisions regulation, which requires that programmes “shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation”¹.

All Strategic Interventions and Operations seeking funding through the Scottish ESF and ERDF programmes should demonstrate that they have considered the contribution of the supported activities to the promotion of equality between men and women and ensure that the operation application includes a description of specific actions which intends to take to actively support equality.

Alongside this, applicants should consult Scottish Government guidance, policies and news on gender equality: <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/gender-equality/>.

To do this, applicants should ensure that the operation is designed to take account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements for ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Where Strategic Interventions and Operations are not targeted to support individuals directly, applicants should still consider the impact the operation will have on equality between men and women. For example, this might include:

- Encourage entrepreneurship and business start-up initiatives to encourage more take up from women
- Support the creation of an environment which supports inclusive work places, which promotes equality of opportunity for staff, including the reconciliation of work and private life
- Improving women’s representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is described by the European Commission as “specific actions to take into account environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management”². It is one of the Horizontal Themes to ensure that the programmes are delivered “in line with the principle of sustainable development and with the Union's promotion of the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment”² and all Strategic Interventions and Operations across ESF and ERDF activity are expected to contribute towards this goal.

² Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 – Article 8

The Scottish programmes are committed to delivering actions towards this across the programmes, in particular through:

- ERDF Thematic Objective 4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
- ERDF Thematic Objective 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

In addition to the focused Strategic Interventions and Operations within these areas of the programme, all Strategic Interventions and Operations should consider the impact the action will have in contributing to sustainable development. At application stage, applicants should consider the impact which the operation may have on environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management, and identify potential mitigating actions which will be undertaken during the delivery of the operation.

Within some activity, and in particular in the ESF programme, it is acknowledged that Sustainable Development may not be directly applicable in the same way as for projects which involve capital expenditure. In these cases, it is reasonable to demonstrate how sustainable development is integrated in the Strategic Interventions and Operations in other ways, such as to:

- Promote environmental awareness and good practice in the implementation of activity;
- Integrate sustainable development into Strategic Interventions and Operations undertaking awareness raising education and training programmes;
- Support participating employers to adopt or improve Environmental Sustainability Strategies;
- Promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and
- Recognise and promote health and wellbeing as one of the corner stones of a healthy, vibrant economy.

To do this, applicants should ensure that the operation is designed to take account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements for ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Where Strategic Interventions and Operations are not targeted to support individuals directly, applicants should still consider the impact the operation will have on the relevant sectors. For example, this might include:

- Ensure access to applications for funding are available and accessible to all, particularly for people in rural areas, older people, disabled people
- Encourage entrepreneurship and business start-up initiatives to encourage more take up from young people, women, minority ethnic, disabled people and LGBTI people
- Ensure access to technology is available and accessible to all, particularly for people in rural areas, older people, disabled and others affected by the 'digital divide'

Outline how horizontal themes will be embedded within the Strategic Intervention and Operations

The application should establish how the Lead Partner will ensure that each of the horizontal themes is entrenched within the Strategic Intervention and all Operations.

Who within the Strategic Intervention is responsible for ensuring that horizontal themes are addressed (within the Strategic Intervention and operations)?

Lead Partners should identify precisely which member(s) of staff will have responsibility for horizontal themes within the Strategic Intervention and Operations – appropriate job descriptions should be provided.

Provide details of the proposed system for monitoring and evaluating horizontal themes

Lead Partners must be able to demonstrate that appropriate monitoring systems are in place to ensure that horizontal themes are measured and assessed throughout the lifetime of the Strategic Intervention.

Case studies will be encouraged as a form of qualitative evidence. Each year lead partners will select one case study per investment priority which can be used for ESIF publicity requirements.

Part 6 – Management Structure

Management Structure and Reporting (Programme Compliance)

Strategic Interventions must have a robust and coherent management and reporting structure in place. Applicants must therefore provide an explanation of the proposed management structure including:

- a description of both the day-to day management arrangements and the overall organisational management structures
- clear evidence of the capacity and expertise of the Strategic Intervention to manage Operations and delivery agents effectively
- an outline of the proposed reporting hierarchy and the anticipated frequency of reporting within this structure (both within the Strategic Intervention itself and between the Strategic Intervention and Operations/delivery agents).

Applicants must incorporate a flowchart illustrating the Strategic Intervention management structure. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of all staff engaged in the management of the Strategic Intervention should be clearly defined

Delivery Methodology

This section should be used to outline details of the methods of delivery and Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) envisaged i.e. unit costs, procurement etc. Strong rationale should be provided to justify the SCOs requested.

Method of Proposing Operations

The proposing of Operations must be compliant with all relevant legal and compliance obligations (i.e. Procurement requirements, State Aid rules etc.) and, where appropriate, a fair and open competitive process must be followed. Applicants should therefore provide a detailed description of the proposed method for selecting operations within the Strategic Intervention. In addition, the anticipated process for awarding each SCO model outlined in the Delivery Methodology section should be provided also.

Performance Compliance

In the 2014 – 2020 Programme, Structural Funds grant will only be distributed to Strategic Interventions once agreed milestones have been achieved. It is therefore crucial for Strategic Interventions to ensure that they have the capacity to monitor performance by Operations/delivery agents. This section should describe how the Strategic Intervention will:

- ensure that delivery agents have set realistic and appropriate targets
- monitor and evaluate delivery agent performance
- put processes in place to ensure all reported outcomes are accurate and can be evidenced appropriately
- establish systems for the retention of all appropriate documentation (both at Strategic Intervention and Operation level)

Financial Compliance

It is essential to demonstrate that robust, credible and compliant financial structures exist within all Strategic Interventions. This section should describe how the Strategic Intervention will:

- monitor, report and audit financial information (both at Strategic Intervention and Operation level)
- verify actual expenditure i.e. flat rate models
- distribute grant to delivery agents
- establish systems for the retention of all appropriate documentation (both at Strategic Intervention and Operation level)

Part 7 – Regulatory Compliance

Applicants must outline how the Strategic Intervention will ensure compliance with each of the sub headings: Procurement; State Aid; Publicity; Data Retention Requirements; Equality Impact Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment. Applicants must refer to the relevant sections of the National Rules for further guidance.

Part 8 – Declaration

The declaration should be completed and certified by an appropriate senior individual within the Strategic Intervention