

Supporting PRoductivity INnovation & Growth (SPRING)



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Overview

The project will use ERDF funding to assist SMEs seeking to increase their capacity and capability by delivering intensive and higher value interventions that support growth and productivity improvement measures. It is managed by The iNet, Loughborough University.

Businesses must be based in **Leicester & Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership area (LLEP)** and engaged in the general area of one of LLEP's priority sectors:

- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Creative Industries
- Food and drink manufacturing
- Life Sciences – Health and Medical Technologies
- Low carbon technologies
- Logistics and distribution
- Professional Services – Scientific and Technical sub-sectors
- Space and Space enabled Technologies
- Textile Manufacturing

The support includes a mixture of:

- An information, diagnostic and brokerage review
- Part-funding to attend trade fairs through our 'exhibitor package'
- Up to 2 days 1:1 support- mentoring; market/technology growth opportunity research
- Part-funding (grant) towards external costs of investments in enhanced capabilities and new technologies including equipment required to take new products, processes and services from early development to production.

It will make it easier for SMEs to accelerate their investment in activities which enable growth and enhance their competitiveness.

The programme will operate from July 2019 through to June 2022.

SME support - Main Points to Note

Companies must undergo a comprehensive review with an iNet Advisor in order to establish eligibility and access support from this programme. This review meeting will last typically 2 – 3 hours and will help you develop your growth and competitiveness plans.

Following this review, support may include one or more of the following:

- **Part-funding towards attending a trade fair** – 'exhibitor package' which can include the cost of the exhibition space, plus anything hired from the venue.
- **2-day research report** – to help you to identify, scope and access new markets and sector supply chains.
- **Part-funding towards external costs relating to company based productivity and capability enhancement projects** – via simplified application process

Other considerations:

- External costs for direct project activities and SME beneficiaries in LLEP area only
- Projects must be aiming to introduce new capabilities, enhanced capacity or a significantly improved product, process or service
- **Funding is subject to availability and is paid at a rate of 44% for eligible external capital costs, up to a spend of £40,000, and at a rate of 30% for eligible external revenue costs, up to a spend of £8,000. There is no minimum.**



- Projects are expected to create one or more new jobs
- SME contribution will be in cash – i.e. for external costs and expenditure made by the SME - not in kind
- The funding provided constitutes de minimis state aid. Appropriate application of this regulation will be discussed with an advisor

Grant Funding

Some indicative project examples (not exhaustive) of the type of activity that may be funded are likely to involve some elements of:

- Manufacturing process and equipment enhancements which improve throughput or efficiency – e.g. automation of manual processes
- Sector specific accreditation
- Increase product and service range capabilities
- Waste reduction, recovery and re-use of end-of-life materials

Eligible forms of **Capital Expenditure** (items costing £5,000 or over) include:

- new production machinery e.g. precision machining centres, additive manufacturing machines
- prototyping equipment e.g. geometry capture devices, measurement and modelling systems.
- laboratory and production / product test equipment e.g. automated inspection devices
- production environment control systems e.g. humidity
- equipment for material and finishing processes e.g. heat treatment, corrosion protection, painting

Eligible forms of **Revenue activities** include:

- specialist technical / engineering services e.g. manufacturing engineering, plant design, refurbishment and installation
- supply chain services e.g. technology road-mapping, sector-specific accreditation process services
- small items of equipment, tooling, software (under £5,000) e.g. transducers, instrumentation
- related IT hardware and software for systems integration and business process improvement (**not** basic infrastructure e.g. finance / accounts systems)

Process Outline

Suitable SME beneficiaries will be visited by an advisor who will enrol and undertake a review to determine the nature and type of support required. The advisor will support SMEs throughout the application and claims process helping them to follow the scheme and ERDF regulations.

Applications will be reviewed against:

- Economic viability of the SME
- Strength of the business case
- The potential for new job creation
- The potential to enhance competitiveness, add capabilities, improve productivity or enter new markets

SME beneficiaries must adhere to the ERDF compliant procurement regulations for purchasing goods, services and capital equipment and provide evidence to demonstrate this compliance with the application. We are not able to support any expenditure for orders which have already been placed prior to the offer of a grant.

Grant payments will be made upon completion of the project and provision of ERDF compliant defrayal of expenditure by the SME. Where the grant supports capital expenditure the SME will be required to maintain an asset register. SME beneficiaries will also be asked to sign output forms on the progress of the introduction of new products, processes or services and any new jobs created as a result of their project.