



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

Overview and Summary

Green Infrastructure Community
Engagement Fund

Guidance for Applicants

January 2017



Disclaimer

Applicants should be aware that as the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund is a new programme, the guidance will be reviewed as the programme evolves and therefore may be subject to change. The European Union and Scottish Ministers reserve the right to amend the National Rules and SNH reserves the right to amend the published guidance during the period of the programme. Decisions to fund projects will be based on the availability of funding, how well the project matches the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund priorities and its contribution to outcomes as part of the whole Strategic Intervention. These priorities may change during the course of the Strategic Intervention to take into account gaps in meeting priorities in previously funded projects and not to fund at all. The Scottish Government reserves the right not to award any support at all under this programme.

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Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to set out how the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund - part of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention - will operate. The Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund (GICEF) is a Challenge Fund – it will provide funding through a competitive selection process for 10-15 projects of budgets between £50,000 and £120,000.

Why?

There is an opportunity through delivery of GICEF to add value to, and increase the benefits of, the work that will be funded through the Green Infrastructure Fund (GIF).

The outcomes for urban communities we are seeking through the GICEF across Scotland are:

- Communities understand and engage with their green places
- People understand how green infrastructure provides benefits for their community
- Influence of communities on green infrastructure (GI) development increases
- Community ownership and empowerment increases, leading to full potential of green infrastructure being realised
- Communities want to share their experiences of green infrastructure

These sit alongside the [Blueprint for Green Infrastructure](#) produced for the GIF.

Applications are invited from projects focussing purely on community engagement with green infrastructure outwith areas funded by the GIF. These projects will lead to an increase in understanding of the value of GI, and the benefits it can provide. There are lower levels of engagement with GI in deprived areas (lowest 15% of SIMD) and this fund will look to address this – demonstrating the benefits for nature, the quality of the environment, health and wellbeing, increased levels of participation within a community, and attractiveness of place in these areas. Through a series of community engagement projects we want to ensure that this understanding, promotion, and valuing of GI and its benefits will become more ingrained in the culture of these communities.

By increasing engagement by communities in GI, there is the potential for benefits to extend beyond the lifetime of the funded projects. Knowledge of the benefits of GI will become more widely recognised. Interest in communities becoming involved in GI from initial design through to on-going management will grow. GI will be considered during future community development.

In terms of adding value to projects funded through the main GIF, the community engagement projects will bring benefits from shared learning and transfer of knowledge. Knowledge of methods of community engagement, realised benefits of GI, design and management techniques, innovative GI etc. could be transferred to communities with existing but underutilised GI, or could provide the inspiration for new development of GI and associated infrastructure.

The fund presents an opportunity to generally increase community engagement, participation, and social inclusion in deprived communities, where low levels of cohesion are

often found, through careful targeting of projects. As highlighted in the [Community Engagement Guidance](#) for the GIF:

'Recent literature suggests that having a voice in the community and feeling a sense of empowerment gives citizens a stronger commitment to their local area. As a consequence they will be more likely to be a part of local activities. According to Understanding Participation "when an active interest is shown in their opinion...and [they] feel their engagement was influential and acted upon" – a citizen will be more motivated to be involved and stay involved politically.'

The fund also supports findings and recommendations from a number of other reports and initiatives.

The [State of the UK's Public Parks 2016](#), published by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), highlights a downward trend in the quality and condition of parks in the UK, along with the overall number of parks in the country. The report also highlights the importance of parks to families and communities:

- 57% of people visit their local parks at least once a month or more often (rising to 61% in urban areas)
- Parks are very important to families, with 54% of households with children under the age of five using their local parks at least once a week
- The condition of parks may influence level of use – with 76% of those who consider their local park to be improving using it at least once a month

As part of this work, Greenspace Scotland have supported HLF's call for collaborative action in order for communities to play a more active role in management of their greenspace.

As was highlighted within the Increasing Participation, Community Engagement and Involvement Guidance for the main GI Fund, there is a risk that only the more affluent communities will be able to take advantage of the new powers brought about by changes to community empowerment legislation, as they tend to have easier access to the skills, experience, facilities and funding needed to take advantage of them. Research by the Carnegie Trust³ shows that to date 90% of community owned assets are located in the 80% least deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland and just 3% in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The Policy Memorandum for the Community Empowerment Bill 2014 touches on the importance of building capacity within these disadvantaged communities. The community engagement fund therefore, aims to address this inequality by providing opportunities for the most deprived communities to become involved in the design and on-going management of their greenspace assets.

The GICEF will also help to deliver on a number of National Indicators, as part of the [National Performance Framework](#), such as improving access to local greenspace, improving people's perceptions of their neighbourhood and increasing natural capital.

Through building a sense of place, and then involving the community in the process of designing, managing, maintaining and understanding the value of their local green space, it will be possible to instil a sense of pride and ownership. This investment, both from and in the local community, should make it possible to build a greater sense of participation and engagement, potentially bringing together the community through their involvement with GI

projects. Community engagement projects will facilitate a shared vision to be developed, combatting isolation and disengagement within the community.

What?

The GICEF will be delivered through a number of locally led and locally relevant projects. The intention is to fund 10 – 15 projects with up to a maximum of 40% funding (50% in Highlands and Islands). Eligible project costs will be a minimum of £50,000 to a maximum of £120,000. Projects should all be bespoke and specific to the communities they engage with - delivery of the fund will not be prescriptive and will support community engagement projects which have been designed from the bottom up, are locally relevant and are innovative to the locality.

In the context of locally relevant, appropriate tools and techniques, outlined and justified as part of an application, will be used in order to deliver outcomes based projects. As these projects will be led by the community it is important that they are designed for the needs of that community. Involvement of local NGOs and intermediary bodies is encouraged to ensure that projects are meaningful and lead to long term benefits. We are looking to fund projects which have a clear legacy and positive impacts which are realised beyond the period of GICEF money being provided. These projects may be the first step towards further green infrastructure being developed, more extensive community engagement or complimentary to wider plans and strategies for the community. The [Community Engagement Guidance](#) suggests a number of approaches for on-going community engagement. These suggestions are not exhaustive as we do not wish to limit innovation:

- Art-based approach – artist working with a community to understand, develop and document their story of engagement and relationship with GI to date, and where they want it to go.
- Citizen-science approach - communities supported by a scientist to explore and document the changes in their local environment as a result of engagement with GI, or to document changes in thinking and future planning.
- Participation and Activity approach - communities could be supported to develop activities and enterprises associated with their GI.
- Volunteering and skills development – development of local skills through volunteering or skills development programmes, which involve direct engagement with local GI, or learning elsewhere and transferring that learning to their local area.
- Nature-based approach - focusing on developing people’s understanding and appreciation of urban nature, communities in areas of GI funding would be supported to explore and engage with their local biodiversity through surveys, nature walks, mini-beast adventures, wetland activities (clean-ups, pond-dipping etc), increasing habitat for biodiversity through active community management and celebrating nature through events.
- Ecosystem Approach - Communities could be supported to explore the ecosystem services provided by their green infrastructure and to consider how they can benefit from its improvement.

Further details on activities that are eligible for funding through the GICEF can be found in the [Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund Eligibility Guidance](#).

The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) can also be used by applicants to provide guidance designing community engagement projects. The National Standards for Community Engagement, developed by SCDC from the experience of communities and agencies with extensive participation of over 500 community and agency representatives, set out best practice guidance for engagement between communities and public agencies. The standards are:

- The Involvement Standard
- The Support Standard
- The Planning Standard
- The Methods Standard
- The Working Together Standard
- The Sharing Information Standard
- The Working With Others Standard
- The Improvement Standard
- The Feedback Standard
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard

Towards the end of the project implementation phase, a showcase event of community engagement projects will be held, bringing together all of the recipient communities, encouraging transfer of learning from the projects funded by GIF to the GICEF projects (and vice versa).

How?

The fund is being delivered using the same processes developed and approved by the Managing Authority for the GIF. These have been adapted to suit the scale and content of the GICEF. For full details on how projects will be assessed and selected please see the [Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund Assessment and Selection Procedure](#).

Our Project and Funding Officers will be available during the support period (12th January 2017- 17th March 2017) to provide advice on eligibility, although they will not be able to give you detailed advice on development of your projects. Please note we will close this support period a week before the closing date to allow us to prepare for the selection phase.

SNH Project Officer support, guidance and open events/surgeries will give potential applicants all the information they require to understand the aims of the fund, and develop eligible and meaningful projects to meet the Fund's outcomes. The GICEF launch event will take place in Dundee on 14th February and there will be two further events later in the month, one in Glasgow and one in Inverness. There will be a chance to book an introductory

surgery with one of our support officers during one of these events – applicants are also encouraged to get in touch in advance of the events to make initial contact and be assigned to one of our Project and Funding Officers who will be the first point of contact within the GI team at SNH.

Once applications are received they will be screened and assessed, and the Scrutiny Panel will select projects for funding, as well as confirming that due process has been followed. The selection process ends with approval and sign off by the SNH CEO. Delivery contracts will be agreed with the applicant to allow a project start date in June 2017 with a finish date of December 2018. All funds defrayed and payments must be made by June 2019.

We will select the best projects, based on a range of agreed assessment criteria, which meet the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement outcomes, and deliver value for money. We will be looking for a balance of outcomes across the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, as well as evidence of need, geographic spread, innovation, deliverability, fit with strategy and policy and a clear framework for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on results.

During the delivery period for the approved projects, we will maintain on-going contact with grantees, fulfilling audit requirements and ultimately evaluating the outputs and results of the projects.

The ERDF is a fund of last resort, so you will need to have identified all the necessary match funding in advance, even if some is pending approval. We cannot accept the following as match funding: European funding of any kind; corporate and private sector funding; and in-kind contributions. Match funding for successful applications will need to be confirmed before Approval to Start is given. It should be noted that additional funding for the activities supported by ERDF after approval will reduce the ERDF contribution proportionately, so additional funding needs to be associated with an increase in budget or for something not supported by ERDF.

When?

The GICEF will follow the timetable below:

Table 2 Timetable for the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund

Round	Activity	Date
1	Open for applications	11 January 2017
	Deadline for applications	17 April 2017 at midnight
	Decision	May 2017

The Approved Purposes of the project must have been achieved by the end of December 2018. Annual monitoring of results will be required up to 2023 and data retention to 2030.

Who?

Eligible Applicant Organisations

Before submitting applications for support, organisations must first establish whether they are eligible to apply for funds. If you are not already a Registered Organisation and think you could qualify, please contact us and we will discuss requirements and next steps.

With regards to development and delivery of individual projects, priority will be given to projects which clearly involve local and locally relevant groups, who both know and are invested in the communities they will be working with. Our main target group are communities in urban deprived communities and applications will need to clearly demonstrate how they will engage with the different groups within their community.

Regarding eligibility of partnerships, the guidance for the GIF will be followed:

'Partnerships, in the more traditional sense, are not eligible to apply. We cannot accept an application from a group of organisations with one acting as a 'lead partner'. However, if a partnership is legally constituted and the application would be coming from that partnership, then it may be considered an organisation and therefore eligible to apply.'

It is advised that eligibility of partnerships should be discussed at as early a stage as possible with the GI Team before an application is made.

Applicant organisations are responsible for all aspects associated with implementation, monitoring and reporting on projects. This includes submission of the application, acceptance of grant, project implementation including cash-flow management, submission of claims, monitoring and reporting progress, monitoring and verification visits and the retention of project documentation for the prescribed period. Project documentation includes records confirming that any procurement complied with the ERDF procurement guidance¹ and maintaining a full audit trail vouching expenditure incurred and defrayed. Reclaim for defrayed costs of ineligible activities or State Aid breaches would be made against the applicant organisation. Such responsibilities are onerous - applicants therefore need to demonstrate significant and sufficient administrative and financial capacity at the time of application.

There are two main categories of eligible applicant organisations as follows:

- **Public Sector**
- **Voluntary or Charitable Organisations** - While these may be eligible to apply directly for funds, careful consideration will be given to the nature and capacity of organisations to carry out projects. In certain circumstances, organisations may require a 'sponsor' to vouch for the applicant, accept contingent liability for the project and, crucially the grant and ensure proper implementation, reporting and accounting.

The following are not eligible:

- **Private Sector** - This may be taken to be organisations established and operating for profit where these profits accrue to shareholders, partners or sole traders. This

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404/EuropeanStructuralFunds/ProgrammeDocumentation/Publicprocurementguidance>

includes companies acting in the public interest (e.g. privatised former public utilities, Abellio, Network Rail).

Further information

The Green Infrastructure Community Engagement fund application form and guidance builds on and complies with the Scottish Government's current guidance and documents on the [Scottish Government European Structural Funds web pages](#). The National Rules and the guidance on these pages is a good place to start planning your application.

These three documents may be of use to you:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00487277.pdf> - National Rules - Please bear in mind that the National Rules covers guidance for both ERDF and ESF. Our guidance will be specifically aimed at what is eligible for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf - ERDF - Monitoring & Evaluation guidance

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