

BUSINESS READINESS FUND

Applicant guidance

Introduction

The Business Readiness Fund (BRF) was launched by Government and aims to help businesses prepare for the UK's exit from the EU on 31 October 2019.

The fund will be administered by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Objective

The objective of the BRF is to fund business representative bodies and organisations to engage and provide advice to UK-based businesses to understand the impact on their business and trading arrangements arising from the UK's exit from the EU without a negotiated agreement; and to provide practical support to business to mitigate any immediate impact.

Who can apply for funding?

Organisations eligible to apply for funding will be legal entities that are membership or subscription organisations of a generic, sector-based or geographic-based nature and which represent and speak on behalf of the interests of business with their consent. These organisations will operate anywhere in the UK and their members will be exclusively or predominantly UK-based-firms. Eligible organisations will include:

- Trade Associations;
- Chambers of Commerce;
- Chartered Institutes and other professional membership bodies with a significant membership; and
- Any other organisation that meets the description above.

Applications are welcome from consortia but the consortium must designate a lead organisation (that meets the description of those eligible to apply) for the purposes of funding and reporting. The lead organisation will be responsible for ensuring delivery by the whole consortium.

Public sector bodies acting on their own will not be eligible to apply for funding. However public sector bodies, even if they do not meet the eligibility criteria set out above, may participate as non-lead members of a consortium.

In order to be eligible for funding, applicants and consortium members (if applicable) must not be undertakings. Where an organisation carries out a mix of commercial and non-commercial activities, it is eligible to apply but must confirm this grant will not cross-subsidise commercial activities carried out by the applicant or consortium members. Applicants must agree to provide such evidence as BEIS requires, which may include evidence of the applicant's accounts, to demonstrate that no cross-subsidy has taken place.

BUSINESS READINESS FUND

Applicant guidance

This means that exclusively commercial organisations, such as businesses, will not be eligible to apply for funding either on their own or as members of a consortium.

The minimum application amount is £25,000. Given the need for all activity to be delivered by 31 October 2019, we expect bids to be commensurate with organisations' ability to deliver activity in this timeframe. Applications above £200,000 will incur further checks on the financial viability of the applicant

All proposed support programmes **must be delivered in their entirety by 31 October 2019**; and must be additional to those activities already in delivery or planned to be delivered; and must be made available to non-members/subscribers.

Only applications from business representative organisations that can demonstrate strong financial stability will be considered and applicants will be required to evidence this through the application process.

Support which eligible applicants provide to businesses will need to be administered in line with the requirements of the de minimis regulation (Commission Regulation no. 1407/2013) to ensure compliance with State aid law.

What we will fund

The purpose of the scheme is to fund business representative bodies and organisations to provide support (including guidance, information and training) to private businesses to consider and adapt their business practices in advance of EU Exit without a negotiated agreement. The support eligible organisations will provide will be more specific to business or a business sector, business model or geographic location than the general advice that is available from other organisations and government. Applicants for funding will need to demonstrate that their proposed support programmes will help businesses become ready for EU Exit on 31st October 2019 without a negotiated agreement and cover the most important or needed subject matters for that particular sector/region/target audience.

Funds cannot be used to deliver 'generic' business advice or training or other support – they must be focused on the short-term adjustments that businesses need to make in readiness for a potential exit from the EU without a negotiated agreement. Eligible organisations will not be able to distribute grant funds directly to businesses.

Successful applicants will be able to use the grant funding to procure services and goods from third parties, including commercial operators.

All funded activities must be available and relevant to many or most businesses in that sector/geographic area. We will not fund any activities designed for, or having the effect of, giving competitive advantage to some businesses over others. Activities must not be made available on an exclusive basis to some class of businesses over others.

BUSINESS READINESS FUND

Applicant guidance

All activities must be non-chargeable and cannot be restricted to members or subscribers of any organisation.

The practical support eligible for funding could include but is not restricted to:

- Written information (or advice packs) in the form of information, FAQs available in printed form, on publicly available websites, in openly available publications (print or on-line) free of charge to businesses
- Paid information advertisements in the press, trade press, or targeted social media
- Free webinars, podcasts, or similar
- Events or training workshops for businesses directly related to changes in processes arising from EU Exit without a negotiated agreement

BEIS will also consider applications for other practical activities designed to help businesses manage the impacts of the UK leaving the EU without a negotiated agreement. Applicants should note that whilst proposals including other practical activities will be considered, these may require an enhanced appraisal and assessment process which may affect the applicant's ability to deliver the programme by 31st October 2019. Where BEIS considers that activities in a successful bid could have a wider beneficial impact, government may get in touch with the applicant to discuss further options to deliver and amplify those activities (including through government action).

Applications need to include the following information:

- A description of the need for support based on the best available evidence and the business issue that the activity will address
- The proposed activity, content and means of delivery
- The type and number of businesses the proposal will reach
- The intended impacts and why this initiative will be an effective course of action
- How you measure the outputs and impact of your proposed activity
- The delivery plan for implementing this proposal, focused on quality, credibility and certainty of delivery
- The timeframe for delivery – please note that all activities must be completed by 31 October 2019

Assessment criteria

BEIS will assess applications for funding in a transparent and objective manner. Grants will be assessed against the following criteria and proposals will only be funded where they are satisfactory against all the following criteria:

- That the proposed activity addresses the evidenced need for support;

BUSINESS READINESS FUND

Applicant guidance

- That it is feasible that the proposed activity will be delivered in its entirety by 31 October 2019;
- That the activity is of high quality and impact, and is proportionate to the cost;
- A sufficient number of businesses are likely to benefit from the activity, and that the number of businesses benefiting is proportionate to the costs;
- The proposed activity is additional and complementary to recent, current or planned support available to the target businesses, including from government and non-government sources;
- That the activity is available to business on an equal basis irrespective of membership of, or subscription to, an organisation;
- The activity is focused on those businesses and those business issues most impacted by EU Exit without a negotiated agreement;
- That businesses will not be charged to benefit from the activity;
- That the activity must be offered on a transparent and open basis to relevant businesses, and cannot discriminate between members and non-members;
- Financial stability of the applicant, counterparty risk, acceptable proposed costs;
- That the proposal represents value for money for the taxpayer.

How to apply

Eligible organisations are invited to complete this online application form, uploading any requested documents including the Supplier Information Form before submitting. Applications received after 30 September may not be considered.

BEIS will conduct a fair and objective appraisal of your application against the criteria set out above and will endeavour to feed back to you within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application.

Approval of Grant

If after considering your application, BEIS determines that you should be offered funding, a Grant Offer Letter will be issued to you. This should be signed and returned to BEIS quickly, and if possible, within 48 hours of receipt. Applicants will need to ensure compliance with conditions contained in the Grant Offer Letter to receive grant funding.

We will endeavour to pay your grant directly to your nominated bank account within 7 working days upon receipt of your signed Grant Offer Letter. If you have not returned, or there are errors with the Supplier Information Form you submitted with your application, payment will be delayed. Activity taking place after 31 October 2019 will NOT be funded and BEIS will recover all funds relating to activity taking place after this date regardless of whether these have been contractually committed. BEIS will also recover any residual or unused funds. Repayment must be made to BEIS within 30 days upon demand.

A BEIS monitoring officer will be appointed to you during the duration of the project to ensure value for money and deliverability.

BUSINESS READINESS FUND

Applicant guidance

Costs & Performance

Only the actual costs of delivering the support programme will be eligible to be claimed from BEIS and only those costs comprehensively evidenced will be included as eligible. Funds cannot be distributed or passed through to participants. The evidence required to demonstrate actual costs and performance can include (but not limited to):

- A completed monitoring form, for which BEIS will send you in MS Excel format, identifying the actual activity undertaken, number of participants, number of companies, name of companies (or unique reference number), sector, location and grant defrayed
- A completed transaction list, for which BEIS will send you the template in MS Excel format, identifying the date of the invoice, supplier name, date of payment, the value and service provided;
- Actual invoices paid (e.g. venue, specialist sub-contractors, printed materials);
- Payroll and timesheet evidence (other than the 5% management/admin costs);
- Any other supporting evidence, which can be verified;
- All expenditure claimed excluding management/admin costs must be supported with Bank Statements and the BACS Listing (if BACS is used);
- VAT – Recoverable VAT is an ineligible cost. Irrecoverable VAT is an eligible cost.

You will be required to submit to us this and any other evidence we require to substantiate the eligible costs.

Equipment including IT equipment will not be considered as eligible costs and management/admin costs will be limited to up to 5% of the total actual expenditure.

Should you require further advice please contact:

businessreadinessfundenquiries@beis.gov.uk