

UKSPF Rural England Prosperity Fund

Briefing



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The Rural England Prosperity Fund

- A rural top up to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), providing allocations for eligible local authorities in England. • The fund provides up to £110 million of capital funding to eligible local authorities between 2023 and 2025.
- The fund supports activities that you see as the particular challenges rural communities face.
- REPF should not be seen as the only money rural areas are eligible to receive. It is complementary to funding that places can use to support rural areas under the UKSPF.
- It succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England

Aims of the Fund

The Rural Fund is integrated into the UKSPF which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF.

The Rural Fund objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities for:

- Supporting Local Business
- Community and Place

They also relate to two of the Levelling Up White Paper Missions:

- Mission 1 – Living standards
- Mission 9 – Pride in place

The Rural Fund provides small scale capital funding to:

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams
- support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy



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Rural

Rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services
- Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil are excluded but all other towns are classed as 'hub towns'

85% of England's land mass is rural, rural areas are home to 9.6 million people (17% of England's population) and the rural economy is worth £253 billion to the economy (15% of England's output).

Rural areas often face specific challenges including:

- lower productivity rates
- poorer connectivity
- poorer access to key services

The government's ambition is to level up the UK by spreading opportunity more equally across the country and bringing left-behind communities up to the level of more prosperous areas. That includes rural areas where productivity is generally lower than the England average and where access to services is poorer.



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Identifying Projects

- To help identify the types of projects Defra expect to see funded they have provided a list of interventions, objectives, outputs and outcomes. Most are the same as UKSPF interventions for Supporting Local Business and Communities and Place
- Two extra interventions providing funding for:
 - Small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas
 - Rural circular economy projects
- Investments should demonstrate value for money and additionality
 - consider how investments contribute to net zero and nature recovery objectives. These include:
 - the UK's commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050
 - wider environmental considerations, such as resilience to natural hazards
 - the 25 Year Environment Plan commitments

To support green growth, think about how projects can work with the natural environment to achieve objectives.

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Interventions list – supporting business

Projects within this investment priority could include:

Funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.

This includes:

- capital funding for net zero infrastructure for rural businesses
- diversification of farm businesses outside of agriculture

Funding for growing the local social economy and supporting innovation. This includes:

- community businesses (including cooperatives and social enterprises)
- research and development sites

Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy

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Interventions list – supporting communities

- Funding for investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities
- Funding for investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups
- Funding for creation of and improvements to local rural green spaces
- Funding for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer
- Funding for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities
- Funding for active travel enhancements in the local area
- Funding for rural circular economy projects



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Next Steps

- Local authorities are asked to submit their REPF addendum using the online platform during the submission window which on 30 November 2022
- November 2022 to January 2023 - assessment period for government.
- First payments expected to lead local authorities in April 2023



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