

UK SPF Project Approval Process

Approvals for projects/schemes as part of the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) Local Investment Plan are overseen by the Monmouthshire People & Place Partnership (referred to as 'Strategic Partnership'). The partnership is made up of members from a range of stakeholder organisations and local authority services areas who have expertise linked to the core priorities of the fund.

This document outlines the process undertaken for funding opportunities that are either solely for proposals developed externally of the local authority ('external opportunity') or jointly for externally developed proposals and internal service area proposals ('combined opportunity').

Proposals can be submitted at any time. All decisions on funding are taken at meetings of the strategic partnership, which meets every 4 to 8 weeks on average. To allow time for proposals to be scored, the window for a proposal to be accepted will close 2 weeks before each partnership meeting, unless a specific deadline is stated. Proposals received after this date will not be considered until the following meeting. A limited amount of funding is available for projects/schemes, and once all funding is allocated any subsequent proposals will not be considered. In these instances, the lead partner will be informed and offered for their proposals to be retained on a holding list.

Phase 1 – Initial Expression of Interest

The first phase of the project approval process is the submission of an initial expression of interest (IEOI). Initial expressions of interest are reviewed for eligibility, as well as alignment to fund and local authority objectives.

1. Project proposals are submitted via a standardised IEOI form. No other form of proposal will be considered for funding.
2. An initial assessment is undertaken on all proposals to determine the eligibility of the named partner(s) and the proposal itself. Where ineligibility is identified, the lead partner will be informed, and the proposal will no longer be held for consideration.
3. The proposal will be reviewed to determine the type of funding requested, and the appropriate investment priority for the proposal. Where funding is not available of the appropriate type or investment priority, the lead partner will be informed, and the proposal will no longer be held for consideration.
4. The proposal will be reviewed against selected criteria from the full criteria list to determine an IEOI score. Criteria are scored on a scale of 1 to 5, and each criterion holds a weighting (multiplication factor) of up to 3.
 - The extent to which the proposal demonstrates:
 - An ability to meet UK Government criteria for the programme and deliver outcomes from the programme framework
 - A contribution to meeting the strategic needs of the area as set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 and other relevant strategies
 - That it represents value for money and that the project can't be funded elsewhere
 - Alignment with local needs that will complement and not duplicate existing provision
5. The maximum score achievable for this phase is 55. If any proposals score less than 30, the lead partner will automatically be informed that they have been unsuccessful, and the proposal will no longer be held for consideration.

Details of the criteria referenced in points 2, 3, 4 and 5 can be viewed in **appendix 1**.

6. Regardless of the outcome, a summary of proposal scores is presented to the Strategic Partnership to consider/review. The Strategic Partnership may challenge scores and refer them back for rescoring where appropriate.
7. Where the partnership is satisfied that an IEOT is eligible and meets the requirements of the fund, the lead partner will be invited to submit a full expression of interest. (Phase 2)

Phase 2 – Full Expression of Interest

The second phase of the project approval process is the submission of a full expression of interest (FEOI). This is a more detailed project proposal and plan as well as any supporting documentation required to confirm eligibility (etc).

1. Project proposals are submitted via a standardised FEOI form. No other form of proposal will be considered for funding.
2. Proposals, lead partner(s), and other partner(s), will be reviewed against the full qualification criteria, including all mandatory supporting documents/information. Failure to provide any of this information or to meet any of the qualification criteria will result in the proposal being rejected.
3. The proposal will be reviewed against the full criteria list outlined below, further details of which are set out in **Appendix 1**.

The extent to which the proposal demonstrates:	
An ability to meet UK Government criteria for the programme and deliver outcomes from the programme framework	H
A contribution to meeting the strategic needs of the area as set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 and other relevant strategies	H
That it represents value for money and that the project can't be funded elsewhere	H
Alignment with local needs that will complement and not duplicate existing provision	M
The experience and capability of the project sponsor	M
Significant local engagement with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries	M
An ability to identify and manage risks effectively	A
They can deliver within the short timeframe for the programme	A
That delivery will take account of equality duties, the Welsh language and environmental good practice	A

H,M,A denote High, Medium and Additional criteria weightings respectively.

4. Each criterion is scored 0 to 5 with 5 being the highest score. The overall maximum score achievable is 78. Next steps, dependent on score, are outlined below:

Score:	Next Steps / Recommendation:
Less than 44	Not considered further
44-64	Consider for approval with further information
65+	Consider for approval

5. Regardless of next steps, a summary of proposal scores is presented to the Strategic Partnership to consider/review. The Strategic Partnership may challenge scores and refer them back for rescoring where appropriate or request further clarification from the lead partner.
6. Consideration by the Strategic Partnership is essential for ensuring there is no duplication of existing provision, that the proposal will deliver additionality, represent value for money, and align with strategic priorities.
7. Scores determine a recommendation and next steps for a proposal. Following consideration, it is for the partnership agree, reject or defer a decision a subsequent meeting.¹
8. Agreement of provisional approval by the Strategic Partnership may still be subject to the availability of funding. Proposals will need to fit within the parameters of the local investment plan and can only be considered for ratification of the award when:
 - a. Funding becomes available within the appropriate UKSPF Investment Priority/Theme(s)/Sub-Theme(s)
 - b. Funding becomes available that meets the capital/revenue requirement of the proposal
 - c. Funding becomes available to cover the full delivery cost of the proposal
9. When a provisional approval is agreed by the partnership, and on the basis that appropriate funding is available, the decision is referred to the relevant elected member and Strategic Director to ratify.

¹ Strategic partnership decisions to allocate funding may not always follow the order of scoring. For example, new information may be raised at the partnership meeting by a member, or if two very similar projects/schemes scored highly it is unlikely that both would be funded. Reasons for any such decisions will be recorded.

Appendix 1: Expression of Interest Criteria Overview

QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

CRITERIA CHECKLIST	Y / N
There are no identified grounds for mandatory or discretionary exclusions	
A legal entity exists (and can provide details of its financial position) which will be responsible for the delivery of the project as lead partner	
There are no identified conflicts of interest that may compromise the conduct of the project (or partners)	
The lead partner and delivery partners (where applicable) are eligible organisations as set out in the UKSPF prospectus	
The proposal does not exceed the maximum grant value (where applicable)	
The proposal aligns to the fund interventions and priorities	
There are no concerns raised via general declarations	
The proposal is to deliver a project/scheme, not to support an individual enterprise or organisational development.	
The proposal sets out how the project/scheme will comply with the UK Subsidy Control regime.	

PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

CRITERIA CHECKLIST	Y / N
There are no identified concerns with the performance (financial or otherwise) of any other project(s) or scheme(s) being delivered by the lead partner and other partners through either UKSPF funding or other local authority funding.	

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Proposals are assessed against criteria and scored between 0 and 5, with 5 being the highest score. The 'available' scores within the scale vary by criterion and are outlined in the definitions table. The scales will be one of the following:

- **Full scale of 0 to 5** with definitions provided for every scoring option.
- **Incremental scale** (e.g. 0,1,3,5) where only the defined scores are in use. Failure to meet the lowest score definition results in a zero score.
- **Binary scale** (e.g. 0,5) indicating that the criteria is either met (5) or not met (0)

Where scoring options are not listed and defined against a criterion they are not in use. For all criteria, a score of zero is assigned where there is a 'Failure to demonstrate the criteria can be met.'

Each criterion is weighted, which means a multiplication factor is applied to the score. Criteria 1 to 3 = High (x3), 4 to 6 = Medium (x2), and 7 to 10 = Additional (x0.2).

For initial expressions of interest (IEOI), only criteria 1 to 4 are used. For a full expression of interest, all criteria are used.

The full list of criteria, available scores and supporting definitions is included below:

Criteria	Score	Supporting definition
1. An ability to meet UK Government criteria for the programme and deliver outcomes from the programme framework	5	Demonstrably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aligns to the target theme(s) and sub-theme(s) identified appropriate and deliverable outputs and outcomes from the standard list, provide context of how the activity aligns to the purpose of the fund, as set out in the prospectus and technical note
	3	Demonstrably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets most, but not all, of the above
	1	Demonstrably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets at least one of the above
2. A contribution to meeting the strategic needs of the area as set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 and other relevant strategies	5	A clear and demonstrable alignment to strategic objectives as set out in the community and corporate plan and other relevant strategies. This may include details of specific strategic objectives and actions.
	4	Broad alignment to specific strategic objectives but less detail than above.
	2	Proposal demonstrates links to broader strategic context
	1	Minimal alignment to relevant strategies or a limited response
3. That is represents value for money and that the project can't be funded elsewhere	5	Demonstrably cannot be funded elsewhere and/or demonstrates very good value for money. This may include details of value for money assessments, the leveraging of match funding or inward investment, or future cost savings.
	3	Cannot be funded elsewhere and provides some details of how it achieves value for money
	1	Alternative funding sources are clearly available, OR limited demonstration of how value for money is achieved

4. Alignment with local needs that will complement and not duplicate existing provision	5	Addresses an identified local need and doesn't overlap, and/or compliments existing provision
	4	Minimal overlap with existing provision and identifies a local need
	3	Some degree of overlap but identifies a local need
	2	High degree of overlap with existing provision OR lack of identified local need
	1	Clearly duplicates exiting provision OR fails to outline local need
5. The experience and capability of the project sponsor	5	Demonstrable experience of delivering this type of project effectively.
	4	Experience of delivering similar projects of this scale.
	3	Experience of delivering similar projects on a smaller scale.
	1	Very limited experience of capability demonstrated in proposal
6. Significant local engagement with stakeholders and potential beneficiaries	5	Stakeholders and/or beneficiaries have been effectively engaged in the development of the proposal or through other relevant and appropriate engagement schemes that have helped to shape the proposal
	3	Some level of engagement with stakeholders and/or beneficiaries
	1	Minimal engagement with stakeholders and/or beneficiaries
7. An ability to identify and manage risks effectively	5	Detailed response detailing risks and appropriate mitigating actions
	1	Very basic risk identification and mitigation
8. They can deliver within the short timeframe for the programme	5	The proposal raises little or no concern with deliverability in the timeframe of the programme
	3	The proposal raises some concern with deliverability in the timeframe of the programme but identifies appropriate contingencies/mitigation actions
9. That delivery will take account of equality duties, the Welsh language and environmental good practice	5	Details provided of how the project will take account of relevant policies and/or reference to organisational policy/procedures that will support compliance