



Start of the Regional Growth Fund – What to Focus On? A Local Authority Perspective

From today, the Regional Growth Fund is open for applications. A pot of £1.4bn will be available over the next 3 years to fund proposals focusing on the creation of jobs in the private sector.

Competition

Competition will inevitably be fierce – the RGF is around one third of the total funding formerly overseen by the RDAs across the same period. Furthermore, Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, disclosed this week that new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would not receive any additional support, required instead to bid for RGF funding directly.

Considerations for Success

With the opening of the Regional Growth Fund by the Deputy Prime Minister today, we draw together some of the key considerations highlighted by a number of local authorities as they seek to best position themselves for the advent of the RGF.

Three Considerations for Success

1. A ruthless focus on private sector jobs

The coalition Government wants to realise private sector led recovery, specifically, the creation of private sector jobs. This is considered especially important in those regions where local economies have high proportions of public sector workers, and consequently, a higher exposure to the effects of funding cuts. Local authorities will need to clearly define their approach to attracting and retaining private sector investment and set out how RGF support will be critical to achieving this.

2. A LEP for success?

The first LEPs to be approved will be announced today, and will be eligible to bid for RGF funding, alongside other private sector bodies. However, with the DCLG now seeking to implement a “personalised timetable” regarding outstanding LEP proposals, with some acknowledged as requiring “radical reworking”, there is a growing sense of urgency among local authorities to secure approval for their LEP if they are to access RGF opportunities.

3. Playing to your strengths

In seeking to rebalance the economy, the Government is keen to not be portrayed as ignoring regional identity. There is a broadly sympathetic view regarding the role of RDAs in supporting the social fabric of the regions and local authorities recognise that proposals to generate private sector job growth should also highlight the wider socio-economic benefits their communities stand to gain. Success stories in the regions, such as the Nissan plant in Sunderland, can typically demonstrate a wealth of primary, secondary and tertiary social and economic benefits realised among local communities.



iQ is the research and market intelligence division of regeneration consultancy CommunitySense. iQ provides in-depth assessment and analysis for regeneration professionals, drawing on primary research to improve understanding and encourage a course of action. **Further analysis at www.communitysense.co.uk**



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