

## **Hertfordshire's 'Rural Innovation' fund : An applicant's guide**

This short guide explains how to access funds to support innovative rural projects in Hertfordshire.

The funding is provided by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) out of their "Rural Renaissance" funding stream. Discretionary funding programmes are central to the way the East of England works with sub-regional partners like the Hertfordshire Rural Forum. This enables the Rural Forum to deal with specific Hertfordshire priorities in an innovative way and to fund locally identified projects based on need.

All successful projects will meet one or all of the objectives identified in Rural Forum's Rural Innovation Strategy. The Forum intends to use EEDA money to fund a variety of activities; from raising awareness of rural issues; to developing the relationship between towns and their rural hinterlands; to creating a viable and robust rural economy; to tackling issues associated with rural crime.

The Hertfordshire Rural Forum has a long history of funding successful projects and a good track record in terms of delivering actions. Through this guide, the Forum is seeking to encourage the development of a wide range of projects sponsored by a public, private and voluntary organisations.

This guide is principally to encourage applications **for funding for projects due to start between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006**. However, a limited amount of money however is available for the current financial year, but this must be spent before 31 March 2005. If you would like to propose projects that can be delivered before April then please contact Trevor Mose on 01992 555291 to discuss your proposal.

### **How much money is available?**

It is anticipated that £300,000 will be available for 2005/06 and there will be a requirement for match funding and the maximum length of support. There will be no restrictions on the amount that can be applied for, although it is expected that the funding would support fewer large projects rather than numerous small ones. Depending on the level of interest it may be possible to establish a small grants fund that could cater for smaller projects.

### **What sort of projects will be supported?**

The broad objectives of the Rural Innovation Programme are:

1. To build capacity in local rural communities.
2. To facilitate the development of competitive and sustainable rural economies.
3. To improve the quality of life for people living or working in rural communities.
4. To protect and enhance the natural and historic rural environment, including extending access to the countryside and developing quality rural leisure opportunities.

Projects with the following characteristics will be encouraged:

- Research – broadening our understanding of rural issues
- Genuine Innovation – untested, new ideas, elements of risk
- Sustainability - One-off / free-standing projects
- County wide or potential for county-wide application
- Useful outputs - Toolkit or guidance for application elsewhere
- One-off capital projects (no maintenance) demonstrating innovation and clear public benefit

## **What are the criteria for match-funding?**

Project proposals must be match-funded. Initially this should be 50% in the first year of a project. Projects spanning more than one year will be expected to increase the amount of match-funding to 66% in their second year and 75% in the third and final year. Projects will not be supported for more than three years.

It is understood that organisations especially those from the community and voluntary sectors find it hard to meet match-funding requirements. For this reason applications are encouraged from partnerships involving a range of organisations. However, public sector and other large organisations would be expected to demonstrate 'steps towards sustainability' in the way described.

Whilst match funding can take any form from time to hard cash, match funding in the form of real money will be taken to demonstrate a greater commitment to the project. In the event of several projects being evaluated projects providing more match-funding are likely to be chosen in preference.

The above criteria are guidelines to help with project proposals. If you are unsure as to whether your idea should be developed into a proposal please contact us to discuss your requirements.

## **Who can apply?**

Any organisation or group can apply for funding. Projects by individuals for individual benefit will not be supported.

## **How to apply?**

There are two stages to the application process. The first is to complete a simple expression of interest form (maximum one side of A4) that summarises the proposed project. These will be discussed by an independent appraisal panel who will then invite successful project leads to complete a full EEDA application form. **The final deadline for 2005/06 project applications will be Christmas 2004**, so an early submission of an expression of interest is encouraged. **If you are seeking funding for a project to be completed by 31 March 2005 applications are needed by November 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**For further information please contact Peter Davidson or Trevor Mose on (01992) 555262 or email [peter.davidson@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:peter.davidson@hertscc.gov.uk) or [trevor.mose@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:trevor.mose@hertscc.gov.uk)  
Forms are also available online @ [www.hertsdirect.org/ruralforum](http://www.hertsdirect.org/ruralforum)**

