



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



HM Government

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Project Support Officer - Research & Innovation Challenge Fund (RICF)
MANAGED BY:	Adam Hickman
GRADE:	Grade 7 £26,999-£29,636

BACKGROUND

Working at the West of England Combined Authority

The West of England is a fantastic place to live and work; a place where ideas flourish and businesses grow, and a diverse population calls home. With a highly-skilled workforce, innovative businesses, rich cultural and natural assets, and excellent connections, the West of England competes on a global scale.

In 2017, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) was formed to bring the region together to drive economic growth. A West of England Mayor was elected, and significant powers and funding were transferred to the region to support work to ensure residents have better skills, more job opportunities and a better quality of life. We're working with our regional partners and with Government to protect the environment and ensure the West of England continues to be a thriving, successful and innovative place for future generations.

Covid-19 has had a big impact on the West of England, and we are leading the regional economic recovery, bringing people together to ensure our region remains a thriving, successful and innovative place to live and work. By joining WECA, you will be helping us with this important work.

WECA is made up of three of the region's local councils - Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Building on a strong track record of partnership working in the region, the West of England Combined Authority continues to work closely with North Somerset Council. The Combined Authority also the accountable body for the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership.

WECA is an equal opportunities employer, in line with the Equalities Act 2010, and invite applicants to contact us to identify any additional support needed during the recruitment process.

The Project: WECA Research & Innovation Challenge Fund

WECA has secured funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the WECA Investment Fund to operate a grant scheme to support SMEs to undertake research and innovation activities. The Research & Innovation Challenge Fund (RICF) will award 50 grants, alongside technical support, to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the West of England LEP area, leading to more SMEs carrying out innovative activities and to new products and processes being introduced to market, further research collaborations and high-value job creation. The project will be delivered over three years. The RICE will align closely with the West of England Local Industrial Strategy.

The RICE is an important project for this region as part of its Covid-19 recovery and the project has been adapted over recent weeks in response to this.

Note: The RICE is receiving up to £1,451,825 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>.

PURPOSE OF THE JOB

The Project Support Officer will support the Project Manager in the day-to-day administrative and project co-ordination duties of the RICE, to achieve successful delivery to time and budget and to ensure that the businesses participating receive a quality service and achieve their desired outcomes.

The programme is funded through the European Regional Development Fund and must meet requirements in the form of defined outputs. The Project Support Officer will work with the Project Manager in overseeing the collection, assurance and reporting of these outputs. European funds are claimed in arrears of expenditure and the post-holder will be responsible for ensuring that submitted claims are accurate and supported by the necessary evidence.

In addition to experience working on complex projects, the post-holder will have strong communication skills. The post-holder will engage with multiple and varied stakeholders to build effective working relationships with partners across the region and beyond.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting to the RICF Project Manager, this role will encompass a range of administrative, project coordination and complex project support in an often fast-paced environment, flexing and adapting to the changing needs of the project. Typical responsibilities will include:

- Acting as the first point of contact to deal with enquiries and complaints from potential grant applicants, grant beneficiaries, project partners and other internal / external stakeholders; escalating urgent and important issues as necessary.
- Undertaking an initial review of grant applications to ensure they meet grant eligibility requirements, such as ERDF and State Aid, working closely with the Grant Management and Assurance Team to provide due diligence.
- Undertaking an initial evaluation of grant applications to ensure proposed projects are value for money, deliverable and financially viable, working closely with other team members.
- Following up on stalled applications to help applicants problem solve and overcome barriers.
- Ensuring that grant beneficiaries have the correct legal and financial documents to implement their project and claim grant.
- Reviewing grant claims to check that they are valid and eligible; and processing claims to ensure that applicants are paid in a timely manner.
- Maintaining project databases to ensure the collection of accurate project and financial data; helping to collate and analyse data to provide monthly, quarterly and narrative reporting; and responding to requests for financial information, including to support WECA's claim to draw down grant.
- Administration, processing and query handling with internal and external teams including finance (monitoring expenditure against budgets, inputting quarterly partner reporting data, cross-checking with database to verify and update forecasts), procurement, IT, evaluation and audit; working at pace with a high caseload of diverse activities, reviewing and prioritising to ensure deadlines are met.
- Using detailed knowledge of the project and joint working with delivery partners, evaluators and database providers for development of project delivery tools, infographics and presentations using a range of MS Office tools
- Supporting the promotion of grant offers, including helping the Communications Team to develop social media campaigns, press releases and presentation material.
- Managing events and meetings, such as organising venues, issuing invitations, taking minutes, presenting and contributing to in-depth discussions.
- Helping to evaluate the impact of grant, including through case studies.
- Researching key project topics to bring continuous improvement and help develop new grant streams and grant bids as required.
- Any other duties commensurate with the role, including deputising for the Project Manager on occasion.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL (MUST HAVE)

Qualifications and Knowledge

- Good standard of general education and/or equivalent experience.
- Excellent IT skills including Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and database entry and reporting.

Experience

- Preparing documentation, such as the reporting of project outputs, in formats acceptable to internal and external audiences, including funders.
- Managing internal and public enquiries by phone, email and face-to-face.
- Meeting support including diary management, minutes, chairing and presenting.
- Event management, including liaison with venues, logistics, invites, set up and delivery.
- Promoting a project to internal and external stakeholders, including presenting.
- Providing administrative support in a dynamic, complex and fast-paced project and organisation.
- Developing documents and presentations in a range of styles and formats.
- Database support including system administration, designing reports, audit and analysis of data.

Skills and Competencies

- Excellent customer services skills, with the ability to deal competently with enquiries and complaints.
- High standard of written and oral communications skills at all levels, with the ability to create reports and presentations to a high standard with strong attention to detail.
- Ability to assess and evaluate applications within an agreed framework.
- Public speaking, able to confidently present information to individuals and groups.
- Self-motivated, capable of planning and prioritising own workload to meet deadlines.
- Flexible and agile with the ability to respond at pace to competing demands.
- Able to work as part of a team and build relationships with colleagues in partner organisations.
- Focus on excellent customer service.
- Appreciation of the importance of discretion and confidentiality.

DESIRABLE

- Experience of delivering previous European funded projects and/or business R&D projects.
- Professional project management qualification (e.g. PRINCE2/MSP/Agile)
- Knowledge of the existing business support infrastructure in the West of England.
- An understanding of the principles and application of State Aid legislation.

REWARDS AND BENEFITS

WECA staff receive:

- 25 days annual leave, rising to 30 after five years' continuous service, plus bank holidays, pro rata
- Auto-enrolment into the Avon Pension Fund
- Cycle to work scheme and secure bike parking
- Free eye tests for all display screen equipment (DSE) users
- Commuter Travel Club - WECA employees can sign up to receive discounted monthly bus tickets, unlimited bus travel for work or leisure within your chosen zone, automatic ticket renewal and price freeze for 12 months.