

Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee: Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF)

Expression of Interest (EOI) / BID

Gloucestershire Economic Growth: Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF):

This fund is for the benefit of the whole of Gloucestershire, and utilising funds from the current Gloucestershire Local Authority Business Rates Pool. It facilitates collective work on the economic development agenda and reflects the commitment of the Pool participants to drive economic investment which also links to the planning and infrastructure process. Eligibility criteria for the fund has been established and agreed by all participants, against which bids for funding are assessed.

Access to the Fund is for the principal stakeholders only – the Local Authorities and Local Economic Partnership, and any project or funding request will need to have a clearly identified sponsoring lead organisation/contact. Expression of Interest submissions should be completed and submitted for consideration by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee Senior Officer Support Group, at a relevant meeting. They will assess its potential against the criteria and whether a good strategic fit. This mirrors the same approach adopted for the consideration of new projects for the Gloucestershire Capital Investment Pipeline (CIP).

Project Name <i>(Be specific not general, to avoid confusion with other similar projects or locations)</i>	
A world-leading Innovation Village at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), Cirencester. Request for specialist project management support to the value of £100,000. (This is to be match-funded by the RAU, who have already invested in excess of £200,000 on professional fees for the project – a continuation of which will be required to progress to an outline planning application.)	
Investment theme: <i>Tick the primary theme that best fits your project. If applicable, also tick a sub theme. If 'other' state and explain.)</i>	
Primary Investment theme: Business Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/> Place Shaping <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Skills and Employment Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
Sub investment theme: Digital <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment <input type="checkbox"/> Energy <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Regeneration <input type="checkbox"/> Transport Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
Promoter Details	
Promoter Organisation	Cotswold District Council (supported by Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP)
Promoter Address	Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester
Primary Contact (name & job title)	Paul James, Economic Development Lead, Cotswold District Council Rob Weaver CEO, Cotswold District Council

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Email Address	paul.james@cotswold.gov.uk ; robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Contact Telephone Number	01285 623558
<p>Project Summary (Max 250 words) <i>(Describe your project idea clearly and succinctly, including what the investment would buy, and why it would lead to economic growth for Gloucestershire. Include the potential timeframe, and any significant drivers or constraints related to the scheduling of the investment. Include details of the organisation(s) that would be involved in its delivery, and why public funds are needed).</i></p>	
<p>The development of a globally leading Innovation Village on the Royal Agricultural University's 12 hectare 'University Gate' site will do for food security and agri-tech, what the Golden Valley development will do for cyber security – and provide some direct synergies.</p> <p>The carbon-neutral development will harness the power of the land and rural communities to meet global challenges of climate change, biodiversity and food security. It will provide a home to a global community of influencers, practitioners, researchers and entrepreneurs, capitalising upon the University's reputation as a world-leading specialist provider for sustainable farming and land management.</p> <p>The Innovation Village will be a catalyst for growth across multiple dimensions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research – to attract and accelerate academic and industry R&D outputs, research funding and knowledge transfer • Education – from rural skills through to executive education, an expansion of relevant, practical education provided to business and the community • Business development – expansion of the successful Farm491 and Growth Hub facilities • Commercial – an associated 80-bed hotel and conferencing facilities to support the business communities regionally, nationally and globally • Affordable living – live-work studios that will help attract and retain graduates, business owners and entrepreneurs • Connectivity – improve sustainable transport links to Cirencester and Kemble Train Station <p>The project has the full support of the RAU's Governing Council, led by the Chair Dame Fiona Reynolds, and is attracting positive interest across the private, public and charitable sectors. The project is moving at pace aiming to acquire outlining planning permission in 2022, with a view of breaking ground in late 2024.</p>	
<p>Summary of benefits/outcomes that will be delivered (Max 250 words) <i>(Expanding on your summary, provide information on the tangible benefits or outcomes that would be delivered, leading to the growth of the Gloucestershire economy. These could address challenges or capitalise on opportunities, including those associated with improving productivity. List the expected benefits, estimated quantities and indicate the timescales).</i></p>	

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The GDV of the Innovation is estimated to be circa £75M in totality. This investment would lead to the following economic benefits:

- New businesses – doubling the current outputs of Farm491 and Growth Hub within first five years of operations, representing additional £35M of investment, 120 jobs created, and support for 200 start-ups and SMEs
- High-value job creation – new Academic and R&D opportunities estimated at 50FTE
- Provision of skills, training, employment and affordable housing, targeted towards improving retention of 16-24yr olds.
- Research funding – attracting annual research income of £10M p.a. by 2030, growing from current baseline of £2M p.a.
- Student growth – the RAU aims to grow its UG and PG student population by 600 by 2030, which will be supported (directly and indirectly) by the Innovation Village
- Increase in conferencing business, and associated revenue growth – estimated value of £5M p.a.

According to a study undertaken in 2020 by Hatch Regeneris, the Royal Agricultural University contributes GVA of £20M to the local economy and £32M to the regional economy. This development aims to increase this by at least 75%.

In addition, there will be benefits to the prosperity and productivity of rural communities, locally and regionally. The Innovation Village will provide a rural counterbalance to the proposed developments in the urban core of the county such as Cyber Central in Cheltenham and Kings Quarter/The Forum in Gloucester. Indeed, alongside these developments GFirstLEP have commented how:

“The Innovation Village project will contribute significantly to making Gloucestershire a ‘magnet’ county and as a location with an un-paralleled quality of work-life balance.”

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Strategic Fit (Max 150 words) *(Give the local, regional or national context for your project. Explain how it clearly aligns to the Strategic Economic Plan v2*

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2018/sep-2-update2018v3.pdf>
and complements the local District strategies and delivery plans

It addresses global challenges including the climate, ecological and food security crises, building on the role of the RAU's Professoriate as authors of the National Food Strategy and Nutrient Management Strategy. It strengthens the RAU's role as a world-leading specialist provider for sustainable farming and land management, and supports and delivers against the Strategic Economic Plan and Draft Local Industrial Strategy which identify agri-tech as a key growth sector. It also builds on successful GFirst investment in Farm491 and the Cirencester Growth Hub.

The Council's 'Green Economic Growth Strategy' 2021-25 promotes agri-tech and the need for 'high value, high-skilled, low environmental impact jobs' and specifically references this site as a priority.

It complements activities and investment at Hartpury University/College and links with the GFirst funded Applied Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College which opens in May 2022, and the approved Steadings development for 2,350 homes and 9 hectares of employment land.

Evidence of need or demand (Max 150 words) *(give details of the evidence you can reference that supports your case that there is a need or demand for this project)*

In addition to well documented global challenges relating to climate, food and biodiversity, the impact of Brexit and major changes anticipated in UK agricultural policy have placed even greater emphasis upon coordination of knowledge and expertise between universities, and beyond universities to include government, policy-makers, industry and practitioners.

Whilst many universities have developed centres of excellence to focus upon specific academic aspects of these challenges, a proposition that focuses upon people, community and cross-sector, multi-organisational approaches, is both timely and unique in the UK.

The RAU is already responding to this demand for coordinated action, demonstrated most recently by DEFRA's decision to choose the RAU to host its launch of the UK Agricultural Partnership.

Summary of the project costs and any sources of funding: *(Estimated total capital cost of the project, and (if available) list the main elements of the budget. Provide details of any potential or secured source(s) of funding and the likely shortfall.)*

RAU has spent to date in excess of £200K on professional fees and has devoted significant amounts of senior management and professoriate time.

The project could form part of Cotswold District Council's Local Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Cotswold District Council is considering making a contribution from its own resources.

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In addition, this project could form part of a Cotswold Levelling Up Fund bid in respect of the capital costs.

Discussions are already underway with potential partners, including businesses, trusts and foundations, and RAU alumni (many of whom hold senior positions within relevant national and international businesses).

GFirst LEP is promoting this development as an investment opportunity at the UK Regeneration, Investment and Infrastructure Forum in Leeds from 17th-19th May.

Summary of the Revenue Investment(s) required *(Explain how the project would be deliverable and sustainable by explaining the sources of revenue funding to support the likely cost needed to deliver the project following the capital investment)*

The next stage is to engage specialist Project Management expertise, in order to coordinate the design, architectural and planning functions over the next 22 months – until 31st March 2024.

The cost of this Project Management for this period is estimated to be in excess of £100,000 – i.e. £55K per year. This costing has been established through conversations with industry experts and the RAU’s planning consultant.

The £100,000 grant investment will allow the University to bring in expertise to focus solely on this project to ensure the momentum and pace that has been built up continues thereby realising the Innovation Village vision and unlocking the significant local economic benefits it will bring.

Project Status *(select from one of the following, and provide brief explanation)*

<p>Concept Stage <i>(very early stages, requires considerable development before it could be considered for funding)</i></p>	
<p>Outline Stage <i>(early stages, some detail clear but longer term aspiration which will need further development)</i></p>	<p>The site is allocated in the CDC Local Plan for uses allied to the University and an outline planning permission has been granted, although this will need to be updated.</p> <p>A vision document was created following work by RAU’s senior management and academics.</p> <p>An architect’s conceptual plan has also been produced, showing how the Innovation Village and related facilities can be laid out on the available land.</p>
<p>Developed Stage <i>(clear project plan, deliverable, but seeking funds)</i></p>	

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Mobilising Stage <i>(project moving close to delivery, which still has some challenges to overcome)</i>	
Project Status: key milestones <i>(where applicable, provide brief notes on the current situation)</i>	
Promoter identified	Cotswold District Council
Full Business Case Available	The funding request of GEGJC will facilitate the delivery of a Business Case by funding Project Management expertise.
Planning Status	It is proposed to submit an outline planning application during 2022. The site is already allocated in CDC's Local Plan.
Land Assembly (potential requirement for CPO)	The site is already in the ownership of the RAU.
Confirmed Funding Sources	Currently funded by the RAU. GFirst LEP is promoting this development as an investment opportunity at the UK Regeneration, Investment and Infrastructure Forum in Leeds from 17th-19th May. Suitable private sector partners are being identified.
Design Detail Stage	From the present to early 2024.
Earliest Potential Start Date	Construction phase to start late 2024.

Key challenges associated with Project <i>(give brief indication of the main challenges or risks associated with the successful delivery of this project)</i>	
Challenge / Risk	Potential Impact / Mitigation
Funding (full project)	The RAU has funded the project to date. By its nature, the development lends itself to significant public and private sector funding, given its likely economic impact and contribution to solving key climate, ecological, and food security challenges.
Political	Political risks will be mitigated by briefing all political groups on CDC and the local MP Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, who is an RAU alumnus.

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Resources	Having insufficient resources to move the project to the next stage could mean a loss of momentum, and that this unique opportunity to bring about a development which helps to meet global challenges is delayed or lost. The requested £100,000 is a tiny fraction of the economic and societal value that the development will produce.
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Declaration by Applicant

I certify to the best of my knowledge the information submitted on this form is true and correct.

I have the appropriate level of responsibility to submit this Expression of Interest on behalf of my organisation.

I am aware that acceptance of a project on to the CIP does not automatically result in further support or funding through any partner organisation.

Signed (on behalf of Promoter)



29th April 2022

Status of signatory (e.g. CEO, company director, authorised agent)

Chief Executive

EOI submission details (see list on front page)
Sent to: Gloucestershire Senior Officer Group c/o Angela Presdee, Gloucestershire County Council
Date submitted: April 2022