

December 2008

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Latest on call for proposals for Innovative and Transnational projects

The call recently launched under the ESF Innovative and Transnational Strand was nearing its deadline for submissions to be received (Dec 17th). BUT PLEASE NOTE THIS DEADLINE HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED JANUARY 16TH*

This initiative is aimed at supporting a small range of regional projects to develop and deliver new ways of extending employment opportunity and raising workforce skills. This call is outside the usual Co-financing arrangements, and applicants are required to provide at least 50% match funding.

Sharing and learning from other countries is an important dimension of innovation in the ESF programme. Potential projects must therefore include an element of transnational co-operation with at least one other member state –see below (It should be noted that this initiative is not intended to ‘develop’ partnerships as such, rather to entail, or connect with, what is already operational in terms of extending employment opportunity and raising workforce skills).

2009 is the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and this call is timed to promote that through exemplifying creative and innovative approaches to education and training. Projects will subsequently be expected to mainstream and disseminate their activities and results in order to inform both future policy development and delivery. Thematic networks will be created to bring together successful projects to achieve this.

Priorities and Funding

Innovative and transnational projects will be supported within the Priorities of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective of the ESF:

Priority 1 – Extending employment opportunities (£1,279,374 ESF allocated)

Priority 2 – Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce (£701,592 ESF allocated)

Themes and Funding

Up to three projects will be supported in the region against the following themes: ‘Engaging with Employers’ and ‘Active Inclusion’ – combined resource within Priority 1 allocation; and ‘Demographic Change’ – Priority 2 allocation.

Transnational Partners:

At least one partner from another EU Member State must be identified in the application. Any application must provide evidence of a previous collaborative relationship or transnational co-operation with transnational partner(s). There will be a degree of flexibility to enable other transnational partners, not identified in the original application, to add value at different stages where appropriate. It is expected that the transnational dimension of projects will bring real benefits and added value to the innovative activity. Transfer of good practice should aim to achieve strategic benefits that can be widely shared. Examples of transnational activity include:

- Networking
- Thematic workshops/exhibitions
- Study visits

- Joint research/studies
- Piloting or testing new tools, methods, approaches etc
- Work shadowing towards practice development
- Events, seminars and conferences
- New joint development initiatives

Contacts for prospective partnership bids:

Priority 1

Engaging with employers (developing and delivering innovative ways to help workless people gain skills for employability – for further details access http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/engaging_with_employers_311008.pdf) A local further education college may well be making a submission and is interested in hearing from organisations who feel they may be able to contribute in this area

Contact: Mark Thrumble, Sector Co-ordinator FE Colleges, 0191 2954898

Active Inclusion (developing and delivering innovative ways to help unemployed and inactive people make the transition from unemployment and inactivity to sustainable employment– for further details access http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/active_inclusion_311008.pdf) There may be two or three partnership opportunities proceeding. As of now we can indicate the following contacts

Contacts: ESFVON

Priority 2

Meeting New Challenges - Demographic Change (Older Workers and Migration) (developing and delivering innovative ways (a) of training older workers in order to update their qualifications and skills and prolong their working lives and/or (b) integrating migrant worker into the workforce to address employers' skills needs for further details access http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/new_challenges_demographic_change_311008.pdf). There is one partnership that looks likely to be bidding here

Contact Bob Brown, Sector Co-Ordinator Universities, Bob.brown@sunderland.ac.uk

Guidance and the Application Process - see www.esf.gov.uk/info_for_cfo_and_projects/guidance.asp

Duration and spend:

Projects to last up to three years. The start date should be no earlier than 1st April 2009 and no later than 1st June 2009. The end date must be no later than 31st May 2012. Expenditure (ESF and Match) will need to be made between these dates.

***Deadline extended**

In response to representations from potential applicants, the deadline for the submission of applications for innovative and transnational projects has been extended from Wednesday 17 December 2008 to Friday 16 January 2009. This will provide more time for applicants to build solid partnerships. The innovation page (www.esf.gov.uk/innovation_transnationality/) on the ESF website will be updated to reflect the new deadline. The ITM Unit will inform people who attended the information events of the new deadline.

For further information – or if above Contacts not available: Contact Alan at ESFVON, on 0191 274 9886

Current position on uncommitted funds of ESF Co-financers (LSC and JCP)

The LSC have informed ESFVON that there is approximately £3 million of uncommitted resources still to spend before 2010. The specification of this spend is still to be decided, and ESFVON will keep Bulletin readers up to date on any determination of ITTs. It is worth noting that under the new DPS system (see below) we may have some early indication (possibly 90 days ahead of the ITTs) of what might be on offer.

JCP have very little money still to allocate – something in the region of £200,000. Again, ESFVON will let readers know when and where this is destined.

Full list of partnerships/organisations funded so far under LSC and JCP contracting

The LSC has made the following contracts on ESF in their first round of spending across the North East. The focus of this delivery is strongly on engaging and providing pre-e2e support for young people aged 14 to 19 who need additional help before being linked into mainstream provision, though some contracts involve advice and guidance services for adults.

REGION: North East
CFO: LSC
Priority: 1

Provider Name: Redcar Borough Council
Project: Elite Project
Funding: £906,570
Contract Start Date 18-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
Redcar and Cleveland College
Middlesbrough Football In the Community
Prior Pursglove College
A4E
Shape
Shaw Trust
Redcar and Cleveland MIND

Provider Name: Newcastle City Council
Project: Preparing for Progression
Funding: £1,000,000.00
Contract Start Date 07-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
CSV
NACRO
Rathbone
NECC
Stonham Housing Association

Provider Name: Hartlepool Borough Council
Project: Going Forward
Funding: £637,000.00
Contract Start Date 30-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
A4E
NACRO
Springboard Sunderland Trust
JHP Group Limited
Barnardos
Hartlepool College of FE
West View Programme
Owten Fens Community Association
Hartlepool Carers
Hart Training and Education Limited

Belle Vue Centre
Hartlepool Working Solutions

Provider Name: Sunderland City Council
Project: Engagement Support and Prevention Project
Funding: £998,200.00
Contract Start Date 15-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
City of Sunderland College
Connexions Sunderland
A690 Youth Initiative
Easington Lane Community Access Point
Sans Street Youth & Community Centre
City of Sunderland YMCA Foyer
YMCA Herrington Burn
Sunderland North Community Business Centre
Blue Watch Youth Centre
The Box Youth Project
Sunderland Carers Centre
Pennywell Youth Project
Sunderland Counselling Services
Houghton Racecourse Community Access Point
Hendon Young Peoples Project
Southwick Neighbourhood Youth Project
Pallion Action Group
Lambton Street Youth Centre
TWEBLO
Sunderland Youth Offending Service
University of Sunderland
Education Service c/o Castlegreen School
Leaving Care
BL Hairdressing Training
ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd
Team Wearside
Key Training
Riverside Training
Springboard Sunderland Trust

Provider Name: Stockton Borough Council
Funding: £983,422.00
Contract Start Date 21-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
A4E
Five Lamps

Newtown - Norton
Nacro

Provider Name: Pertemps
Project: Youth Participation Tees Valley
Funding: £726,139.69
Contract Start Date 9-July-08
Contract End Date 30-Dec-10
Endeavour Training Ltd

Provider Name: Darlington borough
Council

Project: Skills4me
Funding: £647,812.00
Contract Start Date 29-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
JHP Group Limited
NACRO
Skill Training Limited
CFBT advice and Guidance
DISC
Darlington College
A4E

Provider Name: Sunderland City Council
(Connexions Tyne & Wear) in partnership
with Igen (Tees Valley) and CfBT (County
Durham)

**Project: Enhanced Advice Information
and Guidance Project Funding:**
£1,987,500.00
Contract Start Date 18-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Project Subcontractors (VCS bold)
Berwick Borough Family Centre Limited
Castle Morpeth Disability Association
CfBT Education Trust
CSV Training & Enterprise NE
DISC Ltd
Employment Opportunities
Gateshead Council
Igen Ltd
Learning Links Europe Ltd
Links
Tomorrow's People Trust Ltd
Wallsend Peoples Centre
Age Concern North Tyneside
Sunderland North Community Business

South Tyneside TEN
Surestart Children's Centre, Blythe Valley
JET (Jobs Education & Training)
Fourth Action
Brinkburn Centre-Newcastle City Council

Provider Name: A4E
Funding: £998,800.00
Contract Start Date 19-Jul-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Acumen trust

Priority:
2

Provider Name TUC
Contract Start Date 17-Jun-08
Contract End Date 31-Dec-10
Learn for
All Fund
£2,993,653

Version: 30 September 2008

The following is the current list of sub-contracting funded through Job Centre Plus

Prime Contractor - A4e (Northumbria)

- NE01; subcontracting to:

CCP

Learning Choices

Crisis UK

Wansbeck CSV

CSV Blyth

CSV Hexham

CSV Newcastle

Morpeth Borough Council- not commencing programme until 5/1/09

Wallsend Peoples Centre

Prime Contractor - Working Links

(STWV) - NE06; subcontracting to:

Derwentside Training

Bishop Auckland Training

S & D Training

Prime Contractor – Working Links

Tees South and North (NE02/NE03);

subcontracting to:

Fane

Focus Training

MC2

Pitman

PPD

Resources

Roberts Training

Skills Training

Cleveland Housing Advice Centre

Hartlepool Borough Council

Redcar & Cleveland College

S W Durham Training

Stockton Borough Council

Stockton Riverside College

Update on Community Grants

We had hoped to be able to tell who had been awarded this contract – especially as the start date for the delivery on the project is December 2008. No news I'm afraid. Bravo (LSC's delegated information portal) tell us (Dec 2nd) "some time before Christmas". Let's hope we can inform you sooner. We know that at least two bids went in.

LSC position on new requirements: 'Provider Development Network/Provider Support Programme'; (also, re-cap on 'Qualified Provider Framework', c/f Bulletin, November 6th):

ESFVON has been informed by the LSC of an active 'consultancy process' now taking place with lead delivery organisations in the context of their current **ESF(2007-2013) provider support programme** and proposed new 'Provider Development Network' (PDP). This is a flexible, high quality, development programme designed to support European Social Fund (ESF) lead provider organisations that are new to working with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or are existing contractors with the LSC. The programme is being delivered by Octicom and Mindset, both established consultancies with a high profile in the northeast and significant experience of capacity building.

The LSC is committed to ensuring that it only contracts with providers that have robust quality systems and can demonstrate the capacity to manage and deliver high quality programmes. It is essential that providers – both existing and new – have in place effective systems for ensuring high quality management and delivery, and for reporting on quality through annual self-assessment. As well as being a requirement of the contract, good quality systems and a fully-evidenced, self-critical approach to performance within partnerships will support ESF lead providers as they contribute to delivering the challenging regional priorities set out in the North East ESF Framework 2007-13.

As a co-financing organisation the LSC is responsible for ensuring that performance monitoring and management of projects is carried out and contractual requirements are met. The 2007-2013 ESF programme brings with it significant changes to delivery including increased emphasis on partnership and cross-sector working and greater focus upon the quality of outputs and audit visits from the ESF Managing Authority. Added to this is a further layer of national quality requirements and assessments, which all mainstream providers are required to adhere to.

Given the more stringent approach to commissioning in this ESF round, the programme of support has the following aims:

- Ensure that lead providers understand the requirements of entering into an agreement with the LSC, especially in regard to self assessment, the Common Inspection Framework, the Framework for Excellence and effective quality improvement plans.
- Place these requirements securely in a context appropriately reflects ESF-funded activity.
- Ensure that contract management requirements are understood and adhered to through the use and development of robust management information systems.
- Support partnerships through developing lead and delivery partner relationships, implementing partnership management and putting in place appropriate data management and evaluation of partners.

- Raise awareness of the ESF programme's cross cutting themes: gender equality and equal opportunities; sustainable development and innovation.
- Complement support provided via the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, ensuring that identified needs are dealt with as a cohesive package of support.

We understand that given the indirect (i.e. sub-contracted) way smaller VCS providers are now involved with LSC delivery, any 'mandatory' expectations of quality standards, etc. will fall on the prime provider (lead organisation), who will have the task to 'cascade' requirements on actual delivery organisations with the Prime still held to account that these are implemented. It appears, therefore, that the Prime contractor (lead body) will have to take key responsibility here, engineering appropriate systems etc. We surmise it may be a little while before the 'cascading' implications become evident to sub-contracted delivery organisations.

further information can be had by accessing <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/NorthEast/ner-providerdevelopmentbookletfinalversion-pm-01sep2008.pdf>

we feel it might be useful, in the context of the above, to re-print our previous explanation of the LSC's **Qualified Provider Framework** circulated a few weeks ago, just in case you missed it the first time.

What is the Qualified Provider Framework?

As of 31st October 2008, the LSC has opened a **Qualified Provider Framework (QPF)** for providers of education and training services. This is a maintained list of all providers from which the LSC will secure education and training services.

The Qualified Provider Framework will streamline the way the LSC commissions and contracts for provision and will supersede the current PQQ system. In the future, providers wishing to be eligible to receive invitations to tender can apply to be pre-qualified at any time.

The LSC will temporarily freeze the QPF list to new applicants ahead of each tendering process beginning. The dates that the list will be frozen will be published well in advance ensuring providers have sufficient opportunity to be on the QPF list and pre qualify for that tender.

Only providers interested in receiving invitations to tender for new programmes need to contact the LSC (SEE LINK BELOW). The LSC will continue to negotiate with providers already contracted. Viz., any provider that wishes to be included in the LSC's tendering round in January 2009 needs to ensure that they apply to pre-qualify by **10th December 2008**. Providers who do not apply to pre-qualify by this date will not be eligible to receive invitations to tender in January 2009.

How does the QPF differ from the previous PQQ process?

Existing PQQ arrangements apply to previously published tenders. The QPF is designed to meet an EU directive intended to implement a more 'dynamic purchasing' system **in the future**.

Whereas under the previous arrangements a PQQ was passed or failed as a closed process, the QPF for an individual organisation remains open and **can be amended by that organisation at any time**, both in respect of new information and circumstances, and also where the organisation fails to meet required QPF quality standards.

Certain questions that were previously asked at the ITT stage are now directed by the EU to be asked before ITT; there are, therefore, **more questions under the new system**.

For organisations that were previously successful with their PQQ, the QPF has, therefore, the following practical implications:

- Where a question remains the same, providers will simply have to confirm that their answer is correct.
- Where the answer is no longer accurate, providers will of course, be able to change it.
- Where there are new questions, providers will be asked to submit new answers.

For further information access the following or ring ESFVON on 0191 2749886

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/commissioning/qualifiedproviderframework/>

Finally, and for total clarity: (1) where providers completed a PQQ for August 2007 or January 2008 rounds, and wish to continue to receive tenders, they will need to log on to the LSCs e-tendering portal to check their details are correct. The LSC will pre populate the new QPF with answers already supplied in previous rounds. This means that where a question remains the same, providers will simply have to confirm that their record is correct. Where an answer is no longer accurate, providers will of course, be able to change it. Where there are new questions, providers will be asked to submit new answers. If these providers wish to receive tenders in January they will need to make these changes/confirm their answers before the freeze date of 10th Dec 2008.

Alternatively, they can apply to pre-qualify at any point during the year and, if successful, will be included in subsequent tendering rounds. (2) Where providers have not submitted a recent PQQ response and they wish to receive LSC tenders, they will need to log on to the e-tendering portal and apply to pre-qualify. If these providers wish to receive tenders in January they will need to apply to do this before the freeze date of 10th Dec.

If not, they can apply to pre-qualify at any point during the year (the portal will be continually open) and, if successful, they will be included in subsequent tendering rounds. Pre-qualification remains valid for up to four years, provided answers remain valid (i.e. qualifying standards are maintained); providers will be asked annually to confirm that this is the case.. n.b. only providers wishing to receive tenders for the January round need to take action before Dec 10th.

n.b. bear in mind the latter is principally, at this stage, setting the stall for primary contract holders

LSC, significant implication of new ‘Dynamic Purchasing System’

LSC have recently announced a significant development as a consequence of their new ‘Dynamic Purchasing System’. It has long been a complaint of the VCS that as things stand the time allowed between the publishing of ITTs and the deadline for the return of completed submissions is rarely sufficient; particularly in light of the fact that Co-financing is now more or less predicated on the Prime/sub-contracting model and this requires significant time to factor partners etc.

In with the adoption by the LSC of its DP system there will be ‘early day’ notice of the broad areas in which they will be targeting forthcoming ITTs; it is currently intended to give 90 days notice of ‘intent’ as general area indicators ahead of the ITTs coming out. Along with the sector ESFVON will adopt a ‘watching brief’ and it will clearly be our intention to take a proactive stance on what will in the future be formally anticipated. Expect to see much more on this – vis a vis prospecting for partnerships/etc - in our future Bulletins!

ESFVON’S future commitment on supporting the sector

As will have been gleaned from this Bulletin so far, there are significant changes coming into play regarding ESF Co-financing systems especially. Some of this calls for corresponding tuning of the support ESFVON already provides supporting the sector under its technical assistance remit. Certainly ESFVON remains committed to do what it has traditionally done in respect of Co-financing, by way of seeing that the sector is informed of opportunities, acting as a catalyst to prospective partnerships, and in supporting organisations through the twists and turns of ESF regulations.

But we have noted in this Bulletin where new developments will also impact, at least potentially. We will clearly have to be very alive to the QPF and precisely how it works and is different from PQQ. The 90 days notice under the DP system opens the door on forward planning – and ESFVON sees itself having a key role in respect of the brokerage of that planning, and in going out proactively on that agenda.

The immediate future may seem to be ‘un-problematic’ in so far as most business is done and the money allocated. ESFVON takes a different view. We contend that a three year Programme cannot be ‘cut and dried’ so far ahead; there will inevitably be adjustments and amendments and there will be a role for ESFVON to play in this context, especially where there are systemic failures, or failures against particular outputs that have been targeted. JCP have indicated that they will be concerned to look much more systematically into the ‘customer journey’, and ESFVON feels that it can potentially contribute strongly here as well. For one thing, it has strong links to recent research we have initiated around the full incorporation of the sector in optimizing and smoothing customer options.

We intend to be fully explicit on how we can work with this as well. And this is not to overlook the significance of the PDP in the long run. Although this is an LSC initiative it is very likely that this and other trends we have mentioned in this Bulletin will inevitably apply to all Co-financing ultimately+. As with other developments in may be a case of ‘watch this space’ for now, where significant support will be required very soon.

It is ESFVON’s commitment to continue to provide that support.

Latest ESFVON publication: Celebrating Voluntary and Community Centre Projects

ESFVON is pleased to announce the above publication. This full colour booklet gives a retrospective flavour of the successes of VCS organisations who delivered under ESF in the previous Programme. We have concentrated on the visual image rather than lengthy description to convey something of the reality of what projects did. Five of the twelve projects illustrated are also featured in an accompanying 'live action' CD. Cost prohibits an unsolicited circulation but ESFVON will be pleased to sent a copy free to all organisations requesting it.

Any queries about information in this Bulletin, or about European funding generally, ring ESFVON on 0191 274 9886