



**European Union**  
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## **Employer Responsive Theme**

### **LSC call for tenders under Response to Redundancy**

The LSC in the North East is making £7.5 million available to support individuals affected by redundancy. This is its part of £100 million the LSC nationally is utilizing for this purpose through Co-financing arrangements (£50 million ESF, £50 million Train to Gain).

The money will come on stream for projects to run from April 2009 through to December 2010 (monitored through to June 2011).

Voluntary organisations currently pre-qualified through the Qualified Provider Framework (QPF – see/download ESFVON Bulletin Dec 2008) to deliver Adult Education and Training Services should have been notified of this tender opportunity through the Bravo e portal system. (Please note it is not possible to become QPF eligible at this stage as the QPF list is frozen to new applicants ahead of each tendering round.

In so far as providers are targeted by the LSC, tender information, including the project specification, is not generally available via the LCS website. ESFVON is publishing this notification, together with a précis of the current offer, having in mind that QPF eligible organisations could conceivably overlook the opportunity, but also because other organisations might enter into partnership or sub delivery arrangements with contractors at a later stage (the QPF requirements in this subsequent context would, of course, need also to be met) .

ESFVON is confident the LSC similarly takes the view that major initiatives such as this need to remain fluid and responsive to need and circumstances throughout the life of the contract and not, as it were, be fixed in aspic on day one. Applicants are given the national specification together with the North East Regional Requirements (NERR) as a separate cover. The following summary of the ‘main body’ tender will interject these regional requirements where relevant; this is followed by a final review of the NERR.

**Aim:** providers to be responsive to the implications for employment and redundancy of the current recession, with the aim of ensuring adults affected by redundancy, or currently unemployed, would be made ready through training and education support to access sustainable employment. *[ESFVON comment – the national agenda, whilst focused on redundancy, has a remit for the broad mass of the unemployed therefore]*

The **Service Requirement:** Is presented nationally as a dichotomy: ‘The Employer Offer’ and ‘The Individual Offer’. *[ESFVON comment – important to note at the outset that the pre-amble and the Employer Offer which follows it are OVERIDDEN by the NERR. The latter is entirely explicit]* ‘Due to existing arrangements to support individuals under notice of redundancy the LSC North East only wishes to procure provision limited to the delivery of the “individual offer” in relation to the target groups

listed... Furthermore the intention of the LSC in the North East is to only fund proposals delivering the individual offer in pre employment scenario. For absolute clarity, in the North East the LSC will not be procuring any provision through this exercise to deliver the “employer offer” as described above in the main body of the tender. Alternative arrangements are already in place to deliver this element of the provision in the North East’. The ‘employer offer’ is therefore excluded in this tender specification.

The Individual Offer is also fundamentally affected by the NERR. Following on from the previous (above) it states (this time with reference to the Individual Offer) ‘Therefore it is not expected (as stated in the main body of the tender) “that providers will proactively market training availability to affected employees within supported organisations”, as this would duplicate and potentially undermine the benefit of current/alternative arrangements. Instead providers will be required to make best use of their existing employer links.’

The Service Requirement/Individual Offer is significantly changed/shortened in its regional reference therefore. Packages of support, typically 2 to 8 weeks should be concentrated on updating skills within a sector or retraining individuals for progression into something new. Training should be flexible, and meet benefit rules. *[ESFVON comment - assertions in the Individual offer that it should also be continuous into employment are presumably affected by the NERR proscription above, which limits funding to pre-employment only and may possibly raise ambiguities about how delivery is to be funded by this spec in relation to actions on Train to Gain]*

Finally, training should be client-centred and incorporate at least some or most of the following -

- Training Needs Analysis and Individual Learning Plan;
- Skills for Life diagnostics (including ICT) and delivery of appropriate training;
- Assessment of generic employability skills needs and the delivery of training to improve job search, job application and in-work skills;
- Embedded IAG and learner support
- Training to update skills needed for a specific employment sector;
- Pre-employment training to provide skills to enter a different occupation or sector;
- Regular progress reviews;
- Exit interviews and customer tracking.

Activity should be focused on skills development throughout, and factor career aspirations in line with local labour market opportunities; otherwise it is unrestricted. Qualifications are not a requirement, though accreditation is seen as a positive especially where such foreshadows eventual Train to Gain or apprenticeships. Links to other public and private sector support contexts (such as Next, JCP, specialist advice) are expected – *[ESFVON comment -employer support agencies e.g. Business Link, are presumably excluded]*

The Service Requirement notes in conclusion: ‘The successful contractor should have the capacity to deliver education and training immediately once the contract starts in April 2009. This should not be delayed in any way by any recruitment processes or other processes that need to be introduced.’

**Other NERR:** The NERR seeks to accommodate the following regional (LSC, One North East, JCP, GONE) four point co-ordinated response to the downturn:

1. Resilience
2. Redundancy/Redeployment - To minimise the number of people who become unemployed, if/when redundancies become necessary. Or to put it another way to move as many people as possible “from a job, to a job”.
3. **Recruitment/Retention - To ensure that entry/re-entry to the world of work is as swift and effective as possible for individuals who are unemployed (whether as a result of the current economic downturn or on a longer term basis) and that they are appropriately supported once in employment in order to maximise their chances of retention/sustainability and progression in employment.**
4. Readiness for the upturn

It does do so, however, in terms of the following critical discrimination - **Significant mainstream and ESF funded support and provision is already in place in respect of Redundancy/ Redeployment, hence the provision outlined in this tender specification is focused exclusively on the Recruitment and Retention theme.** *[ESFVON comment - this exclusion is perhaps slightly anomalous in light of the fact that the initiative is predicated/funded through John Denham’s package to specifically support workers affected by redundancy!]*

The NERR specifically anticipates potential partnership building c/o ‘It is expected that providers will recruit the target client groups specified below onto the pre-employment provision through effective partnership arrangements to generate appropriate referrals.’ *[ESFVON comment – justifying to some extent, we would contend, the publicity given to the tender in this Bulletin c/f above]*

The NERR indicates the target scenario as:

- adults who are 18 years or over who have recently been made redundant, but are not yet in receipt of benefits and are not yet in work
- adults who are 18 years or over who have been made unemployed as a result of redundancy or job cuts from their previous employer and are receiving benefits
- longer term unemployed adults who are 18 years or over which will include people over the age of 50; people from a black minority ethnic background; and other disadvantaged groups

Provision should be made available to all adults outlined above who are in need of it in order to facilitate their entry to employment, regardless of current skills and prior qualification levels

#### Geographic/Spatial Targeting

The LSC requires a broad range of provision and providers to ensure full geographic coverage for the North East region.

#### Funding Available

A total of £7,713,249 is available for the whole of the North East.

£5,399,274 is to be targeted at those individuals who are unemployed including those recently made redundant; and £2,313,975 to be targeted at the longer term unemployed further disadvantaged by the current economic situation. (virement possible)

#### Outputs and Outcomes

The above funding is intended to deliver support to at least 5142 individuals; at least 22% (1131) moving into employment with training

#### Contracting

The LSC is looking for flexible provision responsive to demand and to ensure regional coverage the LSC intends to procure a number of contracts across the North East region

ESFVON is open to further enquiries on this tender (c/o Alan Payne on 0191 2749886). For more information on LSC funding policy and guidance go to:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/strategic-overview/>

### **Forthcoming Seminar: an explanatory guide for voluntary organisations to ESF co-financing and the tender process**

**MONDAY 23 MARCH 2009 – MIDDLESBROUGH  
FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2009 – GATESHEAD**

Many organisations have had experience of applying for ESF in past years, but may be uncertain of the role they can play in the new ESF Programme, and how they can participate in tender opportunities. Similarly, many organisations have members of staff who are new to the European Social Fund and would welcome an introduction to this area of funding and the contribution which voluntary organisations can make, particularly with regard to those “hardest to reach”.

ESFVON is facilitating **FREE** half day seminars to appraise organisations and new members of staff of the current processes and potential opportunities existing under the European Social Fund Programme 2007 – 2013.. It will be doing so in partnership with the Learning & Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. The seminar will provide an overview of the co-financing of ESF, the role played by the Co-financing Organisations, and the steps organisations should consider in relation to their potential contribution to the Programme.

The event will take place in Teeside on **Monday 23 March 2009**, at the Middlesbrough Learning & Teaching Centre, and be repeated in Gateshead at the Gateshead Swallow Hotel on **Friday 27 March 2009**. Both seminars enrol from 9.30 a.m., concluding by 12.30 p.m.

Interested parties are welcome to attend. A booking form is included as an attachment to this Bulletin

## **Update on ESF call for submissions under Innovative and Transnational initiative**

The deadline for receipt of submissions under the ESF Innovative and Transnational initiative was 16<sup>th</sup> January.

Preliminary indications are that at least one application was anticipated in Priority 1 – Engaging with Employers; 3 bids were expected in Priority 1 – Active Inclusion; and one in Priority 2 – Demographic Change. Submissions were sent to ESF Regional, European and International Division in Birmingham, who will make an assessment of the Transnational ‘gateway’ question. This will be reported back to regional Government Offices. A rating denoted as ‘unacceptable’ will exclude the bid from further progress.

Other aspects of the bid will be appraised regionally – in our case by GONE – with their recommendations to be formally approved by the Regional Committee. It is anticipated that the whole of the process should take a couple of months. Applicants will probably get to know whether they have been successful sometime in March. More detailed ‘chapter and verse’ on appraisal can be seen on

[http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/inn\\_trans\\_selection\\_criteria\\_info\\_311008.pdf](http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/inn_trans_selection_criteria_info_311008.pdf)

## **Current position on ‘Dynamic Purchasing System’ in relation to uncommitted funds of LSC; the position of JCP**

It is the LSC’s intention, as part of their new Dynamic Purchasing System, that an ‘early day’ notice be given to organisations of the broad areas in which they are intending to target forthcoming ITTs (see Bulletin Dec 2008).

This clearly is relevant to the situation regarding the still to be allocated funding in the first half of the current ESF Programme. We noted previously that the amounts involved are not huge (about £3 million in the case of the LSC) but it would be useful, nevertheless, to anticipate where the priorities might be. The situation also applies to some extent to unspent JCP Co-financing - where they are similarly intending to give forward notice – but in this case it is clearly less significant since the amount unspent is much less (£200,000)

## **ESFVON’S action plan to support the sector (re. partnerships/organisations Co-financed in the current ESF Programme)**

ESFVON has initiated a programme of information gathering and actions to support organisations Co-financed by the LSC and JCP in the current ESF Programme. In the last Bulletin we published a full list of current entitled providers as indicated to us by the LSC and JCP\* It is our intention to make telephone contact with key management personnel in every case by way of a ‘health check’, amongst other things.

The ‘health check’ is no more than a confirmation of a few basics – how the contract is working out, where and if there are particular problems and whether these are held in common by more than one organisation, the meeting of ESF publicity requirements, and so on.

In total, some 50 voluntary organisations are currently ‘listed’ by the LSC and JCP as either a ‘partner’, in the case of the LSC, or sub-contracted through DWP/JCP, to deliver services. We intend to have contacted most, if not all, by the time this Bulletin is circulated. We will be feeding back information to the LSC/JCP through formal channels.

The next Bulletin should report on what’s happening or if there are any ‘action points’.

One of the things we anticipate as a by product of this process is the development, ‘de facto’, of a constituency of VCS organisations that are sub-contracted. Whilst, obviously, the crucial value for the latter is the contacts and working relationships they have with others in ‘their’ particular contract, it may nevertheless be useful to review from time to time the wider commonality.

It may not of course – and we certainly don't want to add to the plethora of talk shops that currently abound to distract those who really only want to get on with the job. On the other hand, if there is technical matter that needs airing we feel we can best do this by targeted circulations between Bulletins; which also avoids over specializing the Bulletins for the larger numbers of VCS readers and who are not currently contracting.

\*it should be noted that whilst Voluntary sector organisations were highlighted in bold format in a very few cases this did not happen. Hopefully this error has now been corrected. Anyone wanting to see the amended list or view the list for the first time e mail alan@esfvon.org .uk and denote 'ESF Programme list' for return send.

## Update on Community Grants

We understand that an organisation has been given initial approval by the LSC to shepherd the ESF community Grants Programme over the next two years. This is, though, still subject to final agreement and contract. We are confident that whoever is appointed will combine an in-depth regional perspective on community groups with a wide understanding of ESF rationale and this will be to the benefit of the VCS sector.

We will be endeavoring to obtain some idea of the practical agenda for the implementation of the Programme from the latter as soon as possible, and will, of course, inform VCS organisations in our next ESFVON Bulletin.

## Latest on the Implementation of the LSC Provider Support Programme

The LSC Provider Support Programme (see last Bulletin, Dec.09) is past the half way stage, (see the following schedule). Mindset, the consultancy charged with running

Group	Workshop Title	Date	Place	Target Audience
1	<b>W1</b> – Effective Self-Assessment <b>W2</b> – Making Partnerships Work	02 Dec 10 Dec	CfL CfL	<b>Partnership leads</b>
2	<b>W3</b> – Quality Systems <b>W4</b> – Data and Management Information <b>W5</b> – ESF Context <b>W6</b> – Capacity Building and Development Planning	08 Jan 13 Jan 23 Jan 30 Jan	WR WR WR WR	<b>Partnership leads and project managers</b>
3	<b>W7</b> – Initial Assessment and Induction <b>W8</b> – Teaching, Training and Assessment <b>W9</b> – Progress Review, Exit and Progression <b>W10</b> – Equality and Diversity	20 Jan 17 Feb 20 Feb 25 Feb	CfL CfL CfL CfL	<b>Delivery partner managers and practitioners</b>

the sessions, tell us that whilst content has been steered by the formal expectations and requirements of LSC contracts and the various inspectorates surrounding same, the aim

here was very much to glean through the workshop method the practical applications and relevancies for those present: how, for instance, the lead provider, being fully versed in what is required by an LSC contract, communicates that 'down the line', and what are the practical implications at the delivery end.

Clearly, some of this is reflected in the differential targeting of the audience – the deliverers targetted in the delivery focus in sessions W7 to W8, whereas 'managers' are seen to have more of a remit for content in W3 W6. Unfortunately, given the fluidity of the workshop process and the subjective nature of what results from it, any simplistic generic 'main points' summary is hardly germane.

What is more to the point is the extent to which organisations incorporate whatever they have learnt and that this informs enhanced or better practice. The LSC may well have found out whether this has happened on their agenda for the future. Mindset, will be producing a Report at some stage;

The ESFVON Bulletin will endeavor to report the 'main points' from that in due course.

### **Celebrating Voluntary and Community Sector Projects**

As mentioned in the December 2008 Bulletin – ESFVON has published a full colour booklet illustrating a sample of twelve projects funded in the last Objective 3 ESF Programme, together with a 'live action' CD reporting on five of these. We are pleased to be able to send both of same to anyone who requests us to do so. (Telephone 0191 2749886)

**For any enquiries about information in this bulletin, or about European funding generally, ring ESFVON on 0191 274 9886**