



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	EDU Funding Requests
Date:	9 March 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459
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Relevant Background Information

This report comprises a request for funding under the following programmes:

1. Smarter Procurement Programme
2. Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)

1. Smarter Procurement Programme

Members will be aware, at the Development Committee of 13 May 2009, approval was given to develop and deliver initiatives to support enhanced access to public and private sector procurement opportunities. This was to be delivered through a number of activities, including the Smarter Procurement Programme.

Match funding of these initiatives was sought from DETI to deliver 2 waves of the Smarter Procurement Programme over a 2 year period and this was subsequently approved.

In January 2010 wave 1 of the Smarter Procurement Programme was launched targeting 10 small businesses and social enterprises in the Council area which wanted to look at how they could improve their chances of winning new business through tendering opportunities from both the public and private sectors.

2. Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 14 November 2007, approval was given for Belfast City Council to cluster with Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council for the delivery of Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP).

Axis 3 of the NIRDP contains a funding allocation (£1,240,000) for the delivery of a programme of Village Renewal for rural settlements across the eligible cluster area of

Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn. The purpose of the measure is to support animation and capacity building within and between villages and their surrounding rural areas.

Key Issues

1. Smarter Procurement Programme

A total of 24 applications were received and, following a selection process, 11 businesses were awarded a place on the Programme with a further 6 businesses placed on a reserve list. An additional 6 businesses have also indicated an interest in participating on a future programme.

A Meet the Buyer event held in the Waterfront Hall in June 2010 has generated £300,000 worth of business to date for participating companies.

The December 2009 Belfast City Council survey of 500 businesses in the Council area highlights the demand for procurement initiatives, with 44% of respondents requesting support to improve their procurement processes. This, coupled with the demand already experienced for wave one of the Smarter Procurement Programme, supports the need to launch a second wave of the programme in May 2010 – earlier than initially planned.

Resource Implications

Each wave of the programme will cost £15,000 to run. The participating companies make a contribution of £100 towards the costs (10 companies = £1000 income) and the remainder is match-funded at a level of 50% by DETI. A contribution of £7,000 from Belfast City Council is therefore required to match fund the second wave of the Smarter Procurement Programme, scheduled to commence in May 2010.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the additional amount of £7,000 to match fund wave 2 of the Smarter Procurement Programme, scheduled to start in May 2010, money for which is available within the budget.

Decision Tracking

If recommendation is accepted, an update on outputs will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

Time frame: December 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

2. Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)

A total of 17 eligible villages/rural settlements exist within the three council areas. Within Belfast, the only eligible village/settlement is Hannahstown. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has suggested that it will require potential village renewal projects to produce a village development plan, identifying priority projects which can be resourced from the available funds. This is a compulsory step required before any further funds can be drawn down. However, DARD funding for this activity is up to a maximum of 75% of costs incurred.

It is proposed that Lisburn City Council leads a funding bid (including Belfast and Castlereagh Councils) to DARD to draw down funding for the development of a discrete number of deliverable Village Renewal Plans. Following this process villages/rural settlements will then be able to make further applications for support from NIRDP and other funding sources. Villages can apply for up to £250,000 for agreed activities under this measure from NIRDP.

Resource Implications

It is expected that a village development plan will cost no more than £20,000. It is therefore recommended that Belfast City Council co-funds the village development plan in Belfast, up to a maximum of £5,000. This will allow the village to potentially draw down up to £250,000 towards development and renewal activity.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to a resource allocation of up to £5,000 for match funding of a development plan for the village in Belfast, with the remainder of the match funding (up to £15,000) to be provided by DARD.

Decision Tracking

If recommendation is accepted, an update will be presented to a future meeting of this committee.

Time frame: December 2010

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Key to Abbreviations

NIRDP – Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme
DARD – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment
ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

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