



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	European Social Fund – Match Funding Requests
Date:	6 December 2010
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that, at the August 2010 meeting of the Development Committee, details of an upcoming call for projects under Priority 1 of the European Social Fund (ESF) were provided. Priority 1 focuses on “helping people into sustainable employment.”
1.2	At the August meeting, Members agreed a set of criteria to be used to guide the development of any potential applications under ESF. It was also agreed that these criteria would be used to assess any requests for match funding from potential partners.
1.3	The call for projects was launched in late August 2010 and the deadline for submissions was 5 November 2010. The ESF programme is managed locally by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

2	Key Issues
2.1	If successful in their applications, projects requesting ESF support are awarded funding of up to 65% of the total project value. They have to seek match funding from another public sector partner(s) for the remaining 35%. ESF projects have a three year duration but match funding requests have to be endorsed on an annual basis.
2.2	At present, Belfast City Council is match funding one project – HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment). Our financial commitment to the project in the current year is £40,000. To date, 70 long-term unemployed people have found work as a result of their participation in the programme.
2.3	In view of the success of this project, an application has been made to develop

	<p>and expand the HARTE programme under this new round of ESF. This project will engage 250 long-term unemployed with a view to helping them find jobs in the tourism, hospitality and wider service industry. Lisburn City Council has also agreed to be a partner in the project.</p>
2.4	<p>Given the significant opportunities available in this sector in 2012-2013, with the opening of new facilities and major events, it is proposed that the programme will be front-loaded in years 1 and 2 to ensure that those participating can avail of these opportunities.</p>
2.5	<p>In the estimates submitted as part of the budget planning process for the financial year 2011-2012, an allocation of up to £75,000 has been set aside to support employability initiatives under the Economic Development budget. It was envisaged that this could include some element of match funding for ESF schemes. However consideration was also given to using some of that amount for non-ESF activities, in line with the skills development needs identified as part of the Belfast Employability and Skills plan work. An amount of £45,000 had nominally been identified to support two skills development programmes in the creative industries and business services sectors. This means that around £30,000 had been set aside to match fund other ESF initiatives.</p>
2.6	<p>Applications for match funding have been received from 7 projects. The total match funding requested exceeds £230,000.</p>
2.7	<p>Details of all projects that have made match funding requests are attached as Appendix 1. The table provides some assessment of the projects against the criteria previously established by this Committee and includes details of the level of match funding requested for this coming financial year.</p>
2.8	<p>Members should also be aware that, in addition to the projects identified in Appendix 1, correspondence has also been received from Training for Women Network (TWN) and Women In Business. Both organisations have asked for meetings with officers to discuss ESF funding applications. Both organisations received some funding from Belfast City Council under the previous ESF funding round. Women in Business was supported in years 1 and 2 and Training for Women Network was supported in Year 2.</p>
2.9	<p>Members are reminded that, as part of their decision at the August 2010 Development Committee regarding priority criteria for Council's contribution to ESF projects, it was agreed that requests for match funding received after the application process closed would not be considered. The letter from Women in Business was received on 5 November – the closing date for submissions (applications closed at 12pm that day). Subsequent correspondence with DEL suggests that Training for Women Network has not listed Belfast City Council as a potential match funder. As such, we do not have details of both projects and they have not been listed in Appendix 1.</p>
2.10	<p>In addition to the match funding requests, our HR section has indicated that it would be willing to support an additional ESF application which focuses on providing work placements for young people. This scheme is being proposed by North City Training and builds on a pilot initiative supported by DEL last year. This project will not require any match funding from Belfast City Council as the project promoters are seeking the match funding from other partners. Belfast City Council is being asked only to facilitate work placements as part of this programme.</p>

2.11	Members are advised that all projects are currently being assessed by DEL and a decision on successful projects is likely to be made before Christmas. As such, all projects listed will have to meet the DEL eligibility criteria and exceed the scoring threshold established. If this is the case, any decision taken by this Committee to match fund a project will be subject to a positive decision by DEL in the first instance.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	The match funding requests received total in excess of £230,000. At present, a maximum of £75,000 has been set aside within EDU's budget estimates for the incoming financial year for employability initiatives. £30,000 of this amount had been identified to match fund ESF applications.
3.2	The HARTE application will require up to £50,000 in match funding from BCC in year 1.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	All applications will be equality impact assessed by DEL as part of their decision-making process.

5	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the match funding requests received by ESF project applicants – Consider prioritisation of the match funding requests within available budget estimates, subject to DEL's decision to support the relevant project (s). – Note the proposal to extend the HARTE programme and agree to match fund this up to a maximum of £50,000 in year 1.

6	Decision Tracking
	Subject to the Committee decision, a report will be brought back to the February meeting of the Development Committee to confirm the DEL decision on all projects that have requested funding from Belfast City Council.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>ESF – European Social Fund DEL – Department for Employment and Learning</p>

8	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Overview of match funding requests received