



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	European Social Fund (ESF) match funding requests – additional requests received
Date:	21 May 2013
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members may be aware that European Social Fund (ESF) Priority One provides financial support for training and other activities to assist long term unemployed people obtain sustainable employment. Funding is awarded through an open call for projects. Successful applicants are allocated funding on condition that they can provide 35% match funding from another public sector source.
1.2	At the July 2011 meeting of the Development Committee, Members agreed to provide match funding for four ESF projects. Three projects were managed by community-based training providers, namely Stepping Stones; Upper Springfield Development Trust (USDT) and Time Associates while the fourth project was led by Belfast City Council, with Lisburn City Council as a project partner.
1.3	The ESF projects are funded through Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). Match funding must be secured on an annual basis. At the 19 March 2013 meeting of Development Committee, it was agreed that match funding for year 3 (financial year 2013/14) of the three projects, as well as the Council-led HARTE project, would be set aside from the 2013/2014 EDU budget. In total, a budget of £73,485 was set aside from Council resources to match fund the four projects.
1.4	Although the original letters of offer from DEL were issued on the basis of a three year programme, DEL recently wrote to all project promoters to confirm that they can offer funding to the approved projects for an additional year (2014-2015) should the project promoters wish to take this offer up. Equally, they have confirmed that they are in a position to offer an uplift of 25% in the funding available to interested projects. In both instances, these offers are based on the project being able to draw in the appropriate levels of match funding.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The offer of 25% uplift has led to some projects having difficulty in being able to get agreement from their match funder to provide the additional funding to allow them to draw down the extra money from DEL.
2.2	Many Belfast-based ESF projects are match-funded by Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO). The office has confirmed that, while it is in a position to commit the match-funding at the previous levels of expenditure in the original letters of offer, it is not in a position to provide the match-funding for the increased amount (i.e. to meet the 25% uplift offer from DEL).
2.3	From discussions with BRO, they have received requests from nine projects based in the Belfast City Council area to provide the additional match-funding amount while they are aware of at least three other projects that have declined the offer of the additional funding from DEL as they accepted that they would not be in a position to find the additional match-funding.
2.4	Belfast City Council has now received requests from three of those projects to provide the match-funding to allow them to draw down the additional funding from DEL in the current year. These projects have indicated to DEL that they would be keen to draw down the increased amount but that they are still actively seeking the match funding. All projects should, by now, have confirmed with DEL whether or not they wish to avail of the funding. All funding from DEL is subject to the agreed match funding being in place.
2.5	<p>The projects that are seeking support from Belfast City Council are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lenadoon Community Forum – Neighbourhood Training for Employment Project - Ashton Community Trust: Progress to Employment - Ashton Community Trust: Women’s Training Project.
	Additional details on the areas of focus of each project are outlined below.
2.6	<p><u>Lenadoon Community Forum: Neighbourhood Training for Employment Project</u> Lenadoon Community Forum’s Neighbourhood Training for Employment Project aims to help local people gain accredited qualifications with a view to increasing their employment opportunities.</p>
2.7	<p>The original plan for year 3 of the programme was to provide support to 340 local residents. The additional support would allow the project promoters to increase this to 450 participants. The types of courses to be undertaken will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essential skills combined with ICT - Sage payroll/accounts levels 1 and 2 - ECDL essentials and extra - Manual book-keeping levels 1 and 2 - Bridge to essential skills in ICT.
2.8	Supporting the extra 110 residents would require additional match-funding of £12,010.
2.9	<p><u>Ashton Community Trust – Progress to Employment</u> The Progress to Employment programme provides participants with access to accredited training and resources that will improve their skills and improve their</p>

	<p>chances of a more sustainable future in employment. It focuses on training to match participants' skills with employer's requirements. A mentor will further support the client through one-to-one support. A new NEETs (those not in employment, education and training) programme has just been introduced as part of this initiative.</p>
2.10	<p>In 2012-2013, 546 participants availed of job search support; 287 undertook accredited training and 158 entered into employment. The targets for 2013-2014 will be 25% higher than these figures (i.e. 682 availing of job search support; 358 into accredited training and 197 into employment). The additional numbers will be predominantly made up by targeting NEETs.</p>
2.11	<p>The amount of funding offered by DEL to Progress to Employment in the current financial year (including the uplift) is £365,725. At present, DSD have committed to providing match funding of £94,360. This leaves a shortfall of £33,642.65 to allow the full amount to be drawn down.</p>
2.12	<p><u>Ashton Community Trust – Women's Training Project</u> The Women's Training Project focuses on improving the employability of those women experiencing significant employment gaps, lone parents, those returning to the labour market and women with little or no qualifications. The project aims to offer women training which will increase basic and intermediate skills and a mentor will to support the client through one-to-one support.</p>
2.13	<p>In 2012-2013, 125 participants received accredited training and 48 went into employment. The targets for 2013-2014 are 156 participants to receive accredited training and 60 into employment.</p>
2.14	<p>The amount of funding offered by DEL to Women's Training Project in the current financial year (including the uplift) is £150,643. At present, DSD have committed to providing match funding of £38,868.98. This leaves a shortfall of £13,856.02 to allow the full amount to be drawn down.</p>
2.15	<p>In all three cases, the projects can proceed in line with their original letter of offer i.e. the amount agreed in year 1 with DEL and for which DSD had agreed to provide the 35% match. However if they are to access the additional support offered, they will need to identify an additional match funding amount to make up the requirement for 35% public match funding.</p>
2.16	<p>Members should be aware that, given that the Council has not been asked to support these projects to date, no provision has been set aside within current EDU budgets to meet the match funding requested.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>The additional match funding amounts requested are £12,010 for Lenadoon Community Forum's Neighbourhood Training for Employment Project; £33,642.65 for Ashton Community Trust's Progress to Employment Project and £13,856.02 for Ashton Community Trust's Women's Training Project. The total match funding requests for the current financial year are £59,508.67.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No specific equality and good relations implications. These will be tested by DEL as part of the funding application process.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to consider the match-funding requests for the three ESF projects, as set out above.

6	Decision Tracking
Update reports will be presented to Committee on an annual basis, should the match funding be allocated.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office DEL – Department for Employment and Learning DSD – Department for Social Development	