



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: NI EU Regional Forum Grant Offer

Date: 17 June 2014

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that BCC launched the NI EU Regional Forum (NIERF) in May 2012 with the NI Executive's Junior Ministers. This Forum was formerly known as Belfast in Europe, and before that the Belfast Quarters En Crise network. It was created to provide a collaborative platform for stakeholders who are engaged in EU activity. The NIERF has now been in existence for 2 years, it is co-chaired by OFMDFM and has a membership of over 100 members from all sectors, across all of Northern Ireland.
1.2	In December 2013, OFMDFM proposed the establishment of an EU Capacity Fund to increase NI access to EU competitive funding. The £373k fund provided by OFMDFM was to support Forum members from the community and voluntary sector who have no previous experience or who have been unsuccessful in accessing these funds. It was agreed by Members that the fund would be administered via the EU Unit and that up to £60k of the fund would be set aside to resource the Forum and to recruit an Officer on a 2 year fixed term contract to manage the Capacity Fund, to provide Forum secretariat and support for the management of the Forum portal.
1.3	An administrative Officer has now been recruited to undertake this work and is located within the EU Unit which has overall responsibility for the Forum within BCC. OFMDFM has also provided a Senior Officer as a resource on a temporary basis to oversee the design and development of the Capacity Fund and to lead on the development of the Forum. This resource and BCC role with respect to the Forum will be reviewed and agreed at the end of this fixed term period.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The details of the Capacity Fund are now being finalised and will be launched following final agreement with OFMDFM. It is hoped that this will

	be achieved before the summer break.
2.2	<p>The EU Capacity Fund will be open to applications from Community and Voluntary sector organisations who are members of the Forum or who have applied to become members. These organisations will be eligible to apply if they have no previous experience or have not been successful in accessing competitive EU funds. The EU Capacity Fund will consist of a number of strands with will target specific steps along the process to successfully apply for competitive EU funding programmes. Strands include support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - costs associated with partner search for EU project development - assistance in making an application for EU competitive funding - costs associated with hosting an EU event which attracts a number of EU delegates - last resort match funding
2.3	In respect to the strand providing assistance to making applications for competitive EU funding programmes, it is our proposal to procure a managed service to deliver this. This is the preferred method of delivery as not only will it provide better value for money, through tighter audit controls and reduced administrative overheads, it will also more importantly reduce the administrative burden on those organisations eligible to avail of the service.
2.4	On 26 June 2014 a showcase event will take place to highlight the achievements of the Forum to date and the chair and deputy chair of the Development Committee or nominees are invited to attend.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	All costs associated with the Capacity Fund are covered by OFMDFM.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that members agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to BCC procuring a managed service to provide the application support strand of the EU Capacity Building Fund, and - that the chair, deputy chair or nominee attend the Forum showcase event on 26 June.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline: June 2014	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen