

What Can Europe Do For You?

European Social Fund

John Hacking
Network for Europe
January 18th 2012



What is ESF?

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the main financial tool through which the European Union translates its strategic employment policy aims into action

ESF aims to improve employment opportunities in the European Union by providing financial support towards the running costs of vocational training schemes, guidance and counselling projects, job creation measures and other steps to improve the employability and skills of both employed and unemployed people



How ESF is managed

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has overall responsibility for ESF funds in England
- DWP manages the England ESF programme at a national level and liaises with the European Commission in Brussels
- Each region has its own ESF allocation to fund projects to address its regional jobs and skills needs, within the framework of the two priorities in the England ESF programme



European Social Fund: funding priorities

Priority 1 - Extending Employment Opportunities

- The objective of Priority 1 is to increase employment and to reduce unemployment and inactivity.
- It will help to tackle barriers to work faced by disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities and health conditions, lone parents and other disadvantaged parents, older workers, ethnic minorities, and people with no or low qualifications. It will also aim to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).



European Social Fund: funding priorities

Priority 2 - Developing a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce:

- The objective of Priority 2 is to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce by; reducing the number of people without basic skills;
- Increasing the number of people qualified to level 2 and, where justified, to level 3;
- Reducing gender segregation in the workforce
- Developing managers and workers in small enterprises
- There will be a particular focus on the low skilled



Accessing ESF

ESF is accessed through Co-financing organisations

- Co-financing means channelling ESF and the required match funding to providers in a single stream
- Organisations which do this are called Co-financing organisations



Accessing ESF in the North West

There are three Co-financing organisation in the North West:

- **Skills Funding Agency** aims to improve the employability and skills of employed and unemployed people by supporting education and vocational training schemes and learning for the 19+ (and Young People's Learning Agency)
- **Jobcentre Plus/DWP** supports disadvantaged people claiming incapacity benefit or Income Support through voluntary participation in the work programme and provides targeted support to tackle worklessness in families with multiple problems
- **National Offender Management Service (NOMS)** aims to enhance the employability prospects of offenders by bridging the existing gaps between offenders and mainstream education, skills and employment services before, during and after release from custody



Accessing ESF in the North West

Procurement mechanisms

- **Skills Funding Agency** procures funds through an online procurement portal after organisations have successfully registered with the Approved College and Training Organisations Register (ACTOR) operating the lead contractor model
- **Jobcentre Plus/DWP** procures funds to organisations on the Employment Related Support Services Network, operating the prime contracting model
- **National Offender Management Service (NOMS)** procures funds through the prime contracting model



European Social Fund: Community Learning Grants

Grants up to £12K accessed through simplified application arrangements, available to voluntary sector groups who would not otherwise be able to access ESF.

Helping people access the labour market

- Help with basic skills
- Taster work experience inc voluntary work
- Training advice and guidance
- Job search assistance
- Confidence building
- Personal development
- Support to overcome barriers to training and employment



Community Learning Grants in the North West are managed by the WEA.

The next application round will be launched on 1st March 2012. Closing Date 4th May 2012

For more information:

www.nw.wea.org.uk/esf_grants/how_to_apply.php

Amanda Smith – 0161 277 5411

ASmith@wea.org.uk

Website : www.nw.wea.org.uk



Current issues in accessing ESF

Feedback we gathered from organisations

- Larger contracts limit opportunities to access
- Provision narrow, prescriptive limited room for innovation
- Payment by results model puts strain on cashflow
- Limited resources to engage with the programme as well as carry on with day to day delivery
- Support in meeting quality standards
- Capacity & Capability to deliver
- Risk of becoming mission-drift

