

## **ESIF-ESF Update for VCS            ESF**

This is the twenty second in a series to update you on the main European Funds in Greater Manchester, provided by GMCVO with the support of Network for Europe, and is part of Technical Assistance. This one covers ESF.

### **Context**

ERDF SUD. Deadline extended by a month to 30/11/17.

### **ESF Working Well**

The lead bidder for this £52m fund was finally announced on 23rd November. After a very detailed procurement process, GM Combined Authority has appointed InWork GM to deliver the new Working Well (Work and Health Programme) across Greater Manchester.

InWork GM is described as a new alliance partnership, between Ingeus and Manchester Growth Company, with Pathways CIC and Pluss. It will launch at the end of January 2018, when it will start taking referrals from JobCentre Plus. The new Working Well programme, part funded by ESF, is intended to support 22,000 participants in GM between 2018 and 2024. It will offer a seamless, co-ordinated and sequenced package of support to individuals to help them to address specific barriers and challenges that make it difficult to move forward. It will support people who are out of work due to poor health and disabilities, build on the previous programme, and is designed to respond to one of GM's strategic aims to reduce long term unemployment and help more residents into sustained employment.

GM is the only local area outside London that has Co-Finance status for ESF, which has made it easier to combine devolved funding with ESF to provide a locally supported project.

### **Changes to the ESF Operational Programme**

Following the review of the English ESF OP, revised versions of the OP are being submitted to the European Commission (possibly in two parts, towards the end of the year, and then in 2018), and it is hoped the changes will be agreed in due course.

### **Remaining ESF in Greater Manchester**

With the £52m allocation now announced, there is ESF still available. It is thought that further calls will not take place until there has been time to look at the activity around that call, and make preparations and any changes for the next ones.

While there are advantages in having further calls using GM Combined Authority as the Co-Financer again, the other Co-Finance Organisations (Big Lottery Fund, ESFA, DWP) are thought likely to make announcements very soon (and Big Lottery makes extra match available locally), and direct bidding is still possible.

It is not yet clear whether the rest of ESF will just be local co-financing, or a mix of different methods.

### **Simplification**

The High Level Group on Simplification is holding its final meeting, and its various recommendations are being acted on. While some will be built into programmes for 2021-27, others are being built into the current 2014-20 programme and will effect us in GM.

A first batch of Commission Delegated Acts was published in the Official Journal on 15th November, including standard scales of unit costs for Education, and stage payments. Work is continuing on similar proposals for support for training (both unemployed and employed).

Meanwhile, the Omnibus revisions are expected to be agreed within weeks - these will increase simplification, including for simplified cost options, state aids, and in particular for smaller projects.

**ESIF sub-committee meeting**

The local LEP level committee meeting for EU funds was due on 22nd September, and then postponed to October, then to December, but will now be held in 2018.

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