

North West Network



Newsletter

Issue 73

Welcome to the latest edition of North West Network's newsletter, featuring the latest information on European issues relating to the Voluntary and Community Sector in the North West.

Greater Manchester Community Grants Celebration Event - July 2010



A total of 64 small voluntary sector organisations in Greater Manchester have been funded to help unemployed people move a step closer to the labour market under the Project Towpath programme. The programme is administered by GMCVO and funded by the Learning and Skills Council and European Social Fund. Beneficiary groups and projects from Greater Manchester were invited to the celebration where they showcased the innovative and valuable work they have undertaken which has made a real difference to SO many people. The agenda featured a variety of speakers including John Hacking from North West Network (NWN), who provided attendees with a real insight into the future of Community Grants and to also look back and see exactly how the money has touched people's lives. For further information on ESF Community Grants please visit our website.

ESF and Europe 2020 conference - June 2010

On 23-24 June 2010 staff from NWN attended the "Shaping the future of the ESF - ESF and Europe 2020" conference in Brussels. 480 delegates from European Union (EU) member states and outside the EU attended. The conference was organised by the European Commission and brought together experts on ESF from public authorities, social partners, NGOs and academics. The main aim of the two day conference was to acknowledge past achievements of the ESF in supporting EU objectives, in particular the previous Growth and Jobs Strategy, but also to explore how the ESF could contribute in the most effective manner to the new Europe 2020 strategy.



NWN attended this event as part of our aim to follow and shape the debate about the future of EU funding in the North West after the 2007-2013 programme.

There will be opportunities in the coming months for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations in the North West to have their say about how ESF develops in the future. For a brief on the conference please visit: www.nwnetwork.org.uk/esf-and-europe-2020-conference-june-2010

Supported by:



ESF 2007-2013 Update

The European Social Fund (ESF) Programme is being delivered mainly through Co-financing organisations (CFOs). The CFOs that operate in the North West are the Skills Funding Agency, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) acting as their delivery agents) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

Skills Funding Agency

The next freeze date for the Qualified Provider Framework (QPF) is 10 September 2010. This is to accommodate the launch of ACTOR, the Approved College and Training Organisation Register, which is replacing the QPF from October 2010.

ACTOR is simpler and less bureaucratic than the QPF. It is a single stage process with fewer questions and multiple-choice answers covering both the pre-qualifying stage and the programmes and provision offer. Only organisations registered on ACTOR will be considered for new contracted provision with the Skills Funding Agency without the need for individual tenders.

- Providers who have been told that they were successfully registered on the QPF and have refreshed their pre-qualifying documents on BRAVO since 11 September 2009 need do nothing until after ACTOR goes live during October 2010.

- Providers successfully registered on the QPF that have not refreshed their pre-qualifying documents via BRAVO since 11 September 2009 should do so before 10 September 2010. Failure to do so will mean that they cannot be automatically migrated across to ACTOR.

- Providers that have previously been unsuccessful in their application for registration on the QPF should wait until ACTOR is launched in October to apply for registration.

Once ACTOR is available, all providers migrated to ACTOR will have to enter ACTOR before 31 December 2010 and respond to questions raised regarding the programmes and provision for which they wish to be considered for funding.

The timetable for future procurement by the Skills Funding Agency is as follows:

Develop Commissioning Plans and Invitations to Tender (ITTs)	May to August 2010
Publish ITTs and procurement of activities	September to December 2010
Commence programme activity	January 2011

According to this timetable, news for ITTs are expected in the autumn and NWN will let all interested parties know as soon as ITTs are announced. Please note that subject to demand, NWN will be holding training events well in advance for submission for tenders for interested organisations in the sub-regions.

Information will be posted at NWN's website as well as dates and information for future training events. So, for further information the link to follow is: www.nwnetwork.org.uk

If you require further information on the European Social Fund, or have a project proposal in mind and would like to find out if it would be eligible for funding please contact a member of the European Team at NWN.

DWP

The Government has announced its plans for radical reforms of the welfare to work system and the implementation of the Work Programme. The Work Programme will be a single integrated package of support providing personalised help for everyone who finds themselves out of work regardless of the benefit they claim.

The Government invited expressions of interest from the private, public and voluntary sectors to establish a framework agreement for the provision of employment related support services, helping people to select, train for, obtain and retain employment suitable for their ages and capacities. help deliver the Work Programme. Interested parties were invited to express an interest by 5pm, 30 July 2010.

The framework competition will identify organisations (including consortia) that have the capacity and expertise to deliver not only the Work Programme but also other potential employment related support services contracts. This may also include contracts that may attract ESF support as the Work Programme may be used by DWP as match for its ESF Co-financing arrangements.

DWP has received numerous suggestions and comments about The Work Programme from their external suppliers. To enable suppliers to propose and discuss ideas on specific areas of The Work Programme, DWP has introduced an online facility to comment and give views on specific themes of the Work Programme. NWN is closely following and participating in the process by providing responses to the online consultations for the Payment Model and Capital Raising. If you have any comments or queries on the Work Programme please get in touch with a member of the European Team.

National Offender Management Service

NOMS are currently shortlisting perspective providers in the regions as they go through their second Procurement round. Up to five prospective providers in each region will be invited to respond to Final ITT on 16 August 2010. The closing date for Final ITT clarifications by prospective providers will be 03 September 2010 and results of the round will become available on 14 October 2010, with a view to contracts commencing delivery from January 2011.

Opportunities for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to access the programme are through subcontracting by either contacting prospective providers directly or by publishing their contact details on the NOMS Contact Database. For further information please contact a member of the European Team.

Working Links update

After Working Links (WL) re-evaluation of their Manchester Central Contract NWN's WL project has been reduced to part-time. NWN is still developing and maintaining a database of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that serves the purpose of gathering intelligence of organisations which operate in Manchester, Salford and Trafford. This database also consists of organisations which have expressed an interest to become subcontractors of WL in the future. If you would like to find out more about NWN's project with Working Links please contact Humza Umair on 0161 236 6493 or E-mail: humza@nwnetwork.org.uk

Skills Funding Agency:

Single Equality Scheme Consultation.

This consultation document sets out how the Skills Funding Agency propose to meet their legal equality duties, and go beyond them where practicable. Anyone who is affected by the Skills Funding Agency work is invited to respond to the consultation, and questions are included throughout the document. Deadline for responses to this consultation is 6 September 2010. For further information please visit the news section at NWN website.

DWP Work Programme Online Consultation

NWN recently canvassed views from the Voluntary and Community Sector in the North West on the arrangements for the new Work Programme. The views were collated by NWN and fed into an online consultation held by the DWP which closed on the 13th August. To see the NWN submissions to the consultation as well as the DWP responses please visit:

<http://interactive.dwp.gov.uk/the-work-programme-your-thoughts>

Indus Delta Framework Forum

The Indus Delta Framework Forum has been developed in association with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). DWP are currently developing a Web Portal as part of the Merlin Standard project. The Merlin Standard project has been designed as a tool to ensure the welfare to work industry builds

and manages healthy and high performing supply chains.

The Merlin Web Portal will be a forum for sharing information on the Work Programme and reducing the process burden for primes and their supply chain partners in building partnerships. Put simply, the Indus Delta Framework Forum is intended as an area for potential prime and sub-contractors to begin discussions on the DWP Work Programme Framework competition and the Work Programme itself. The website might prove useful for organisations which are on the look-out for delivery partners, for those seeking specialist groups or services to join forces with, and gives the opportunity to share information or best practice cases with other primes and subcontractors.

For further information please visit: http://indusdelta.co.uk/page/framework_forum

A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology

The consultation examines ways in which the funding system and methodology for post-19 further education and skills can be simplified to ensure greater transparency for learners and employers and reduce burdens on Further Education colleges and training organisations aiding them to deliver high quality further education and skills training. The deadline for responses to this consultation is 14 October 2010. For further information please visit the news section at NWN website.

Skills for Sustainable Growth:

Consultation on the Future Direction of Skills Policy.

The paper outlines the coalition government's emerging vision for skills and explores some key areas where the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills would like to seek further views. The paper sets the context for the technical funding system and methodology consultation – A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology – that is being launched in parallel. The deadline for responses to this consultation is

14 October 2010. For further information please visit the news section at NWN website.

ESF Programme Evaluations

The ESF Evaluation Team has published three programme evaluation reports. Evaluations are carried out to assess whether the ESF programme is achieving its objectives. They also provide evidence to improve the way ESF works. The following reports have been published:

- ESF Support for In-Work Training: The aim of the study was to examine the nature and

effectiveness of Priorities 2 and 5 provision for improving the skills of employees.

- ESF Evaluation of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities: The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of equal opportunities policy and practice within ESF, in the context of helping to tackle the barriers experienced by each of the main equality groups.

- ESF Cohort Study Wave 1: The main aim was to provide evidence of the longer term outcomes of ESF participants.

For further information please visit www.esf.gov.uk

ERDF Update

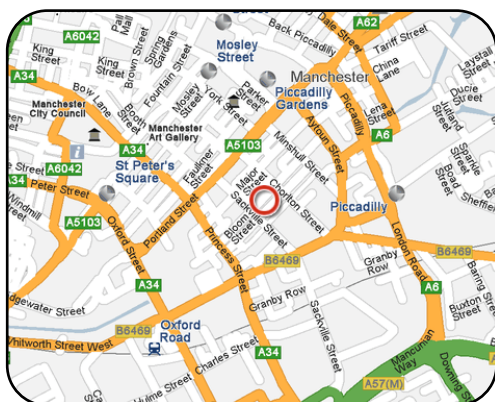
The Performance Monitoring sub-committee met on 15th July (in a tent at Jodrell Bank!). It discussed progress with the programme so far and it was reported that the programme in the North West is close to spending the minimum required to meet the N+2 targets. The N+2 target is the minimum that the programme has to be spent in a specified time period before Europe starts to “claw back” money. The N+2 rules have recently been relaxed. It was also reported that where the programme

was currently oversubscribed there would be a system of reserve lists introduced. More details on these in the next newsletter. As with many other areas of activity affecting the Voluntary and Community Sector there are changes in the air at the NWDA which will impact on the ERDF programme and how it is delivered. The current ERDF programme lasts until the end of 2013 (with spend continuing into 2014 and 2015). However, the managing agency for the ERDF in the North West, the NWDA, will

only last until March 2012. The impact of this is that much of the match funding for the North West's ERDF has been coming from the NWDA's Single Pot funding. This has been cut back dramatically. The new 2014-20 programme is currently being discussed with key decision being made by the end of next year. NWN will continue to represent the views of the Voluntary and Community Sector in regard to ERDF and if you want any further information go to our website or contact a member of the European Team at NWN.

Contact us...

If you would like further information about any of the subjects covered in this newsletter, if you have any feedback, comments or suggestions please contact North West Network on 0161 236 6493 or email info@nwnetwork.org.uk



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