



Leading learning and skills

LEARNING & SKILLS COUNCIL

ESF OBJECTIVE 3 CO-FINANCING 2004 –2008

BIDDING PROSPECTUS

**3.1 Promotion of Lifelong Learning (OLASS) – NE Region
1.2 Improving Employability – Co Durham**

March 2007

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Annex A: - Application Form for ESF Co Financing LSC (March 2007)

Annex B: - Co-Financed Provider Proposal Appraisal and Selection

1. INTRODUCTION

This prospectus outlines the application process to be used for all Objective 3 Co-financing applications submitted to the Learning & Skills Council.

Included within the prospectus are details of the activities to be supported by co-financing within the North East Region; resources available, timetable for bids, application form, project selection criteria, & details of the selection process.

The prospectus has been designed to help applicants structure their funding proposals to deliver activities which address the priority areas identified in the Learning & Skills Council Co-financing Plan.

The Learning & Skills Council Co-financing Plan will be delivered under 5 Policy Fields and 12 underpinning measures (See section 6 for more details).

The Co-financing Plan has been endorsed by the North East Objective 3 Regional Committee. Applicants must therefore be aware that when applying for funds, the proposed target groups, activities, and impacts cannot be compromised without the risk of losing the ESF grant.

Applicants are strongly advised to read the following guidance notes thoroughly before completing their application.

Additionally it is suggested that applicants familiarise themselves with the overarching strategies and policy requirements that ESF Funding through Objective 3 supports this includes:

- North East of England Objective 3 Programme Regional Development Plan (RDP)
- Regional Economic Strategy (RES)
- Learning and Skills Council Co Financing Plan December 2004
- Learning and Skills Council Bidding Guidance March 2007
- European Social Fund Good Practice Guide <http://www.esf.gov.uk/guidance/documents/index.asp>

2. CONTACTS

Please contact the following for further information or guidance about co-financing and the application process.

Name	Telephone Number	E-mail Address
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3. WHAT IS CO-FINANCING?

From January 2001, a system of co-financing ESF has gradually been introduced to deliver Objective 3 ESF programmes in England. This means that ESF funding and domestic match funding will be channelled to applicants as a single funding stream by Co-financing organisations such as the Learning & Skills Council. In the future, it is anticipated that most ESF funding will be channelled through Co-financing Organisations (CFOs) in this way.

Co-financing aims to support a more strategic use of ESF, alongside UK public and other funds. Co-financing involves the management and planning of ESF at Measure Level, rather than project level. This will allow greater flexibility in the use of match funding, and therefore more scope to support innovative projects. Additionally, this approach will aim to fund new activities not previously delivered and allow provision to be responsive to the demand of local/community needs.

4. ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Please note that the following basic principles and criteria **must** be observed before your proposal will be eligible for inclusion in the selection process.

1. A fully completed Co-financing Application Form, and an electronic copy on floppy disc together with two photocopies, should be submitted to reach the Learning & Skills Council by the specified deadline.
2. Proposals must relate only to priorities, measures, eligible activities and eligible target beneficiary groups as detailed in the LSC Co-financing Plan, Prospectus and Bidding Guidance.
3. Please note that you can only apply for funding under one measure when submitting your proposal. If you wish to carry out activities under more than one measure then you must submit separate forms for each measure under which you intend to run an activity.
4. Activities must take place within the North East Region.
5. Organisations applying for funding must be eligible under ESF rules, which includes any organisation, which is legally formed, but **excludes** sole traders and individuals.
6. Applicants must submit application forms to the Learning & Skills Council.

5. ESF REGULATIONS

Please read the relevant sections of the ESF rules and regulations (National Guidance) carefully to ensure ineligible activity and costs are not included in your proposal.

1. Capital Expenditure

Please note that ESF is **not** a Capital Programme - therefore any expenditure for items of equipment must be kept to an absolute minimum, and must be relevant to the project. No single item can cost £1000 or more.

2. Training for the public sector

ESF is **not** usually available for training individuals who have permanent jobs in the public sector, as the Commission believe that direct training of public employees should be supported by the Member State.

However there are some exceptions, these include:

- Training people to allow them to enter the public sector;
- If the public sector contracts out work to private companies, the contracted company is not considered part of the public sector so training activity will be eligible;
- Support for public sector workers who have been given or are threatened with redundancy, which requires them to carry out vocational training to fit them for a new post;
- Lifelong learning for public sector workers employed in traditionally low skilled work who need career development in their current post;
- Training Jobcentre Plus staff working on modernising or providing activity which is additional to normal Jobcentre Plus activity; and
- Funding teachers for activity beyond the standard support available to help the teachers meet the needs of stated ESF client groups.

For ESF purposes, the following are considered to be part of the public sector:

- Central Government
- Local authorities
- The armed forces
- NHS Trusts
- GP Fund-holders; and
- Grant-maintained schools

3.State Aids

Background

1. The current arrangements for handling state aid issues in the ESF Objective 3 programme are through de minimis aid (Commission regulation 69/2001). There are concerns however that the current arrangements are proving restrictive.

2. This note provides further guidance regarding accumulation and monitoring of de minimis aid to enterprises. It also introduces an additional option for dealing with state aid issues in Objective 3, using the training aid block exemption (Commission regulation 68/2001). It is important to note that the training aid block exemption regulation is being introduced as an alternative to de minimis and not a replacement, both will operate together. Under state aid rules it is allowable to use de minimus aid on top of other aid schemes.

3. There is no precise definition of what constitutes a state aid. However there is a very clear statement of principle that any form of aid to a commercial undertaking – whether provided directly by the state or provided indirectly through ‘State resources’ – is incompatible with the Common Market if it distorts or threatens to distort competition within the Community. Aid to individuals and most grants to public and not-for-profit

organisations, such as voluntary, charitable and cultural bodies, are not caught by State Aid rules. These organisations are only caught when they are involved in commercial activities or compete with commercial organisations. Further guidance is provided in the DTI document European Community State Aids – Guidance for all Departments and Agencies (www.dti.gov.uk/Europe/stateaid).

4. For significant parts of the Objective 3 programme the ESF and public match funding provided to projects does not constitute state aid. Where ESF activity is supporting individuals to improve their employability and help them move closer to the labour market the aid is being provided to the individual and there are no direct benefits for enterprises. However there are elements of the programme which provide support to individuals in employment and in these cases there may be state aid implications in that their employers are receiving support towards the costs of training. There will be cases where aid provided is available to all enterprises, for example through New Deal and Modern Apprenticeships. In these circumstances aid measures do not favour certain undertakings and as such do not constitute a state aid.

De Minimis

5. This is the threshold for schemes below which, the requirements of *State Aid Rules* do not apply. The de minimis threshold relates to schemes, which provide aid awards to business of less than €100,000 over a rolling 3-year period. De minimis is not project related – it relates to the total of all public aid to the business in question regardless of source. If the total aid awarded to a business is greater than the threshold then state aid rules always apply.

6. Currently state aid issues in ESF Objective 3 are dealt with largely through the provision of de minimis aid. This enables an enterprise to receive up to 100,000 euros in aid (any public resources including ESF) over a three- year rolling period. Providing such aid is given within the de minimis rules there is no requirement to notify it to the Commission. Where aid cannot be met within the de minimis criteria it must comply with state aid rules either by meeting the conditions of the other block exemption regulations or through notification to the Commission.

7. To ensure that the requirements of the de minimis regulation are met, scheme administrators must ensure that any award of ESF and other public match funding to an enterprise given under the terms of the de minimis block exemption does not breach the € 100,000 (approximately £62,000 at current exchange rates) ceiling over a three year rolling period. Member states are required to keep detailed records of any de minimis aid paid for 10 years.

8. Applicants wishing to make use of the de minimis rules must put in place a monitoring system to ensure the limit is not breached. Typically, such a monitoring system will involve:

- asking enterprises receiving support under their scheme to identify all other sources of support (either in cash or in kind) that they have received in the last three years;
- checking if previous de minimis aid is involved, to ensure that the combined assistance does not exceed €100,000 over any three-year rolling period. Recipients will need to calculate the cash equivalent of any aid in kind (the organisation which provided the aid may be able to help them in this). If the limit is breached, the aid may have to be reduced or refused to ensure the limit is not breached.

The DTI State Aid Branch advise writing to each recipient in the following terms:

“The assistance for [...] constitutes State Aid as defined under Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty of Rome and is being granted as ‘de minimis’ aid under Commission Regulation EC/69/2001. European Commission rules prohibit any undertaking from receiving more than €100,000 (approximately £62,000) ‘de minimis’ aid over a rolling three-year period. Any ‘de minimis’ aid granted over the €100,000 limit may be subject to repayment with interest. If you have received any ‘de minimis’ aid over the last three years (from any source) you should inform us immediately with details of the dates and amounts of aid received. Furthermore, information on this aid must be supplied to any other public authority or agency asking for information on ‘de minimis’ aid for the next three years.”

9. The de minimis exemption cannot be used in the following four areas:

- the transport sector;
- activities linked to the production, processing and marketing of agricultural goods;
- aid to export related industries; and,
- aid contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods.

10. Whilst de minimis rules are straightforward in principle they are difficult and complex to operate in practice because they are not project related and as such rely on individual enterprises being able to identify how much aid and under which schemes they have received support over a rolling three-year period. Money received from notified and approved schemes such as New Deal does not have to be cumulated with de minimis aid. Where enterprises have exhausted their aid ceilings under de minimis, there is no capacity for further aid through ESF. Because of these difficulties, the DTI State Aid Branch does not normally recommend the use of de minimis aid if other alternatives are available.

Training Aid

11. Given some of the issues raised about de minimis aid above, ESF Division is planning to cover relevant parts of the Objective 3 programme in England and Gibraltar under the Training Aid block exemption regulation. This will not replace de minimis, but will provide an additional option within certain policy fields and measures in Objective 3.

12. We believe that training aid provides a better option than de minimis for dealing with aid to enterprises in Objective 3. The Training Aid block exemption regulation covers all sectors and dispenses with the need to monitor levels of de minimus aid provided to individual enterprises. However dealing with aid through this regulation will result in a number of administrative issues for final beneficiaries and scheme administrators, not least because permitted aid levels vary depending on the size of an enterprise, whether support is provided in assisted or non-assisted areas, whether the training supported is general or specific and where aid is provided to disadvantaged workers. Individual notification will also be required where aid to one enterprise exceeds 1,000,000 euros.

13. ESF Division will provide the Commission with a summary of the Objective 3 Operational Programme in England and Gibraltar, as required under the Training Aid block exemption regulation, to be placed in the Official Journal (OJEC). We intend to provide this information to the Commission by October 2002 – a copy of the proposed notice is included at Annex 1.

14. The notice of the scheme to the Commission will mean that there will be no need to pre-notify the European Commission separately of any aid that complies with all the terms of the regulation.

15. The parts of the Objective 3 programme in England and Gibraltar to be notified are essentially those measures that can support employed people and are therefore likely to provide aid to enterprises.

These measures are:

Priority 3, Measure 1

- Promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning (especially for those groups least likely to take part in lifelong learning activities and lacking basic and key skills). Supporting the key policy developments in lifelong learning to improve participation.

Priority 3, Measure 2;

- Improving the employability of those in work through lifelong learning provision, which develops their skills and helps them meet the changing needs of employers, such as in the fields of IT, management and the environment.

Priority 4, Measure 1;

- To support companies, especially SMEs to update and upgrade their employees' vocational skills, including basic and key skills.

Priority 4, Measure 3;

- Encourage entrepreneurship of individuals and competitiveness of businesses, particularly SMEs.

16. There are differing levels of aid intensities allowed under this exemption depending on three factors: size of the enterprise; location of the enterprise; and whether the training offered is general or specific.

For Objective 3 areas permitted aid levels are as follows:

Large Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Outside an assisted area	25%	50%
Assisted area (Art 87(3) (c))	30%	55%

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Outside an assisted area	35%	70%
Assisted area (Art 87(3) (c))	40%	75%

Where aid is provided to a 'disadvantaged worker' the aid intensity can be increased by 10 percentage points. The full definition of a disadvantaged worker is at Article 2(g) of regulation 68/2001. Definitions of 'specific' and 'general' training are given at Article 2(d) and (e) of regulation 68/2001. The definition of a small and medium sized enterprise can be found at Annex 1 of regulation 68/2001.

17. In applying the permitted levels of aid it should be remembered that intensities include both ESF and public match funding. In addition it is a requirement of ESF that at least 10% of eligible expenditure must be public match funding and that total ESF awarded must be a minimum of 25% of the total public cost (ESF and public match funding). The eligible costs of a project that can be funded are defined in Article 4 (7) of regulation 68/2001.

The following examples illustrate how aid can be awarded within the requirements of the regulations:

- Where it is proposed to provide training aid for general training to an SME outside an assisted area the maximum ESF and public match intervention would be 70%; the remaining 30% should be provided by the SME themselves as private match funding.
- Specific training for a large enterprise outside an assisted area would attract a maximum public intervention of 25%; at least 10% of total expenditure must be public match funding, leaving an ESF contribution of 15%. The remaining 75% would be provided by the large enterprise as private match funding.

Co-financing

18. The majority of ESF provision in Objective 3 is now provided through co-financing. Co-financing Organisations (CFOs) are responsible for ensuring that state aid issues are implemented within their own co-financed activity. Although Co-financing Plans must normally be covered in full by the CFOs own cash match funding, where the ESF and CFOs public match funding are providing aid to enterprises there will need to be private match funding from the enterprise involved, to ensure that the relevant aid intensities are being adhered to. There are various mechanisms to ensure that an enterprise's private match funding can be used alongside the ESF and public cash match funding that the CFO contributes. It will be for the CFO and provider to agree between them how to make use of and record the private match funding to demonstrate that state aid requirements are being met.

19. We anticipate that the vast majority of training provided through Objective 3 can be classified as general training as defined in the regulation. Any training leading to National Vocational Qualifications or Key Skills Qualifications can be regarded as general training because the skills provided are transferable to other enterprises or areas of work and as such, substantially improve the employability of the employee concerned. More detail on the requirements for general training is included in Annex 1. If training does not meet the general training requirements, then the specific aid intensities should be applied.

20. The regulations require member states to report annually on aid provided through this exemption. We intend therefore to include additional information in the Interactive Application Form and programme Closure Report so that potential aid can be identified at the time projects are approved and actual aid provided can be quantified at project closure stage. Member states are required to maintain detailed records of aid granted under this exemption for 10 years from the date it is granted.

Employment Aid

21. A further block exemption regulation covering employment aid is expected to be put in place by the Commission in 2003. We do not know yet what the detail of the block

exemption will include although it should focus on aid towards the employment of disadvantaged and disabled workers. Currently employment aid in ESF is provided for through the de minimis block exemption in Objective 3 or should be subject to separate notification.

22. Subject to timing, ESF Division intends to use the block exemption for employment aid to cover employment aid provided through ESF as soon as it is put in place. If it becomes apparent that there will be delays in the approval of the new regulation we will consider notifying relevant parts of the Objective 3 programme separately.

Please refer to guidance on state aids published on the dti web site at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/stateaid/>

Please note that these are only clarifications of a few common areas of confusion and that more detailed guidance should be sought in the European Social Fund Rules and Regulations.

6. ACTIVITIES

All provision should be consistent with The Learning + Skills Council – Business Plan, and support National Key Objectives: To extend participation in Education, Learning and Training, Increase Engagement of Employers in Workforce Development, Raise Achievement of Young People, Raise Achievement of Adults and Raise Quality of Education and Training and User Satisfaction.

It should be noted that in the drive to deliver activities of a more strategic nature within the LSC, a priority for funding will be to support a number of broad based partnerships or consortia approaches.

The LSC would like to contract through a lead organisation that would act as the accountable body on behalf of a wider partnership,

The lead applicant should provide details in the proposal of whether it would be operating on behalf of an established partnership or to what extent partnership development would form part of the proposal,

The proposal must also indicate how the project will seek to engage other appropriate organisations and offer them opportunity to participate in the delivery network. The LSC recognises that Partnerships do not always naturally exist, and if necessary applicants may wish to look to an initial period of development (maximum 3 months) to draw together appropriate partners, and this should form part of the proposal.

Further prioritisation will be based upon compliance with the bidding prospectus and the associated strategies, and on Value for Money based upon unit costs derived at measure level.

All projects must contribute towards one or more of the Measure Levels targets as detailed in the tender specifications:

Bids are invited to deliver the following measure level activities:

Policy Field 3 - Lifelong Learning

Measure 3.1 – Promoting Wider Access and Participation in Lifelong Learning

This measure is aimed at promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning; (especially for those groups least likely to take part in lifelong learning activities and lacking basic and key skills).

Target Beneficiaries

This Measure will contribute to the development of a lifelong learning culture and address certain of the issues identified in the Policy Field rationale by support for any person employed or unemployed in particular:

- Economically Inactive people of working age including lone parents and people on Sickness, Disability and Incapacity Benefits.
- People with caring responsibilities.
- People who lack basic or key skills (either in or out of employment).
- People with low incomes, especially unskilled workers.
- Young people aged 16 and over not undergoing training or education (either full time or through employment).
- Young people aged 16 and over who are, or may become, disaffected.
- People less likely to think about or undertake further learning, such as older people, single parents and people with dependent children.
- Disabled people.
- The recently unemployed.

For employed beneficiaries the emphasis is on the **individual** and **employee led** training and learning.

The target group is diverse but activity should focus on those who would traditionally play little part in Lifelong Learning.

All applications must target one or more of the above target groups.

Target Outcomes

All applications must contribute to the delivery of the outcomes listed below.

Outputs

Total number of beneficiaries 1500

Number of beneficiaries working towards a qualification 900

Number of capacity building projects 1

Number of trainers trained 30

Number of beneficiaries of vocational training / education 900

Results

Number of beneficiaries completing their courses 1000

Number of beneficiaries achieving positive outcomes on leaving 750, of which -

- Number of beneficiaries in work on leaving 350
- Number of beneficiaries moving into further training / education 400

Number of beneficiaries achieving a recognised qualification 600

*Positive outcomes include employment, self-employment, further training, and voluntary work.

Eligible Activities

The following activities should be considered.

- Supporting collaborative action through Learning and Skills Councils, Local Learning Partnerships, Further and Higher Education Establishments and through SME's.
- Providing individuals with ICT skills.
- Providing individuals with basic and key skills and reducing the risk of those with inadequate skills falling behind.
- Extending across through more innovative means, including community and family, and through helping individuals develop and manage their own learning.
- Identification and promotion of means, which can open up access to learning for those adults currently least engaged with the education system.
- Initiatives to widen participation in Higher Education as part of lifelong learning strategies.
- Promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning, (especially for those groups least likely to take part in lifelong learning activities and lacking basic and key skills).

The LSC seeks to fund projects addressing the following themes with priority being given to partnership/consortia approaches which should contribute to the development of a lifelong learning culture and address identified issues. They should also offer innovative solutions to delivery, provide quality actions that incorporate good practice, offer a substantive contribution to the above targets and demonstrably offer value over and above core funded activities.

Actions under this measure are differentiated from those in policy field 4 insofar as the skills development is individually led, generic and not tailored to the needs of specific employers.

Offenders in the Community – promoting Wider Access and Participation in Lifelong Learning

Available resources £1,778,835

Expected number of beneficiaries – 1500

Background

The North East's single vision is that *'the North East will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be a vibrant, self-reliant, ambitious and outward looking region featuring a dynamic economy, a healthy environment and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their full potential'*.

The North East Reducing Re-offending Strategy 2005 links to this vision, *'recognising the need for people to work together to meet the needs of all our Regions communities. More effective resettlement will mean a reduction in offending, fewer victims of crime and a better quality of life for all. In turn this will help our regional economy grow'*.

There are three probation areas in the north east region: Northumbria, County Durham and Teesside. Each probation service works closely with prisons to supervise offenders subject to both pre and post –custodial license. In addition they work with offenders on community sentences who also experience social exclusion and have difficulties accessing community resources without appropriate support.

The following table provides a snapshot of the number of offenders each probation area supervises at any given time which has been taken from the North East Reducing Re-offending Strategy November 2005.

Probation Area	Community Sentences		Total	Pre/post Licence release		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Northumbria	3581	702	4283	2091	83	2174
County Durham	1429	358	1787	758	47	805
Teesside	1937	435	2372	1019	70	1089
Total for Region	6947	1405	8442	3868	200	4068

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improving offender's skills for life issues. This is based upon their individual needs and helps support their return to communities.

LSC Strategy

The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) was introduced in the North East on 1st August 2005 as one of 3 Learning & Skills Council National Pilot Development Regions. From 31st July 2006, the Learning and Skills Council became responsible for managing the planning, funding and delivery of the new integrated offenders' learning and skills service (OLASS) across England. The vision for OLASS is that "*offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society*". In addition OLASS is working to improve the quality of learning provision for offenders in custody and in the community so it is comparable to that which is more generally available in the community.

Next Steps Strategy

The Next Steps Government Strategy which takes forward the recommendations set out in last year's Green Paper 'Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment' focuses on proposals for reducing re-offending through skills development for offenders who often have limited skills or qualifications. This strategy links to a number of important work strands including:

- Employer engagement - Working with employers to design and implement new models of training and preparation for jobs;
- Focusing on skills and jobs in prisons and probation using unpaid work in the community, work opportunities in prisons.

Unpaid Work

Unpaid work is an increasing sentence option with Magistrates and Crown Courts. Under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, offenders aged 16 years and over may be sentenced to perform between 40 and 300 hours unpaid work in the community. Some of the work undertaken is in groups supervised by probation staff, whilst some will be individuals who are supervised by staff from the organisation providing the work.

It is possible for 20% of these hours in the sentence to be utilised for employment related training. With 5 million unpaid work hours delivered nationally in 2005, this represents an excellent opportunity to engage the offender learner and offers the potential for them to achieve accreditation whilst under the supervision of the National Probation Service.

Every year communities benefit from over 5 million hours of unpaid work provided by offenders. This includes bringing derelict areas and buildings back into public use, clearing church yards, country streams and unused allotments, repairing park benches and playground equipment. Some of these projects are relatively small whilst other projects e.g. turning a derelict piece of land into a garden, can stretch over a number of years.

Within the North East region the average number of Adult offenders who are sentenced to unpaid work is as follows:

Probation Area	Case Load	Unpaid Work
County Durham	2600	657
Northumbria	7000	1574
Teesside	3,500	713
TOTAL	13100	2944

Source: National Probation Service Website October 2006.

Programme Specification

Learning and Skills Council funding through OLASS for offenders in the community is for skills for life accredited provision only. An opportunity has arisen to deliver an ESF funded project which will provide additional capacity and engagement in skills for life provision and vocational qualifications (or units) for offenders serving a community sentence, or who are released on licence.

The purpose of this project is to provide greater opportunities for offenders to develop employment related skills, thus bringing them closer to the labour market and to increase their chances of securing sustainable employment.

This project must enhance or add to projects or funded provision already in existence e.g. LSC Core funding, OLASS, ESF and Single Programme.

The successful contractor must demonstrate how they will work with key partners to ensure maximum added value and avoid duplication.

Proposals are invited to deliver targeted high quality individualised learning programmes and support mechanisms that are responsive to the following learning objectives:

- raising aspirations by improving motivation and confidence
- identifying, gaining acceptance for and addressing barriers to participation, retention, achievement and progression
- identifying and developing support mechanisms and interventions from other agencies
- improving attitudes and behaviours
- developing personal effectiveness
- developing basic and/or key skills
- preparing for successful transition from a one to one supported environment onto a more inclusive environment that accommodates their needs.

The LSC would wish to support either a single collaborative project across the region or a small number of projects aligned to Probation service areas to address particular barriers experienced by individuals within the target group.

Delivery should be through a broad partnership or consortia (including post 16 learning providers and referral agencies such as - National Probation Service, Nextsteps, Connexions, Learn Direct, Voluntary and Community organisations), who are able to demonstrate the necessary expertise of working with this particular client group including access to referral and progression routes.

- Applicants will need to demonstrate how they will deliver Skills for Life qualifications through high quality provision.
- Applicants will need to demonstrate how they will deliver effective vocational training that is relevant to the local labour market.
- Applicants must provide a proven track record of engaging with offenders or other disadvantaged groups.
- Project delivery must be linked to the three criminal justice areas of Northumbria, Durham and Teesside. Project applications will be considered from organisations who wish to deliver provision in one or more of the three probation areas.
- Applicants should consider the impact of travel and subsistence and dependant care for this client group.

Target Group

The programme is aimed at offenders in the community, aged 16 years and above and are serving a community sentence or are released on licence.

Geographical Area

It is expected that the successful projects will delivery provision across the entire North East Region. Applicants are required to indicate through their proposal which and how many of the 3 criminal justices areas of the North East they propose to cover

Aim

To provide education, training and mentoring support that will enable offenders in the community to develop and achieve literacy, numeracy and vocational skills that will help them access employment opportunities.

Objectives

- To deliver accredited units of vocational qualifications, skills for life qualifications or progression awards in relevant vocational areas.
- To provide additional mentor (or engagement) support in order to work with referral agencies, in particular the Probation Service, which will actively engage, motivate and encourage the offender to participate in the provision. A sustained mentoring and advice and guidance relationship over an extended period of time is also required in order to support retention and achievement and the strategy for progression.
- To make use of existing Initial Assessment Tools where required for offenders to enable the production of a training plan and to identify level of ability of learner whilst taking into account previous assessments.
- To identify and work in partnership with relevant key referral agencies e.g. National Probation Service, Nextsteps, Connexions, Learn Direct, other learning providers, Voluntary and Community organisations.
- To set up a steering group with relevant key partners including National Probation Service, Youth Justice Board, Learning & Skills Council, Nextsteps, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Learn Direct and National Offender Manager Services which will support the successful delivery of the Project.
- To implement a progression strategy for offenders accessing the project. This would link to existing employer engagement activities with OLASS Providers, the North East Employer Coalition and relevant Information Advice and Guidance services.
- To build capacity of existing staff who support and engage offenders into learning by developing or utilising existing mentoring, assessor and trainer training qualifications (including City and Guilds Level 2 in Adult guidance and mentoring).
- To undertake an evaluation to include how the project can be sustained and disseminate the findings through a Regional event which would include key partners and stakeholders covering the three North East Criminal Justice Areas.

Programme Principles

Programmes should be developed and delivered based on the following principles:

- Ensuring that offender learners have ownership and control of their situation with appropriate support
- Fit for purpose individualised programmes
- Variety of learning environments
- Flexibility and accessibility
- Importance of capturing interest and imagination
- Variety of teaching and support methods: including one to one sessions
- Variation in pace and length – to meet individuals needs
- Fostering a learning ethos
- Maintenance of learner records.

Programme Outputs and Outcomes

The main programme outcomes resulting from successful delivery are:

- Individuals gaining vocational qualifications and accredited units of vocational qualifications
- Individuals gaining Skills for Life qualifications e.g. basic skills and national tests. Such qualifications should be recognised national tests that contribute to LSC targets
- Individuals gaining progression awards
- Individuals into employment
- Individuals into further learning and education
- Delivery of Trainer, Mentor and Assessor training leading to increased capacity for staff who support learners in this client group
- Introduction of mentor support workers
- Established joint working with key agencies who engage with this client group
- An understanding of individuals learning needs through learning assessment
- An understanding through evaluation of how to sustain this project

All deliverable outputs should be consistent with the target outcomes listed on page 12.

Programme Delivery Process

Successful organisations are expected to deliver the following processes through flexible engagement approaches relevant to the needs of the client group. Of importance will be the one to one support offered to the target group in addition to supportive small group activities.

- Engagement, referral and recruitment
- Induction
- Learning Needs Assessment
- Target setting and programme planning
- Individual Learning plans
- Information Advice & Guidance
- Programme Delivery
- Work related Learning
- Reviews
- Accreditation and evaluation
- Progression planning
- Transition and aftercare

Programme Timescales

Recruitment will be on a roll on/roll off basis and providers are required to deliver support which will be tailored to the needs of the target group.

The programme will operate over the following timescales:

1st April 2007 to 30th June 2008

Bids must demonstrate support, complementarity and enhanced value over and above existing provision and proposed new provision (e.g. OLASS Mainstream funding, EQUAL Funding, T2G), and demonstrate how they will facilitate and encourage progression for beneficiaries

Policy Field 1 - Active Labour Market Policies

This Specification relates to activities in County Durham Only

Measure 1.2: Improve the Employability of the Unemployed, Returners and Young People of Working Age

This measure is aimed at improving the employability of the unemployed, particularly the long term unemployed, returners, those inactive in the labour market and young people through targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and removing external barriers to labour market entry.

Target Beneficiaries: -

The Policy Field rationale observes that, on average, those in employment are significantly more qualified and highly skilled than those who are out of work. Skills surveys by the LSCs and their predecessors show that employers' demands of the average employee in terms of skills are increasing and at the same time the number of unskilled jobs is diminishing. In these circumstances, those with limited or no skills face increasing competition in the labour market.

The primary focus of this measure is people who are unemployed or inactive but who require to make modest progress to become competitive in the labour market. These will be individuals who are capable of proceeding into mainstream skills development provision. Those with more specialised needs and/or who face more significant obstacles to labour market integration are catered for under Policy Field 2 although economically inactive people of working age including lone parents, people on Sickness, Disability and Incapacity Benefits and people with caring responsibilities are eligible for this measure.

Also excluded from support under Measure 1.2 are unemployed people already qualified at NVQ4 and above. Support for this group is provided under Policy Field 3.

Broad Target Groups unemployed or jobless

In particular

- Longer term unemployed people (defined as six month plus unemployed) especially people who lack appropriate skills to return to work or have no or outdated qualifications.
- Older people.
- Young people without skills, or with low levels of skills or who have not worked.
- Young people leaving care.
- People living in rural communities.
- People who previously worked in declining industries.
- Economically inactive people of working age including lone parents and people on Sickness, Disability and Incapacity Benefits.
- People with caring responsibilities.

NB All applications must target one or more of the above target groups.

Target Outcomes: -

Outputs:

Total number of beneficiaries 1500
No of female beneficiaries (50%)
Number of beneficiaries working towards a qualification 579

Results:

Number of beneficiaries completing their courses 562
Number of beneficiaries achieving positive outcomes on leaving 1171
Number of beneficiaries in work on leaving 850
Number of beneficiaries in self employment on leaving 50
Number of beneficiaries achieving a qualification 564
Of which:
NVQ level 1 or equivalent 132
NVQ Level 2 or equivalent 432

*Positive outcomes include employment, self-employment, further training, and voluntary work.

Note: All applications must contribute to the delivery of the above outcomes

Activities

Eligible Activities

The following activities are identified in the North East of England Regional Development Plan as eligible for support under this strand of funding. It is expected that the successful applicant would incorporate one or more of these in their proposal

- Providing support through integrated approaches, including the provision of vocational, social and key skills.
- Support for Education Business links to increase understanding of employer needs.
- Job tasters, work placements.
- Vocational training, matched to individual and labour market needs.
- Subsidised employment linked to vocational training.
- Support to address barriers such as child/dependent care, travel, subsistence.
- Support for advanced ILM projects that provide experience which is in significant demand in the labour market (e.g. for employment in call centres) and encouraging local partnership approaches to ILM projects to assist unemployed and economically inactive people of working age into the open labour market.

The LSC seeks to fund projects addressing the following theme, with priority being given to partnership/consortia approaches, which contribute to the development of a lifelong learning culture and address identified issues and offer innovative solutions to delivery, providing quality actions that incorporate good practice, deliver all the above targets and demonstrably offer value over and above core funded activities.

NOTE : ALL ACTIVITIES UNDER THIS SPECIFICATION RELATE TO COUNTY DURHAM

Employability In County Durham

Available resources £1,370,715

Expected number of beneficiaries – 1500

Background

Despite the UK having one of the highest rates of employment in the developed world and enjoying a period of sustained economic growth over the last 10 years, with rising levels of employment and falling unemployment, the levels of economic inactivity have remained static. Economic inactivity is defined as people of working age who are neither working nor looking for work (e.g. someone who is on Incapacity Benefit). The Government has, and is continuing to, place high priority on this section of the labour market, wanting to see people who are economically inactive move into work, using such programmes as Pathways to Work and other measures. Together with people of working age who are not working but looking for a job (e.g. someone on Jobseekers Allowance), the term 'workless' refers to a significant number of people who the Government wish to see move from being on benefits of one kind or another into work. In the North East levels of worklessness are particularly high compared to other parts of the country. The Northern Way points out that whilst the economically inactive make up 24.7% of the population of England,

in the North East the figure is 30.3%. The biggest element of the difference is the proportion of people on incapacity benefit. For example, over 20% of the working age population in Easington claim benefits relating to sickness and disability compared to under 3% in Wokingham and Hart in the South East(1).

Worklessness or “Employability” is therefore one of the major challenges facing the North East region and County Durham. There are a number of national, regional and local strategies and projects to address particular aspects of employability. In the North East, these are grouped under the new “Regional Employability Framework”. LSC is now seeking to commission additional activity to add value to current employability related activities in County Durham, specifically to address the latter stages of the employability journey i.e. immediately pre-employment, during recruitment, post employment and focussed on the employer themselves as well as the workless individual. This project will focus on the impact that can be created through engagement of smaller employers throughout County Durham, on the basis that Job centre plus (the lead agency in this field) are already working actively with larger employers and with the public sector.

The latest draft of the new County Durham Economic Strategy identifies the high levels of “worklessness” as a fundamental issue to be tackled. Unless the issue is tackled, County Durham’s GVA will remain well below national and regional rates, levels of economic participation will remain static or reduce and the County will not contribute effectively to the vision of the regional Economic Strategy. During 2006, the County Durham Economic Partnership commissioned the County Durham Learning Partnership to investigate current activity, determine what gaps in provision existed and indicate what added activities could be delivered in the County. One of the conclusions of the study was to identify a need for more intensive support at the employment stage both for individuals and for employers. It is important to note that the activity that will be funded by European Social Fund as a result of this tender prospectus will need to demonstrate the added value and complementarity that can be realised with existing activities; particularly the ESF funded activity must link very closely to any actions funded by the County Durham Economic Partnership.

The Government has identified the following priority client groups in terms of tackling economic inactivity:

- sick & disabled people who are generally on Incapacity Benefit (IB). Statistics show that once a person ‘has been on IB for a year they are on average likely to be there for eight years and once they have been on it for two years, they are more likely to die or retire than they are to ever work again.’¹
- older workers, aged 50 and over, many of whom describe themselves as having a long term illness or disability
- lone parents – the number of lone parents in the UK have increased substantially over recent decades but the gap between them and the rest of the population in terms of employment rates has been narrowing;
- low skilled individuals – the Government has had a headline target of reducing the number of people without an NVQ Level 2 qualification;
- people in deprived communities, through such initiatives as New Deal for Communities, Sure Start and other area based initiatives.

- people from black and minority ethnic communities where employment rates are quite low but mask significant differences between different groups.

The barriers facing people who have been out of work for a long time are well documented and researched. They include²:

- health problems – these could cover a wide range of ailments, the most common being mental health problems and back problems for people on IB but could also include problems related to different forms of substance misuse, including drugs and alcohol;
- childcare and caring for other family members – problems include the availability of childcare, its cost and shortage of jobs providing ‘family friendly’ working arrangements;
- lack of skills including basic skills, job specific skills, job search skills and the lack of confidence and personal and social skills;
- accessibility and transport including personal mobility issues as well as low car ownership rates, poor public transport and low levels of access to services which can help them to overcome barriers;
- cultural and motivational barriers including ‘second generation unemployment’ where unemployment is the norm in some households; attitudes to undertaking certain types of work and the lack of trust in the benefits system;
- labour market sustainability – concern over the lack of sustainable jobs in the area;
- lack of recent work experience which can be perceived by both individual and employer alike as a serious obstacle to employment; discrimination, whilst addressed through legislation in recent years, may still exist in the minds of some people and therefore be a barrier;
- recruitment practices of employers, including informal practices which mitigate against those with poor social networks. This category can also include the attitude of employers towards groups of unemployed who they perceive to have particular behavioural problems (e.g. ex-offenders);
- unrealistic expectations of employers of the skills people have and how these relate to the competencies they are looking for;
- misinformation and lack of information about job vacancies;
- financial and debt problems experienced by unemployed people;
- the informal economy can exercise a strong pull factor for some people who are unemployed
- record of offending;
- benefits system rules which affect the way people go in and out of the labour market and include the ‘benefits trap’ during the transition into work;
- lack of joined up/inter agency working – effective inter-agency working is seen as being a significant condition to support interventions. The role of LSPs is important but other forms of inter-agency working need to be looked at as does the ability of key organisations such as Jobcentre Plus to be appropriately represented at the level at which they can make the most effective contributions.

All of these barriers to employment need to be considered and, where they apply, need to be addressed if those who are furthest from the labour market are to be helped to move towards employment.

Programme Specification

Proposals are invited to deliver targeted high quality individualised learning programmes and support mechanisms that are responsive to the following learning objectives:

- raising aspirations by improving motivation and confidence
- identifying, gaining acceptance for and addressing barriers to participation, retention, achievement and progression
- identifying and developing support mechanisms and interventions from other agencies
- improving attitudes and behaviours
- developing personal effectiveness
- developing basic and/or key skills – please note that LSC currently provides funding for Job Centre plus clients to receive basic skills training and qualifications, where this is a barrier to their employment. The purpose of this specification should be to enhance the referral mechanisms to this funding and to maximise its effectiveness
- preparing for successful transition from a one to one supported environment onto a more inclusive environment that accommodates their needs.
- Delivery of relevant vocational skills qualifications to assist individuals to enter and remain in sustainable employment

The LSC would wish to support a single collaborative project across County Durham to address particular barriers experienced by individuals within the target group to access employment, receive pre-employment support and support whilst in employment to ensure the sustainability of the individual in work. The project will engage with employers to recruit and retain previously workless individuals although it should be noted that no direct financial wage subsidy is to be made available to employers.

Delivery should be through a broad partnership or consortia (including post 16 learning providers, and referral agencies such as Probation Service, Job Centre plus, Local Strategic Partnerships and appropriate projects recognised and supported by them, local and regional community organisations working with workless individuals and with employers) which is able to demonstrate the necessary expertise of working with this particular client group including access to referral and progression routes.

The Target Group

The programme is aimed at longer term unemployed people (defined as six months plus unemployed), especially people who lack appropriate skills to return to work or have no or outdated qualifications and economically inactive people of working age including lone parents and people on sickness, disability and incapacity benefits that are identified as disengaged or likely to become disengaged from mainstream activities

Programme Principles

A Programme should be developed and delivered based on the following principles:

- ensuring that employers have ownership and control of their situation with appropriate support
- fit for purpose individualised programmes of learning leading to the achievement of

recognised qualifications for individuals and employers

- clear progression routes into other LSC funded programmes such as Train to Gain to ensure sustainable benefit for both employer and individual
- flexibility and accessibility
- importance of capturing interest and imagination
- maintenance of learner records.
- Clear links to existing national, regional and local activities
- Co-ordination with local partnerships to ensure their support and involvement
- Excellent, practical relationships at regional and local level with Job Centre plus

Supporting and working closely with existing “Sector Routeway” type projects in the Region

Programme Outputs and Outcomes

In addition to the outputs listed above, the main programme outcomes resulting from successful delivery are:

Demonstrable improvements in levels of employment in County Durham, particularly in the more deprived areas of the County

Demonstrable reductions in the number of individuals in County Durham claiming sickness, disability or incapacity benefits.

Demonstrable increase in the number of employers in County Durham recruiting and retaining individuals who were previously workless.

Clear demonstration of partnership working at a local level across the County, with improved referral and support mechanisms for employers and workless groups.

Improved skill levels in the County, especially the numbers of individuals with at least a level One or Level two qualification.

All deliverable outputs should be consistent with the outputs listed at the top of this section.

Programme Delivery Process

The successful organisation and its partners are expected to deliver the following processes through flexible and engaging approaches relevant to the needs of the client group:

- Referral and recruitment
- Induction
- Initial Assessment
- Target setting and programme planning
- Programme delivery
- Reviews
- Accreditation and evaluation
- Progression planning
- Transition and aftercare
- Sustainable employment

The key will be the one to one support offered to individuals and to employers. It will also be necessary for the successful applicant to work closely with the LSC funded “Next Step” Information, Advice and Guidance service across County Durham.

Programme Timescales

Recruitment will be on a roll on/roll off basis and providers are required to deliver support which will be tailored to the needs of the target group.

The programme will operate over the following timescales:

1st April 2007 to 30th June 2008 (it should be noted that due to European Funding Guidance no extension beyond this date will be possible)

Bids must demonstrate support, complementarity and enhanced value over and above existing provision and proposed new provision (e.g. OLASS, "Next Step"/ IAG, LSC Mainstream funding, EQUAL Funding, Train to Gain etc), and demonstrate how they will facilitate and encourage progression for beneficiaries.

7. PERIOD OF ACTIVITYr

Co-financed projects in this bidding round may operate between 1st April 2007 and 30 June 2008.

It is intended that decisions will be reached and communicated in April 2007 however any expenditure incurred prior to exchange of contracts will be entirely at the applicants own risk.

8. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must bid using the LSC Co-financing Application Form only.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application is legible. Where possible we request that your response is word-processed, using minimum font size 12.

A Word version of the application form can be obtained from Karen Kean tel: 0191 4926342 or Karen Price tel 0191 4926357, or by e-mail Karen.kean@lsc.gov.uk or karen.price@lsc.gov.uk

Your application should be clearly marked 'Bid for ESF Co Financing' on the covering envelope', and should be returned for the attention of:

Iain Wishart
Learning & Skills Council
Moongate House
5th Avenue Business Park
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0HF

Applications must be received no later than **12.00pm midday 16th April 2007**

A signed hard copy and electronic copy on floppy disc, together with two photocopies of the application form must be submitted for each proposal by the deadline.

Any deliveries made by hand must be made during normal office hours.

Any proposal received after this deadline, or produced using any other documentation will be rejected.

9. SELECTION PROCESS

Bids will be appraised against the Selection Criteria attached to this prospectus and considered by a selection panel chaired by the Head of External Funding with membership drawn from across the LLSC. The bids will also be considered by an Advisory Panel, which involves representation from the Local Authority, Voluntary & Community sector, and Jobcentre Plus.

All applicants will receive feedback on the outcome of the selection process.

RETENTION OF PROPOSALS

Unsuccessful proposals will be retained for a period of up to six months after written notification of the outcome of the bidding round has been issued to applicants.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into force on **1 January 2005**.

Where a request for information is received, a response will be provided as soon as possible, and not later than 20 working days after receiving a request. The request will be considered, and the reply should confirm or deny whether or not the information is held, and either provide the information requested, or explain why it has not been provided, quoting an exemption under the Act.

The Act requires that all requests:

- are in writing (this does include emails)
- state clearly what information is required
- state the name of the applicant, and an address for correspondence

On completion of the appraisal process, all successful bids will be moved into the public domain, and details may be published subject to written request being received.

10. PROVIDER FUNDING

Payment to providers will be agreed (as to levels and frequency) at the beginning of a contract and the process for payment will be streamlined and simplified to the provider's advantage. The majority of the simplification will arise from spend profiling and the subsequent claims with the result that providers should not experience peaks and troughs in their finances.

As a general statement of principle, it should only be necessary to consider paying the full 30% ESF advance in exceptional circumstances. It is anticipated that this situation may arise particularly with new providers or with the voluntary or community sector who have limited financial resources and frequently experience cash flow problems. Once successful projects have been identified the LSC will then be in a position to negotiate a contract with the successful provider. A key element of that contract will be a payment profile that will detail when payments will be made according to the need of the provider. As part of this negotiation, consideration will be given to the particular cash flow needs of the project / provider and whether all or part of the 30% advance will be required. This is a departure from current ESF practice where each applicant receives a 30% advance of 45% of the cost of the project regardless of need. It should be noted that the LSC contract will cover up to 100% of the costs and identify cash flow needs of the whole project rather than a proportion of the project. This should ensure that no organisation would be disadvantaged by the payment system.

11. PROVIDER CONTRACTS

On successful approval of the Co Financing Application (and, where applicable, the New Provider Assessment), the provider will be issued with a contract confirming the delivery of Co Financed provision.

Until signed copies of these contracts are agreed, no delivery will be deemed eligible for funding.

Providers will be expected to submit information relating to learner data on an ongoing basis during the lifetime of the project.

12. NEW PROVIDERS

If you do not currently hold a contract with the LLSC and your application for funding is selected for support you will need to complete an application form for new organisations who wish to deliver LSC funded learning. This covers the following areas: -

- Management structure and background information
- Details of publicly funded projects
- Details relating to qualifications of staff
- Organisations prospectus or leaflet (where available)
- Business plan/ Development plan
- Financial information as appropriate
- Completed financial statement
- Completed health and safety questionnaire
- Completed equal opportunities questionnaire

A copy of this application form can be obtained from the Learning and Skills Council should it be required.

13. PROVIDER PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Much of the learning provision funded by the Learning & Skills Council is subject to Provider Performance Review, conducted periodically to assess factors such as the quality of education and training; continuous improvement; aspects of leadership and management; delivery of agreed volumes; and data management. Co-Financed provision falls within the arrangements of Provider Performance Review, and the Learning & Skills Council is introducing mechanisms to review and evaluate Providers' delivery to:

- Identify areas for improvement;
- Promote continuous improvement;
- Identify excellence and disseminate good practice, and
- Inform future planning and allocations.

14. QUALITY STANDARDS

The Provider will be expected to deliver its provision to an acceptable standard as defined by the Learning and Skills Council, which meets the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework regarding the quality of education and training, the standards achieved by those receiving that education and training, and whether financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in such way which provides value for money, and should take all reasonable steps to:

- (a) Minimise drop out rates and deliver high completion and achievement rates, and appropriate progression;
- (b) Ensure competent and appropriately qualified staff deliver and assess learning;
- (c) Offer equality of access to learning opportunities and close equality gaps in learning and outcomes;
- (d) Provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment which meets the needs of learners;
- (e) Provide good management and leadership of the learning process; and
- (f) Deliver value for money and financial probity.

The Provider shall continuously seek to improve its provision and raise standards to benefit the learner. The Provider shall have the primary responsibility for improving standards and will need to demonstrate to the Learning and Skills Council's satisfaction that it has an effective quality assurance system based on self-assessment, development plans, target setting and a continuous improvement strategy.

15. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Provider shall have an Equal Opportunities Policy Statement written in accordance with the guidelines available from the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission, and which shall have regard to the views of the Learning and Skills Council in respect of the provision of Learning.

In addition, applicants will be expected to demonstrate how Equal Opportunities is mainstreamed into the project proposal, how it will assist the promotion of equality between men and women, how equality issues are considered in policy development and implementation, how they will be addressed, including positive actions to help under represented groups and how it will impact on the project and its target groups.

16. PROPOSAL PRE-SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

A checklist of useful questions is detailed below which should form the basis of checking your application form before submission to the LSC and should provide the senior manager or director responsible for authorising a proposal with the assurance that key risk areas have been considered:

- Have all the key staff who would be involved in the project delivery reviewed the expression of interest and agreed to its content?
- Has an appropriate finance officer agreed the estimated cost of the proposal including any cost forecasts?
- What evidence is there to support the cost estimates?
- Has the senior management group in the organisation approved the project?

Areas to consider longer term, if your proposal is considered eligible.

If the proposal relates to training in a specific sector - has the relevant NTO (National Training Organisation) been consulted?

- Have all organisations or partners involved in the project given verbal support to the proposal, (letters of support will be expected to accompany the proposal at full application stage if successful).
- What are the cash-flow implications of the project and how do they fit with the cash-flow profile of the organisation as a whole?
- What evidence of need for the project is there to support the application?
- What is the "added value" for the project and how is this documented?
- What evidence do you have to support the proposed beneficiary numbers?

Application for Learning + Skills Council ESF Co-Financing 2004 – 2008 – March 2007

Your Application

The purpose of this document is to provide the Learning and Skills Council with information concerning the types of activities from the Bidding Prospectus your organisation would like to deliver.

Your application will be assessed against the appraisal framework, see Annex C of the bidding prospectus by a panel appointed by the Learning and Skills Council .

Following the assessment of the panel, the Learning and Skills Council will contact you about your application. Please note that applications are not guaranteed to receive funding from the Learning and Skills Council. Funding will depend upon the fit of the application against the bidding prospectus, the Learning and Skills Council co-financing application to Government Office and the results of the appraisal panel.

All applicants will receive feedback on their applications and successful providers and agreed activities will be published.

Guidance

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application is legible and if possible, the Learning and Skills Council requests that applicants use a word processor to complete their application, using no less than font size 12.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must bid using the LSC Co-financing Application Form only.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application is legible. Where possible we request that your response is word-processed, using minimum font size 12.

A Word version of the application form can be obtained from Karen Kean tel: 0191 492 6342, or Karen Price tel 0191 492 6357 or by e-mail Karen.kean@lsc.gov.uk or Karen.price@lsc.gov.uk

Your application should be clearly marked 'Bid for ESF Co Financing' on the covering envelope', and should be returned for the attention of:

Iain Wishart
Learning & Skills Council
Moongate House
5th Avenue Business Park
Team valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0HF

Applications must be received no later than **12.00pm midday 16th April 2007**

A signed hard copy and electronic copy on floppy disc, together with two photocopies of the application form must be submitted for each proposal by the deadline.

Any deliveries made by hand must be made during normal office hours.

Any proposal received after this deadline, or produced using any other documentation will be rejected.

APPLICATION FORM FOR ESF CO FINANCING 2004 – 2008
LEARNING + SKILLS COUNCIL (March 2007)

Proposal Name:

Proposal: *(If the application is on behalf of a partnership please indicate partnership details as well as the applicant's organisation. You will be required to provide full details in question 6).*

Name of Applicant Organisation:

Address:

Telephone Number:

E-mail address:

Person to Contact:

Legal Status of Applicant Organisation:

1 Activity focus: *Please identify which Measure your proposal fits. Please quote the ESF Policy Field and Measure. Briefly describe the nature of your proposal, explaining what you intend to deliver in relation to the CFO bidding prospectus. If you wish to carry out activities under more than one measure, you must submit a separate application form for each.*

Please write your answer here.

Policy Field:

Measure:.....

2 Activity Summary: Describe the component parts of your project proposal, its purpose and information on what the activity intends to do. You will need to identify the aims and objectives, **why** it is needed, **how** the needs will be addressed and **who** is responsible for each element of delivery. How and where it will be delivered .

Please write your answer here.

Brief description and purpose of project:

Aims and objectives of the project:

Why the project is needed

How the needs will be addressed

How will the project be delivered i.e. by whom, where, and by what methods? – Please include details of partner organisations involved and their role within the project.

3 Geographic Area of Delivery. *Identify the location at which the project will be based, or the way in which it will operate without a fixed location. You should also identify the catchment area for the project and the likely area that will benefit from this project proposal, for example Boroughs, Districts, Wards etc., and any local initiatives which might impact on the proposal.*

Please write your answer here.

4 Target Groups. Describe and define the beneficiaries of your proposed project. You will need specifically to identify hard-to-reach groups and those at risk of exclusion. Where this is the case, you should explain how your proposal would address their needs (these groups should be consistent with those identified in the funding prospectus). Please include details of relevant experience of working with these target groups.

Please write your answer here.

5 Timescales. Please specify start and end dates of activities. Set out clearly the timetable of your project proposal, illustrating how the timescales fit the delivery of your proposed objectives and what are the key milestones?

Please write your answer here.

Start Date:

End date:.....

What are the key milestones for the project and when will they happen?

6 Linkages. Please specify linkages with other relevant activities/strategies in the local area and provide evidence. If linkages are not fully established then indicate which organisations you intend to work with on this activity and how this involvement will be secured. Please explain how these linkages will complement the project.

Please write your answer here.

7 Added Value Describe how your proposal will bring added value to members of the target group and the local economy, and how it will help to enhance participation in learning over and above that which can be delivered by mainstream provision. Please identify whether you propose to support new beneficiaries solely through Co financing, or whether ESF is intended to enhance current provision which is already funded through existing budgets e.g. LSC mainstream work based learning, further education, LEA Adult & Community Learning, SRB, Single Programme or other sources.

Please write your answer here.

8 Outcomes. *Identify the outcomes you expect to achieve through your proposal, in terms of measurable targets and/or soft outcomes, such as improved self-esteem and confidence. Outcomes should be clearly linked to the activities strategic aims and CFO activities as detailed in the prospectus.*

Please write your answer against the following where appropriate: (not all outputs are relevant to every measure)

- Number of beneficiaries supported
- Number of female beneficiaries assisted
- Number of beneficiaries working towards a qualification
- Number of beneficiaries gaining a full NVQ (or full equivalent) *
- Number of beneficiaries completing their learning/training
- Number of positive outcomes. e.g. number of beneficiaries in work on leaving, moving into self employment, moving into further training/education
- Number of trainers trained
- Number of capacity building projects

***Please note:** For each qualification please clearly indicate:

1 Full title and level of qualification, the awarding body and if possible the qualification reference number. For more information on qualifications, you may wish to access the LSC's Learning Aims Database via the LSC website: <http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/lad/>

2 Whether this a full achievement of the qualification, or a part achievement i.e. modules or units

Are you an accredited centre to deliver the above qualifications: **YES / NO**

If you are not an accredited centre, who will deliver the qualifications?

Other Outcomes

Please provide details

9 Activity Management. *Describe your ability to deliver your proposal, including references to previous experience with the identified target group and capacity to deliver the proposal and manage the overall project where necessary and appropriate. Include brief details of systems you have or will put in place to support and manage the project, including monitoring and evaluation processes.*

Please write your answer here.

10 Financial Information. *Please provide a breakdown of the total cost of your proposal*, highlighting what the funding will pay for. You should profile expected expenditure over the project period. Please summarise activity costs to include training, marketing, childcare, total costs, etc. Costs should be realistic, eligible under ESF guidelines and demonstrate good value for money. They should be clearly linked to activities and aims.*

*Please note: Where appropriate please indicate a unit cost per beneficiary for activities to be undertaken.

Details of any other funding being provided or sought in respect of this application should be included in this section.

Please write your answer here.

11 Cross-Cutting Themes. *Explain how Equal Opportunities, Sustainability and the use of Information and Communications Technology will apply to and impact upon your proposal, incorporate good practice, and how you will ensure they are incorporated appropriately into its delivery.*

Please write your answer here.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Explain how the project has taken into account the needs of the target group and how this was considered in the design and subsequent delivery of the project.

Note: Please indicate the understanding of the different needs, which exist within your target group. Explain any previous experience you have of working with the type of beneficiary you aim to help and identify the different needs you expect to have and how these were considered.

Do you have an Equal Opportunities policy and implementation plan in place that applies to the Organisation and proposed project?

Note: Give details of how the policy will apply to the project, including staff and beneficiaries. Explain how you will deal with any complaints of discrimination, bullying or harassment and how you will monitor, review and update your implementation plan during the life of the project. Confirm that the project will meet all legal obligations.

Describe how you will reach all groups by publicity and marketing and explain how Equal Opportunities will feature in the materials designed to promote the project.

Note: Describe the different types of marketing and publicity materials you will use and explain how Equal Opportunities will feature in these materials.

How you will ensure that all participants, irrespective of where they start from in terms of personal characteristics and experience, will gain maximum benefit from participation.

Please write your answer here.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (continued)

How will you assess and address a participant's barriers to employment.

SUSTAINABILITY

ICT

12 Are you submitting / planning to submit a proposal(s) to any other Organisation? *You should advise us if you have submitted this or similar proposals to other funding organisations, such as another local LSC office and/or co-financing organisation. If so, identify please those organisations and explain whether they, in turn, are aware of your application to Learning and Skills Council.*

Please write your answer here.

13 Do you currently hold a contract with the Learning and Skills Council North East or any other Learning and Skills Council Local Office? *Please explain whether your organisation currently holds a contract with Learning and Skills Council, , either for core (e.g. work-based learning) or other discretionary activity. If so, please identify the nature of the contract, including timescales, funding and the name of your LSC contact.*

Please write your answer here.

14 Other information. *Please use the space provided to offer any additional information you feel would be of value to the Appraisal Panel during the consideration of your proposal.*

Please write your answer here.

15 Certification

I confirm that:

- To the best of my knowledge and belief, the information contained in this application is true and correct.
- My organisation is eligible to apply for support and that I am authorised to make this application on behalf of that organisation.
- I have read the notes to applicants as supplied by Learning and Skills Council

Signed:

Date:

Position in Organisation:

Official Stamp:

Co-Financed Provider Proposal Appraisal and Selection

(As agreed with ESFD and national LSC)

S = Criteria to determine the selection of projects

A = Additional information to support the appraisal and selection of projects and to identify where the project fits within the approved CFO bid.

O = Optional information

S	Activity focus	How closely does the proposed project relate to what is described in the Co-Financing Plan and Bidding Prospectus
S	Activity summary	This should clearly identify: - a) what the project intends to do; b) how it will support the Co-Financing Plan/ Bidding Prospectus; c) why this is needed & what evidence is provided to support the need d) how the need will be addressed; e) who is responsible for each element of delivery
S	Geographic Area of Delivery	Does the project clearly identify which areas will be covered; Are the areas covered consistent with the areas identified in the Bidding Prospectus?
S	Target Groups	Are the target groups of the project consistent with the target groups identified in the Bidding Prospectus
S	Timescales	Projects must operate between the 1 st April 2007 – 30 June 2008 (unless otherwise stated)
S	Linkages	a) Has the project been developed in partnership with other organisations? b) Will other organisations be involved in the delivery of this project? c) Are there clear linkages to the Objective 3 Regional Development Plan; Regional Economic Strategy LSC, etc.
S	Added Value	How will the project add value to existing mainstream provision supported by the LSC i.e. what additional activity will be provided by the project that can not be provided elsewhere?
S	Outcomes	a) Are the outcomes consistent with those identified in the Bidding Prospectus? b) Are the outcomes realistic and linked to the strategic aims and objectives of the project?
S	Activity Management	a) How will the project be managed? b) How will the project be delivered? c) What systems will be used to support the delivery of the project i.e. financial/ monitoring etc

S	Financial Information	a) Is there a breakdown of activity costs? b) Is there a unit price? C) Are the costs realistic? d) Do they demonstrate value for money
S	Cross-Cutting Themes	Does the project clearly demonstrate how it will contribute to the co-financing plan cross-cutting themes of: Equal Opportunities Sustainability Information and Communications Technology
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal explain how the project has taken into account the needs of the target group and how this was considered in the design and subsequent delivery of the project? • Does the proposal confirm that an Equal Opportunities policy and implementation plan is in place that applies to the Organisation and proposed project? • Does the proposal describe how you will reach all groups by publicity and marketing and explain how Equal Opportunities will feature in the materials designed to promote the project?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal explain how the applicant will ensure that all participants, irrespective of where they start from in terms of personal characteristics and experience, will gain maximum benefit from participation? • Does the proposal explain how the applicant will assess and address a participant's barriers to employment?
A	Is the applicant submitting / planning to submit a proposal(s) to any other CFO?	If yes, proposals must include details identifying how they will ensure that duplication of activity does not occur.
A	Does the applicant currently hold a contract with the LSC? YES/NO	If the applicant is successful in their application and is not currently a provider of services to The Learning and Skills Council it may be necessary to undergo an additional assessment as a new provider.
O	Other information	