<u>Questions Arising from Training Event 10 November 2006</u>

Q: Can a learner access ERDF funding alongside ESF funding?
A: No – ERDF funding is for capital projects and training is not an eligible costing.

Q: Under ESF can an application be made for the full cost of a project?
A: Yes – applications should be made for the full cost of the project. Match funding is found at source.

Q: Is it only Level 2 qualifications that can be delivered via ESF or does it include higher level skills?
A: No – tender specifications detail which qualifications can be delivered and there is a tender available for higher level skills.

Q: When you refer to SME's are you talking about the needs of the employees within the SME or the SME itself?
A: This is dependant upon the tender specification.

Q: Is this area new?
A: No – tenders have been released for this type of activity in previous rounds.

Q: If there is an SME within Cleator Moor who don't have any IT, could there be a project to support this business with its IT needs.
A: Yes – as long as the project is clearly identified and the qualifications to be delivered assist these employees.

Q: If we are sending more than 1 tender can we put them in the same envelope?
A: No – each bid should be sent to the LSC separately.

Q: Can we send the bids by special delivery?
A: Yes – but there should be nothing on the envelope that identifies the organisation the bid is from.

Q: Can we personally hand in the bid?
A: Yes – but don't leave it until the last minute. Bids received after the deadline will not be scored.

Q: Is it ok to label the accompanying CD Rom?
A: Yes – as per the instructions the CD Rom should be labelled and included with the bid.

Q: If the bids are to be sent to Manchester where will they be scored?
A: The initial sift of the bids will be carried out in Manchester where they will be logged and given a number. The bids will then be sent to Cumbria for scoring.

Q: If we are a new organisation to the LSC when do we have to send in the new Provider paperwork?
A: This should be sent in along with your bid.

Q: Can we send them in now?
A: No – if your bid is not successful the new provider process will not be completed. You can send in your application whenever you wish, before the deadline date, but the new provider process will only start if your bid is successful.

Q: Can learning activities include soft skills?
A: Yes

Q: If the project will not achieve a level 2 qualification within the timescale will units towards a level 1 or level 2 qualification count?
A: - it will depend on the requirements of the tender specification.

Q: Is scoring related to the learning activity, for example, college based activity/job shadowing?
A: Each bid will be scored on the information given in respect of each question and how this fits to the tender specification.

Q: Can clients live outside of Cumbria?
A: This is dependant on the tender specification. If the tender specification relates to unemployed beneficiaries then they must live within Cumbria. However if the tender specification is supporting an SME or large organisation then the organisation should be based in Cumbria, although the beneficiaries may live outside the area. It should also be noted that under ESF Co-financing we are not able to fund learners that live in Scotland.

Q: Is it okay to refer to national research when compiling the bid?
A: Yes – although it is advisable to use this alongside local research. The LSC Annual plan 2006-07 details local priorities and this can be found on the website at http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Regions/NorthWest/Publications/ and then search for 'annual plan' for the 06-07 publication.

Q: Does the project have to end by February 2008?
A: This is the date by which the ESF Co-financing funding will cease. Activity can not be funded beyond this date.

Q: What if we still have beneficiaries on a project after the end of February 2008?
A: The funding for the project will cease at the end of February 2008, therefore if learners are still on the project you will need to fund them.

Q: Some of the tender specifications ask for a high volume of outcomes for the funding available, can we tender for the full amount of the specification but offer less beneficiaries?
A. If you feel that the unit price for each beneficiary is too low you must include a clear rationale within your bid to explain your reasoning.

Q: Do we have to bid for the full amount of the tender?
A: No - you don't have to bid for the whole value of the tender, you can tender for a portion of the funding available. All bids will be scored consistently and on merit, the scoring system implemented by the LSC is open and transparent at all stages.

Q: How can we identify possible partners for a specific project?
A: If you are interested in working with partners contact the RST and they will forward details to other organisations.

Q: When you talk about partners do these include service providers?
A: If you are using a service provider to delivery some of the provision this needs to be identified within the bid. You will also need to be clear about the specific roles and responsibilities of both partners and service providers.

Q: Do we have to include a letter of support from partners?
A: It is a good idea to obtain a letter of support from each of your proposed partners

Q: What if a referral agency is used for recruitment purposes?
A: If this is the route to be used for your project it will need to be detailed within the bid. Again roles and responsibilities need to be clearly identified.

Q: Previously beneficiaries over the age of 65 were not eligible for ESF Co-financing. Has the changed due to the implementation of the Age Discrimination Act?
A: Government funded provision is exempt from the Age Discrimination Act. You will need to make the provision available to all; however those beneficiaries over the age of 65 will not be funded through ESF.

Q: One of the tenders relates specifically to beneficiaries between the ages of 16-18. Were you given special dispensation to do this in light of the Age Discrimination Act?
A: See above.

Q: Can we include staff costs within the finance section of the bid?
A: Yes – staff costs are deemed as an eligible costing.

Q: If other agencies offer services 'in kind', for example use of office space does this need to be included within the finance section?
A: Yes – all costings for the project need to be detailed along with other sources of funding even if these are 'in kind' contributions.

Q: Can we include overheads in the costing of the project?
A: Yes – but make sure the method used for calculating and apportioning these costs is clearly identified.

Q: Do we have to fund 100% of the project?
A: If you are using other sources of funding in the project all the details should be included in the finance section of the bid.

Q: What are ineligible costs?
A: All ineligible costs can be found on the GONW website, however one of the most common ineligible costs included within the project is capital costs greater than £1,000. ESF Co-financing is a revenue fund. ERDF funding is the capital fund. If you are still unclear of ineligible costs consult the RST.

Q: Does that mean £1,000 per item of capital?
A: Yes it does – a computer is classed as a whole unit, you can't separate each item, for example, show a printer or keyboard separately.

Q: Why have we only been given 6 weeks to write a bid, it is hard to develop partnerships in this timescale?
A: The LSC is working to approved tendering guidelines. It is also necessary to ensure that contracts are in place as early as possible to allow for adequate delivery time before the end of this co-financing plan in February 2008 .

Q: What are the implications if the project does not deliver the required number of outcomes?
A: The outcomes required for each tender specification are clearly identified. The funding will cease in February 2008 and if the agreed number of outcomes has not been achieved then any unspent funding will need to be paid back to the LSC. The amount paid against each output and outcome will be discussed with successful bidders at the contract negotiation stage.

Q: Does that mean we have to take a risk with the number of outcomes we might achieve in the timescale?
A: You will need to think clearly about the rationale of your bid and whether your proposed project can deliver the required number of outputs within the timescale.

Q: Some tenders state that the amount of funding available may increase, is this common to them all?
A: Yes – a statement has been included on all tenders stating that the amount available may increase due to the underperformance of some contracts. However, the total funding given on each tender should guide your application and, should additional funds become available, increased values could be negotiated with successful providers..

Q: Do you have to accept any additional funds?
A: No – by adding this statement to the tenders it means that the LSC will be allowed to increase the value of some contracts, that have the capacity to do so.   Again any changes to contract values will be negotiated.

Q: When will we know if there is more funding available?
A: The LSC will carry out reconciliations for current contracts and once this has been completed they will know if any further funding is available.