



PROSPECTUS FOR ESF CO-FINANCING ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOUTH EAST

South East Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs)

INVITATION TO TENDER March 2007

Prospectus for SE Co-financing Invitation to Tender (March 2007)

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Section 1. CO-FINANCING

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) in the South East are calling for tenders for the delivery of various activities under ESF Objective 3.

This Tender Prospectus outlines the process to be used for responding to invitations to tender for co-financed activity, as issued by the LSCs only. Included in the Tendering Prospectus are details of the LSC Sussex timetable for tendering, tender assessment and appraisal criteria, as well as details of the process.

The Prospectus has been designed to help applicants structure their tendering proposals to deliver activities which address the priority areas identified in the LSC Sussex Co-financing plan.

Information on the tender deadline is contained in Section 4 and the address for each tender bid will appear at the front of the proposal form and the tender pack includes a reply label.

1.2 WHAT IS IT?

In January 2001, ESF Co-financing was introduced to deliver Objective 3 ESF programmes in England. This means that ESF funding and domestic match funding can be channelled to applicants as a single funding stream by Co-financing organisations such as the Learning & Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and SEEDA.

Co-financing offers a more strategic use of ESF, alongside UK public and other funds involving the management and planning of ESF at Measure level, rather than project level. This has been agreed with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE).

The broad aims of co-financing are:

- better value for money;
- added value to the delivery of government programmes;
- innovation and creativity at local and regional levels;
- greater coherence, co-ordination and targeting of provision;
- reduction of bureaucracy.

Section 2. THE OBJECTIVE 3 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PROGRAMME

2.1 ESF OBJECTIVE 3 – OVERVIEW

The European Social Fund (ESF) is an important source of funding for activities to develop employability and human resources, in line with the European Employment Strategy. It is used to add value to policies introduced to make a reality of the Government's vision for an inclusive society.

The ESF covers every part of Great Britain under one or more of three objectives:

Objective 1 covers areas that are economically disadvantaged: Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Cornwall, West Wales and the Valleys, Highlands and Islands of Scotland;

Objective 2 covers areas that are adjusting to changes in their industrial and service sectors, rural areas in decline, urban areas in difficulty, and economically depressed areas that depend heavily on fisheries

Objective 3 operates everywhere except Objective 1 areas.

The European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 programme in the UK is managed by local Government Offices. The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) has set out the strategies and priorities for the use of Objective 3 ESF within the Regional Development Plan for the South East 2000 – 2008.

The Objective 3 Programme aims to tackle barriers to labour market participation experienced by the unemployed and socially excluded. Support is also available to promote lifelong learning and to enhance adaptability, targeting employees and employers, as well as gender inequality.

ESF Policy Fields

The Objective 3 Programme has five policy fields, with each of these being broken into a range of measures.

Policy Field 1 – Active Labour Market Policies - Developing and promoting active labour market policies to combat and prevent unemployment.

Policy Field 2 – Equal Opportunities and Social Exclusion - Promoting equal opportunities for all, especially those experiencing social exclusion.

Policy Field 3 – Lifelong Learning - Addressing individual learning needs of employees to improve employability and promote job mobility.

Policy Field 4 – Adaptability and Entrepreneurship - Promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce in response to the needs of SMEs.

Policy Field 5 – Improving Disadvantaged Groups in the Labour Market – Training for men and women to go into non-traditional areas of work plus gender/equal opportunities training for employers, managers and trainers.

Section 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SOUTH EAST CO-FINANCING ORGANISATIONS

Listed below are the broad objectives of the local LSCs and SEEDA. You need to bear these in mind when designing your project.

3.1 THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

Set up in 2001, the LSC is responsible for planning and funding of all post-16 education and training in England, other than the university sector. There are six local LSC offices in the South East region.

LSC Funding Budgets

The LSCs' budgets include those of:

- > Further Education colleges
- > School sixth forms
- > Work-based learning for young people
- > Workforce development including Investors in People
- > Adult and community learning
- > Information, advice and guidance for adults
- > Education business links.

LSC Aims and Objectives

The National Learning and Skills Council's strategic objectives are detailed in the Corporate Plan. They were defined at the national level:

- > To raise participation and achievement by young people;
- > To increase demand for learning by adults;
- > To raise skills for national competitiveness;
- > To raise the quality of education and training delivery;
- > To equalise opportunities through better access to learning;
- > To improve effectiveness and efficiency.

LSC National Targets

The following targets have been set at national level:

- > To raise participation in post-16 learning, measured by the proportion of 16-18 year olds engaged in structured learning
- > To raise achievement of young people aged 19, measured by the proportion attaining a Level 2 qualification and participants in structured learning
- > To raise achievement of young people aged 21, measured by the proportion attaining a Level 3 qualification.

- > To raise achievement of the entire adult population, measured by the proportion attaining a Level 2 qualification, and the proportion lacking the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.
- > To raise the quality and effectiveness of the education and training that we support, measured by external inspection grades and by structured feedback from learners, employers and training providers

3.2 SOUTH EAST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SEEDA)

SEEDA's Role and Objectives

SEEDA was set up by the Government in 1999 as the lead strategic body for economic development in the South East region. SEEDA's mission is to work with its partners to make the South East of England a World Class region, achieving sustainable development and enhanced quality of life, as measured by economic prosperity, environmental quality and social inclusion - ensuring opportunities and meaningful employment for all.

SEEDA's five statutory objectives under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 are:

- to further economic development and regeneration;
- to promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness;
- to promote employment;
- to enhance the development and application of skills;
- to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK

SEEDA's and partners aims and objectives for the region from 2002-2012 are set out in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) under 5 headings:

- Competitive Businesses
- Successful People
- Vibrant Communities
- Effective Infrastructure
- Sustainable use of natural resources

These objectives are reflected in the 18 priorities for action published in the SEEDA Corporate Plan, to be taken forward in the period 2003-2006.

3.3 JOBCENTRE PLUS

Jobcentre Plus Role and Objectives

Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the Department of Work and Pensions. The Department was created in June 2001, with a simple aim: "to promote opportunity and independence for all". Jobcentre Plus will contribute to the Government's aim of tackling poverty, reducing unemployment, prompting growth and opportunity, and modernising Government.

The objectives of Jobcentre Plus are:

- To increase the effective labour supply by helping unemployed and economically inactive people of working age move into jobs or self-employment and making available to them job vacancies, information, advice, training and support, and encouraging employers to open up more opportunities to them
- To provide high quality and demand led services to employers to fill job vacancies quickly and effectively with well-prepared and motivated employees
- To help people of working age in the most disadvantaged groups and areas to move closer to the labour market, to compete effectively for and remain in work and to adjust more quickly to economic change
- To ensure that people receiving working age benefits fulfil their responsibilities and are offered high quality help and support appropriate to their needs, while protecting the position of those in greatest need
- To pay people of working age the correct amount of benefit to which they are entitled at the right time and throughout the period of their claim, and to protect the benefit system from fraud, error and abuse
- To improve continuously the quality, accessibility and delivery of services to all working age customers, respecting their individual differences and achieving the best possible outcome for each of them
- To increase Jobcentre Plus' overall productivity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Please note that the only Co-financer issuing specifications is the LSC

Section 4. MAKING A TENDER APPLICATION

4.1 ORGANISATIONS ELIGIBILITY

Who can submit a tender proposal?

All organisations or partnerships that are actively working in education, training or learning focusing on people over 16 are eligible unless specified otherwise in the tender. Organisations submitting a tender proposal must be legally constituted. However, ESF Regulations prevent sole traders and individuals delivering ESF co-financed activity.

Collaborative partnerships

The LSCs are particularly interested in encouraging voluntary organisations and employers to be involved in co-financing projects as part of collaborative partnerships.

However, the LSCs will contract with only one lead partner who must be a legal body. As they will then be responsible for the quality of provision and the progress and performance of the contract on behalf of other partner organisations, we will expect them to enter into formal arrangements with their partners.

Many of the specifications will require a partnership approach. If your organisation is interested in working with other organisations in developing a joint response to a tender specification, please see the relevant LSC website - addresses listed in the Contacts section.

Provider capacity

Tenders should summarise any experience or track record the organisation has had in delivering projects with public funding. The LSC are committed to raising the quality and standards of learning provision and will favour proposals from organisations with a sound quality record with no serious concerns.

Existing providers

Tender proposals from providers will be assessed against any previous performance records. Applications from those where there are a number of major concerns in specific areas in their Provider Review or ALI/OFSTED Common Inspection Framework assessment are not likely to be successful.

New providers

Applicants that have not previously held a contract with the LSC will be assessed against the criteria for new providers.

In addition new providers will be required to work towards the quality criteria of the Common Inspection Framework and within the first contract year complete a self assessment and development plan.

As part of the New Provider Process, all new providers will need to produce the following supporting documents:

- Health and safety policy
- Equal opportunities policy
- Audited accounts/independent review of the previous 2 years

To complete the new provider documentation successfully, applicants should ensure that they are able to supply evidence to support the different headings, eg, management systems, leadership and management. The latest version of the LSC New Provider Process is available on the main LSC website – www.lsc.gov.uk

After your organisation has completed the LSC New Provider Process and been awarded a contract, you will need to work towards the quality criteria of the ALI/OFSTED Common Inspection Framework.

ESF provision has been subject to inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) since April 2004. The ALI inspections focus on the experiences and expectations of individual learners through the evaluation of the key principles set out in the Common Inspection Framework. Successful tender organisations will be required to carry out self-assessment against these principles, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement to be incorporated in ongoing development plans by providers.

Providers will be required to provide all reasonable co-operation with representatives of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and to allow access to premises and participants for the purposes of inspection.

Equality and Diversity

All organisations that the LSC contracts with are required to have an Equal Opportunities Policy that covers all the relevant government legislation on inequality and discrimination:

- The Race Relations Act 1976 and amendments
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and amendments
- The Disability Discrimination Act Parts 1 - 4
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Legislation covers both the internal practices of the project and its staff, as well as the manner in which the project activities are carried out. More detail on legislation can be found on the Department of Trade and Industry website www.dti.gov.uk, and

on the websites for the Equality Commissions www.eoc.org.uk, www.cre.gov.uk and www.drc-gb.org.uk

Projects should also be aware of forthcoming legislation on age discrimination and should be committed to age equality within policy and practice. The government's campaign materials on age related discrimination can be found at www.agepositive.gov.uk

Organisations will need to demonstrate that their Equal Opportunities Policy is reviewed on an annual basis, signed and dated by the Chief Executive (or equivalent), is monitored, evaluated and implemented.

As well as the Equal Opportunities for staff the following should be included for beneficiaries:

- Equal Opportunities targets for recruitment, retention and achievement
- Effective recruitment systems that promote equality of opportunity to access and participation in learning
- Support to learners who are disadvantaged through learning difficulties, disabilities and/or who have Basic Skills needs
- Methods for dealing and responding to potential difficulties
- Promotion of Equal Opportunities and associated responsibilities to staff and learners
- Clear lines of accountability
- Review systems and procedures

Furthermore, as one of the three "Horizontal themes" in ESF Objective 3, tender proposals will have to demonstrate the criteria in the tender application form, similar to the above, reflecting the wider ESF requirements that providers meet an Equal Opportunities standard. However, proposals will not be penalised if they are unable to meet this standard, but they will be expected to agree a development plan as part of contract negotiation if successful, in order to implement improvements.

It is important that the **LSCs** work with organisations that are committed to breaking down barriers, and that everyone who wishes to engage in the project is empowered to do so. You need to describe how you will promote access to the project, in a manner sensitive to target groups' needs (individuals or organisations as applicable). You should briefly describe how your project will deal with the following groups who suffer from discrimination and may be represented within the target group you have identified for your project activities:

- men or women (or both);
- ethnic minorities and those who are discriminated against because of their race;
- people with a disability;
- lesbians and gay men;
- people who are discriminated against because of religious belief; and
- other excluded groups such as refugees, ex-offenders, people addicted to drugs and alcohol, and travellers.

Please also describe the needs of, and barriers faced by, your beneficiaries and how these will be dealt with, and how your project plans to empower its beneficiaries. Support measures for the specific needs of all beneficiaries should be described, including translation and interpretation, creche facilities, physical access to buildings, aids and adaptations for disabled people and other means through which you will enable beneficiaries to fully participate in project activities.

You must demonstrate your experience of delivering services to your target groups. It may be appropriate for you to involve organisations that are owned, controlled or operated by equalities target groups in your partnership to ensure targeted and appropriate provision. If you are going to incur further costs, please include them in the project budget.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is another of the three “Horizontal themes” in ESF Objective 3, and the same approach is taken regarding the need to demonstrate in your tender proposal how you meet the criteria.

Questions will cover the following areas:

- How does your project provide the opportunities for everyone to fulfil their potential?
- How does your project ensure environmental protection and enhancement?
- How does your project provide the skills that the economy needs now and in the future?

Sustainable Development is a process that seeks to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, by integrating social, environmental and economic considerations equally into everything we do. It recognises that social, economic and environmental issues are interdependent and therefore activity in one of these areas should not be pursued in isolation but with consideration for each of the other areas as well.

Sustainable development is being increasingly integrated into Government policy, legislation and decision-making to help deliver a better quality of life for everyone. To guide this process the UK Government has developed the UK’s Strategy for Sustainable Development “A Better Quality of Life” (<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk>)

There is also an increasing recognition of the need to integrate sustainable development within education and skills provision, to equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to integrate sustainable development into their work and home lives. Please refer to the Department for Education and Skills “Sustainable Development Action Plan for Education & Skills” (www.dfes.gov.uk/sd/docs/SDactionplan.pdf).

With respect to the European Social Fund, there is now an increasing emphasis on sustainable development. The Objective 3 Programme has taken the three elements of sustainable development and defined them as follows:

- Social: Providing the opportunities for everyone to fulfil their potential
- Environment: Environmental protection and enhancement through the delivery of projects
- Economic: Providing the skills that businesses both demand and require – now and in the future

To integrate sustainable development you must consider all 3 of its elements and not just one or two of them. Please refer to the sustainable development eligibility question when you are designing your project and answering this question. You will be required to complete the ESF sustainable development toolkit http://www.esf.gov.uk/02_About_ESF/20_Sustainable_Development/14_Sustainable_Development_Toolkit.asp Further explanation on each element is given below.

Social: Providing the opportunities for everyone to fulfil their potential

This focuses on tackling social exclusion, widening participation in education and training, and helping to overcome the various barriers (be they social, economic or cultural) that prevent people becoming involved. You should research and analyse the particular needs and issues relevant to your target group, such as socially excluded or long-term unemployed, and identify the steps or actions you need to take to engage with these groups. A diverse range of approaches may be required, and partnerships with other organisations may be necessary to enable effective and targeted intervention.

Environmental: Environmental protection and enhancement through the delivery of projects

There are 3 main areas where you can contribute to the environment as part of your project:

- Consider how you address environmental issues in your organisation especially in the areas of energy, water, waste, procurement and transport and how will this influence how you deliver your project. For example, promote use of public transport and minimise car use, use energy efficient equipment, reduce waste through increased use of ICT and reduce the impact of your resource use by buying environmentally friendly goods.
- Integration of environmental issues into course content to raise the general level of awareness and understanding of environmental issues and how they can be addressed. For example, including information on sustainable design and construction techniques on construction courses; developing social, practical and team working skills through enhancement of a local green space or a river clean-up.

Economic: Providing the skills that businesses both demand and require – now and in the future

This involves ensuring that labour supply meets demand by addressing the generic and specific skill shortages that exist in the labour market, and ensuring an adaptable and flexible labour market. It also includes a focus on the future skill needs of businesses by identifying growth sectors and highlighting the increasing importance of addressing sustainability and environmental management within

business. You should also consider how environmental management issues could be integrated into training provision aimed at employers and employees.

For many Objective 3 projects, the social and economic elements of sustainable development are likely to be the primary focus of your project. Use this section to demonstrate what you are doing to address these elements and how you can address environmental issues in delivering your project.

As part of our commitment to sustainable development, you may be asked to participate in a small number of workshops aimed at helping your organisation and project improve its understanding of and contribution to sustainable development. Alternatively you may be given a sustainable development toolkit to work through. Project managers will discuss this with successful projects as part of the contracting process.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The third “Horizontal theme” in ESF Objective 3 is Information and Communication Technology, aiming to integrate ICT skills into all types of activity, including, for example, actions to develop basic and key skills. Questions in the tender application form will relate to:

What ICT will you use in the project?

How will you use the ICT?

What are the expected benefits and outcomes of using the proposed ICT?

Health and safety

All organisations that the Co-financing Organisations contract with are required to have a Health Safety Policy that covers all the relevant government legislation pertinent to the organisation and the activities undertaken. Organisations should be able to demonstrate that the policy is reviewed on an annual basis, signed and dated by the Chief Executive (or similar), is monitored, evaluated and implemented.

The contents of a Health & Safety Policy should include:

- A planned approach to Health & Safety, and organisational risk assessment
- The promotion of safe working and supervision within all learning programmes
- Systems to check adequate supervision and safe learning environments
- Systems to inform staff and learners about Health & Safety arrangements, entitlements and responsibilities
- Accident and Incident reporting procedures
- Accident prevention and re-occurrence

Quality standards

Successful providers will have to ensure the quality of the service and provision they offer and the primary responsibility will fall with them. If they are working in a

collaborative partnership, they will be responsible for the quality of provision from the other members. Quality standards will form part of the project monitoring arrangements.

Programmes of learning activity that fall within the scope of OFSTED are subject to inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Providers will be required to work towards a self-assessment and development plan as part of the Common Inspection Framework within the first twelve months of delivery. New providers will be supported throughout this process.

Financial viability

Successful applicants will be required to demonstrate that they have sufficiently robust financial procedures and systems to manage the finances of the approved project. They will be expected to employ appropriately experienced staff to facilitate this.

New providers will be required to submit audited accounts or management accounts for the previous two years.

Value for money

Applicants must show how they will ensure maximum effectiveness, promote excellence and high quality delivery and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

Project costs should be realistic and based on actual costs.

4.2 THE INVITATION TO TENDER

The Learning and Skills Councils in the South East are required to follow standard procurement procedures when selecting Co-financed projects.

Projects in more than one Specification

Your project must deliver activities as stated within each LSC Specification. If you wish to tender for an activity under more than one Specification you will have to complete a separate Tender Proposal form for each Specification. You should also note that there is no guarantee that two linked applications related to different Specifications will be selected.

Length of Projects

The funding period for the LSC Tenders is set out in each Specification. The LSCs will consider tenders for a funding period that covers a shorter period within

these dates. The LSCs reserve the right to revise and reissue Tender Specifications at a later date. Tenders for periods outside these dates will not be eligible. Please note that all your expenditure and activity must be both incurred and defrayed within the period of your project. All outputs must be completed within the length of time set out in the Specification. Any outputs, outcomes or milestones falling outside the set period will be deemed ineligible.

Tender Documents

The tender documents will be posted on the LSCs' websites from **March 12 2007 onwards**. Potential applicants will be advised when the documents are available on the website through mail shots and other publicity. See **Section 7 – Contacts** for individual LSC website addresses/links.

The documents on the LSC local websites will be:

- Invitation to Tender Form
- Guidance Notes
- Tender Specifications from each LSC office
- Tender Proposal Label

The documents on the LSC National Office website are:

- Sample LSC Contract
- New Provider Guidance
- Individual Learner Record/Short Record forms

If you do not have a computer, please write to the ESF contact at the appropriate LSC who will send you a pack of information including a label to put on the envelope containing your Tender Proposal. However, interested parties should note that they will need to have access to computer facilities if they are successful.

4.3 PREPARING A TENDER PROPOSAL

When preparing your Tender Proposal, you should:

- Ensure that the ESF Tender Proposal meets/exceeds the LSCs' Specifications in terms of:
 - target group
 - their needs
 - outcomes to be achieved,
 - total number of beneficiaries involved in the tender
 - funding available.
- Involve all interested parties at an early stage, well in advance of the date you have to submit your tender proposal. Partner organisations will then be aware of the objectives and content of the project and the capacity and expertise required

to deliver it successfully. This will demonstrate a real and active partnership to strengthen the Tender Proposal.

- Read and adhere to the Guidance Notes that accompanies the Tender Proposal.

Filling in Your Tender Proposal

When completing the **ESF Invitation to Tender Form**, Tender applicants should ensure that responses within the text boxes are no more than 1 page of A4 for each entire question, including the words of the question, in a minimum font size of 10. Any additional information will be disregarded to ensure fair comparison between applications. Paper copies are available if the applicant has no computer. Handwritten forms must be legible.

More information on completing the tender document is available in the Tender Guidance Notes attached to the Invitation to Tender Form.

Please ensure you have the latest version of the Invitation to Tender Form – as this has been changed from the last Tender round.

4.4 SUBMISSION

Invitation to Tender

All tenders must be submitted using the ESF Invitation to Tender Form. This is available on the LSCs' websites. The **original** completed tender must be submitted with **TWO** photocopies. Only typed/word-processed forms will be accepted in hard copy format (**no email or faxed versions will be accepted**). Only the original Tender Proposal should be sent with **original signature** (on the last page of the Tender Proposal) – not a computer-generated signature.

All Partnership Declaration Forms need to be signed and submitted with the completed Invitation to Tender Form.

Proposals should be returned to the relevant Co-financing Organisation at the address generated on the proposal form and on the reply label and should be clearly marked with the words:

LSC TENDERS 2005-08

- **You must use the label provided by the LSC on their local website**
- **You must not use a company franking machine as this is a sealed bidding process. Envelopes must be stamped and posted or hand delivered so they remain anonymous. PLEASE USE SUFFICIENT STAMPS FOR THE WEIGHT OF YOUR TENDER.**
- **The tendering deadline is 5pm on the 10th April 2007. ALL tenders must be received before this deadline. Tenders arriving at the LSCs' after this deadline WILL NOT be considered. We recommend posted tenders are sent by Guaranteed Delivery. Proof of postage will not be accepted for late tenders.**

All Tender Proposals will remain sealed until after the deadline. They will then be opened at the same time, logged and witnessed by two independent people who are not involved in the assessment process.

Acknowledgement of receipt of tenders will be sent out by email or post as appropriate during the week following the deadline date if requested.

SUMMARY OF THE TENDER APPLICATION PROCESS

South East LSCs' Invitation to Tender Form, Prospectus, Contracts, New Provider Processes, etc, will all be on the LSC Sussex website from **March 12 2007**. Tender Applicants will be able to download the final documents from the website address provided from March 12th onwards. If any organisation cannot access the Internet, ask the appropriate LSC to email it to you or send you a hard copy.

Co-financing Prospectus read by the Tender Applicants to understand the process and the specifications that the different LSCs are inviting tenders for.

If Tender Applicants consider that they are able to deliver against a particular specification, they should complete the Invitation to Tender Form making sure they remember the following:

- Read through the Tendering Prospectus
- Follow the Guidance for the Tender Proposal
- Meet the Specification requirements as closely as possible

This will ensure Tender Applicants consider all of the Tender Proposal criteria.

Send the completed original signed Invitation to Tender Form with TWO photocopies to the relevant LSC's address at the bottom of the specification you are tendering against

BY THE DEADLINE OF 5PM ON 10th April 2007

Please remember to SIGN the proposal and if you post it, put on enough STAMPS!

NO FRANKING!

Section 5. ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL

5.1 THE SELECTION PROCESS

All Tender Proposals received will be subject to a thorough Assessment and Appraisal process. They will first be checked to make sure they are signed, have no extra information attached, are complete, and whether they are a legal constituted body. If this is not the case, they will fail at this stage.

Assessment looks at fit-to-the Specification.

Appraisal compares like-with-like against the Specification

Assessment – Stage One

Eligible Tenders will be assessed independently by one member of the ESF Team, the Spec Writer and one external representative or in some organisations, external partners. They will be assessed against the sections in the tender proposal and marked – see categories below.

Those tenders in the five higher categories will be considered by an Appraisal Panel consisting of LSC staff and external representatives from organisations such as the Government Office, etc.

Evidence	Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tenderer's response has exceeded all of the minimum requirements of the section of the tender; orTenderer's response has met all of the minimum requirements and offers significant added value in at least 50% of the area(s) pre-defined as critical to the successful delivery of the provision.	Significant Added Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tenderer's response has, as a minimum, met all of the requirements of the section of the tender and has exceeded our requirements in at least 25% of cases; orTenderer's response has met all of the minimum requirements and has significantly added value against an area pre-defined as critical. Therefore, overall, their tender offers value above	Added Value

our minimum requirements.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenderer's response has met the minimum requirements for the section of the tender and it is likely that they would deliver the provision successfully. • Delivery arrangements are appropriate and fully described 	Meets Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenderer's response has met the minimum requirements for some, but not all, of the section of the tender, and their response represents a risk in terms of their potential to deliver the provision successfully. 	Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenderer's response has failed to meet the minimum requirements of the section of the tender in 33% or more of cases; or • Tenderer's response has failed to meet the requirements in an area(s) pre-defined as critical to the successful delivery of the provision and this represents a serious risk to Jobcentre Plus in terms of their potential to deliver the provision successfully. 	Significant Risk

Proposals will receive an overall assessment and those acquiring the Meeting Requirements grade and above will go on to the Appraisal Stage. Those Tenders gaining Significant Risk or Risk grades will be rejected.

Please note Tenders must gain a Meets Requirements or above grade in Section 2A – Fit to Specification, 2B – Target Groups and 3A – Management – to go onto the Appraisal Process.

5.2 APPRAISAL CRITERIA

Appraisal – Stage Two

The role of the Appraisal Panels is to ensure that a balanced package of projects is approved to support the priorities for the LSC Specifications and the requirements of the Objective 3 ESF Regional Development Plan. They will appraise the requirements of the Specifications and compare any areas of risk identified at the Assessment Stage.

The Appraisal criteria are listed below. The Appraisal Panel will select the tenders to go forward to each LSC Senior Management/Council for recommendation subject to post-tender negotiations. Please note that any 'lobbying' of Panel members will not be accepted and will result in automatic disqualification of an applicant's proposal

The Appraisal Panel will examine tenders against each other to see which best:

Adds Value

- Which tender best meets and/or enhances the specification
- How effectively the provider has met the specification
- Best supports existing provision if appropriate

Provides Value for Money

- What is the cost per beneficiary?
- How were the costs arrived at?
- What are the benefits for beneficiaries?
- How much of the funding is directly reflected in meeting the needs of the target group?
- How many outputs/beneficiaries per year?

Has Sustainability

- What effect will the project have on the beneficiaries/local strategies?
- What will happen after the life of the project? – to beneficiaries and/or the project?
- How will the project enhance provision or progress to mainstream funding where appropriate?

Has a good Track Record

- Does this provider have a successful track record – if an existing provider, what was their last Provider Review and ALI/OFSTED grading?
- If a new provider, have they given evidence of a successful track record?

The LSCs will use an appropriate rating system to distinguish how well each tender demonstrates the above. Appraisal panels will compare the ratings and recommend which tenders should be considered for support.

5.3 FINAL SELECTION

Tenders will be compared and rated in terms of best fit with the specification. Those projects that best fit will go before the local LSCs' Councils or Senior Management Boards/Panels for final decisions.

5.4 TENDER OUTCOMES

All tendering organisations will receive a letter providing them with the outcome of their own proposal. This will take the form of either a letter giving approval, subject to contract, or a letter informing them that they have not been successful on this occasion.

Where Tender Proposals have not been approved, the unsuccessful applicants will be provided with an opportunity to request feedback. This may not be fully available until contract negotiations are complete. The feedback is intended to help to clarify the reasons for the decision and also to enable the organisation to submit a more appropriate proposal on future occasions.

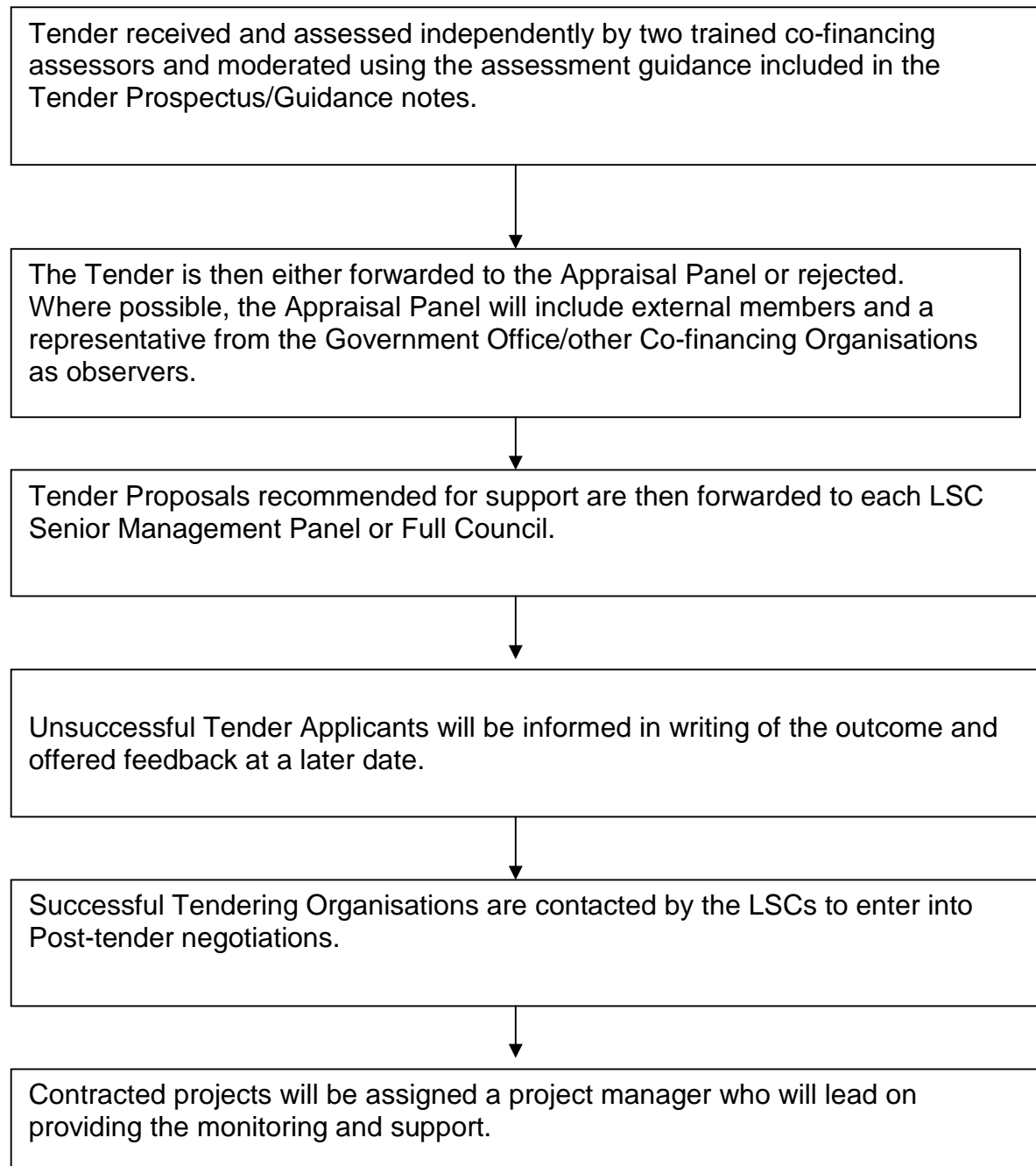
The LSCs' will approve projects 'in principle' subject to the completion of satisfactory viability checks and successful contract negotiation. They reserve the right to withdraw from pre-contract negotiations if these are protracted beyond 30 working days of the date of the initial pre-contract negotiations meeting.

All approved projects will be publicised on the local LSCs' and GOSE's websites – see **Section 7 – Contacts** for web addresses.

5.5 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In the event that an applicant feels the assessment of their proposal has been mismanaged and that the resulting decision is improper, then a complaints procedure is available from each LSC. There is NO APPEALS process under Open and Competitive Tendering.

SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL PROCESS



Section 6. CONTRACTING

Organisations whose tenders are selected for the delivery of the activity as described in the specification(s) will be offered LSC contracts. The contract lays out the terms and conditions and the specific activity as described in the proposal.

A copy of the LSC contract will be on the LSC National Office web site – www.lsc.gov.uk

6.1 PAYMENTS

Payments will be made according to contract costs and to a mutually agreed payment profile that sets out agreed payments for specific milestones, outputs and outcomes. Management information to support the delivery will be monitored monthly. Where there is an absence of evidence or continuous underperformance, payment may be reduced or stopped.

6.2 MONITORING

Contracts will be monitored on a regular basis with a quarterly review of progress against targets and the LSCs' quality standards by the local LSC office. Where necessary, delivery and payment schedules may be re-profiled to take account of experience of running the project. The local LSC will expect monthly returns from the provider.

6.3 BENEFICIARY DOCUMENTATION

One of the conditions of the LSC contract is that where learning delivery is involved, the contractors must use the LSC Individual Learner Record (ILR) or Short Record (SR) documentation in order to identify the beneficiary eligibility, background, activity being undertaken, start and finish dates. Contractors are not permitted to replace the LSC ILR or SR with their own paperwork.

Contractors will be required to maintain comprehensive beneficiary attendance records as part of the proof of hours received by beneficiaries. The ILRs or SR must be completed online and submitted to the LSC National Office electronically. Organisations need to identify this administration cost into their budget/payment profiles to cover this.

As a guideline to administration costs related to the collation and submission of individual learner records, providers need to consider the following costs:

- Training of staff to use the system
- Inputting information onto the system – staff time and online use
- Access to Broadband – if available

Copies of the records you will be using are available from the main LSC websites for information.

As part of the contract you will be required to demonstrate the following:

- Beneficiaries are aware of the source of the funding that supports their project;
- There is a completed ILR or SR for each person who benefits from the project (i.e. a beneficiary in a programme). This form captures essential information on the beneficial for LSC data capture requirements.
- Attendance records are completed for all beneficiaries
- Evidence of successful completion of programmes
- Records of support payments paid to beneficiaries (e.g. childcare, travel, etc.).

Section 7. CONTACTS

The Open and Competitive Tendering process of co-financing will not allow LSC staff to provide guidance or advice regarding the content and completion of the Tendering Proposals. This ensures that no single applicant organisation is given help or assistance over others. Contact names and phone numbers are available on each LSC website for general information.

All queries and answers will be posted on the relevant websites. The Co-financing Organisations' website details are:

Berkshire LSC

www.lscberks.gov.uk

Hampshire and Isle of Wight LSC

www.Hampshire-iow-lsc.org.uk

Kent and Medway LSC

www.lsc.gov.uk/kentandmedway

Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire LSC

www.thelearningcampus.co.uk

Surrey LSC

www.lsc.gov.uk/surrey

Sussex LSC

www.lsc.gov.uk/sussex

Jobcentre Plus

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

SEEDA

www.seeda.co.uk

Section 8. OTHER FORMS OF ESF FUNDING

GLOBAL GRANTS

If you are looking for a small grant for your organisation of up to £10,000, then going to the organisations who look after Global Grants in the South East would be the best route for you. Funding is available for any charities, voluntary and community groups or social enterprises, particularly smaller, local groups that have strong links with the people they are supporting. The group must not have received European funds before and individuals cannot apply.

The Global Grants programme is organised across the South East following the LSC boundaries. If you are interested in this sort of funding, please contact GOSE for Global Grants in your area on the following numbers:

David Steed, Head of the ESF Unit, GOSE Tel: (01483) 882474

Email: david.steed.gose@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

Catherine Hilton, Partnership Support Unit Tel: (01483) 822422

Email: catherine.hilton.gose@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

Website address: www.go-se.gov.uk

Section 9. ESF REGULATIONS

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

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, must be relevant to the project and the cost of any individual item must **not** exceed the ESF guideline figure of **£1000** per individual item.

Training for the Public Sector

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

However, there are some exceptions: These are:

- Training people to allow them to work in the public sector;
- If the public sector contracts our work to private companies, the contracted company is not considered part of the public sector, so training activity would be eligible;

- Support for public sector workers who have either been given or are threatened with redundancy that requires them to carry out vocational training to fit them for a new post;
- Lifelong learning for public sector workers employed traditionally low skilled work that need career development in their current post;
- Training Jobcentre Plus staff working on modernising or providing activity that is additional to normal Jobcentre Plus activity;
- Funding teachers for activity beyond the standard support available to help the teachers meet the needs of stated ESF client groups

The following are considered be part of the public sector:

- Central Government
- Local authorities
- The Armed Forces
- NHS Trusts and GP fundholders
- Grant maintained schools

Publicity

All projects receiving ESF must publicise the contribution these funds have made and make all beneficiaries aware of the ESF support. This is a condition of the LSC's contracts.

State Aid

The European Union encourages actions to strengthen the competitiveness of the regional economy and recognises the important part that the provision of State Aid to companies can play in this respect. However, such aid is considered to distort competition between companies and poses a threat to the operation of the internal market. European Union rules on State Aids limit the support that may be provided by the public funding to assist projects involving the commercial sector.

Companies benefiting from State Aid will be asked to make a contribution of up to 50% depending on the size of the organisation. Those specifications affected by the State Aid rule will contain details of contributions and are available on the local LSC websites.

If you feel your organisation is liable to make a contribution to State Aid, please contact your local LSC before submitting your Tender Proposal.

Further guidance on State Aids will be provided to organisation(s) to whom the LSC awards the contract(s) for the delivery of training to employed people. This guidance will be provided during the contract negotiation stage.

Eligible Costs

Applicants are required to identify how the costs of their proposal have been calculated. Please remember that the full costs of the delivery **must** be identified as

the Co-financing Organisations will provide 100% eligible funding for those projects that are approved. See the Tender Proposal Guidance for an example budget.

If your organisation is registered for VAT, you must include this in your budget.

Definitions of Employment and Unemployment

Within certain measures ESF can only be used to support either unemployed or long-term unemployed beneficiaries. If you apply under these measures, you must make sure that the beneficiaries meet these criteria and you should be able to show that they meet them.

For ESF purposes unemployment is a period where a person is not in paid employment (subject to certain exceptions). Registration with Jobcentre Plus is not needed as evidence of unemployment.

The following are considered as periods of unemployment. Time spent::

- on Invalidity Benefit;
- on Sickness Benefit;
- on Severe Disablement Allowance; or
- in custody (within certain criteria)

The following conditions **do not affect** qualifying periods of unemployment for beneficiaries:

- periods of unpaid work;
- casual or temporary work of not more than four weeks;
- part-time work of less than 16 hours a week in total, provided that the skills needed for the work will not lead to greater involvement in the labour market; or
- time spent on an earlier ESF project where the current project will develop the previous one. Where you cannot clearly show this, the beneficiaries will need to serve the qualifying period again beneficiaries may only continue to work on the current project if you agree

The following **do not count** as periods of unemployment:

- time spent on work-related Government programmes such as New Deal where people are considered to form part of the workforce;
- days for which Statutory Sick Pay or Statutory Maternity Pay have been claimed;
- time spent in compulsory education; and
- time spent on training or education courses that last longer than four weeks.

The longest continuous period an individual may benefit from an ESF project is three calendar or academic years.

Employment

An employed person is:

- someone who works under a contract of employment, which can be written, verbal or implied, and works for more than 16 hours per week.
- a self-employed person (registered with the Inland Revenue as self-employed and paying Class 2 National Insurance Contributions)

Volunteers

Beneficiaries working as volunteers or are doing unpaid work may not be counted as employed for the purposes of ESF.

Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are not generally eligible for ESF support but refugees are. There are exceptions to this for pre-vocational activities (not vocational guidance) training.

Allowable activities are:

- Initial English for speakers of other languages, other basic skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT) where they are not part of provision that leads to employment.
- Orientation provision to raise awareness of the rights and responsibilities of asylum seekers and labour market needs; provision of information about further education and voluntary work in which they can participate; general advice about what awaits those given leave to remain in Britain (information about law, culture, housing, welfare, health, education and employment).
- Involvement in voluntary activity within the asylum seeker community.

What is a “Small or Medium Enterprise” (SME)?

For ESF purposes “Small or Medium Enterprises” (SMEs) are defined as follows:

- Medium Enterprises are organisations which employ fewer than 250 employees but more than 50 at the time the application is made including part-time, seasonal and temporary staff
- Small Enterprises are organisations that employ less than 50 employees.
- Has either a balance sheet at their accounting date with assets, less liabilities, worth no more than 27 million Euros, or an annual turnover of not more than 40 million Euros: and
- Are not more than one quarter owned by firms that do not qualify as SMEs under the above requirements.

Voluntary organisations can be regarded as SMEs for ESF purposes.