

LSC ESF CONTRACTS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORTS

The LSC requires that an annual evaluation report be prepared by the lead partner of each contracted ESF project. We expect that the lead partner will coordinate project evaluation activities on behalf of all those partners and sub contractors involved in project delivery.

These instructions set out the required content, framework and terms of reference for the evaluation reports. It is hoped that by standardising procedures in this way - from the earliest stages of project delivery - that common understandings can be shared across all LSC contracted project delivery teams across the South West region.

These instructions should be used in conjunction with the Guidance Notes for the Evaluation of ESF Projects produced for the LSC by the Marchmont Observatory at Exeter University. They should be read first before entering the Guidance Notes.

It is important to note that this report has two primary purposes. Firstly, it encourages you, the project provider, to evaluate your performance in delivering a project on behalf of the LSC and to consider ways of improving the delivery making it more effective for the participant. Secondly it provides us at the LSC with critical information that we would not collect through our general management of your contract. Therefore this should be seen as a development tool designed to improve the service provided to the project's target group and not as the imposition of additional bureaucracy by the LSC. The report is intended to support and complement the Self Assessment process already in place for quality assurance purposes. We hope that you will embrace the purpose that the evaluation process is intended to support and find it invaluable in delivering a successful project.

We would also draw your attention to the distinction between internal and external evaluations. The LSC evaluation requirement will be essentially for internal use as part of the contract between ourselves and project delivery teams. However, you may feel it appropriate also to commission an external evaluation by outside evaluators, either of specific or more general aspects of your work. Each type of evaluation has its merits and can highlight respectively, for instance, familiarity with the project culture and context (internal) or objective progress and achievement (external).

Frequency of reports

We require the annual evaluation report to be submitted to the LSC at the end of June of each year. A further, independently written, report must be produced at the completion of each project. The purpose of the annual report is to review the

achievements of the project to date and identify any improvements that might be made to raise project performance.

Report contents

The evaluation report must cover the following topics:

1. Delivery arrangements, including partnership processes
2. Achievements to date
3. Comparison of performance with expected results
4. Impact
5. Summary of activity
6. Identified improvements
7. Case studies

1. Delivery arrangements, including partnership processes

Describe the infrastructure deployed by the project. Include the numbers and levels of the posts involved and the locations and methods of delivery. Assess how effective this arrangement has been.

Describe any partnership arrangements established to deliver the project, listing all organisations involved in the delivery, the contractual relationship put into place with those organisations and their role.

Describe the management and communication processes implemented, e.g. steering group, management team hierarchy and how these have worked in practice. Include the methods of communication and the frequency and effectiveness of any management meetings.

Describe the publicity arrangements that have been deployed including the various methods applied. Describe the links with referral agencies and other relevant organisations that have been developed and utilised for the project.

Make an objective assessment of the effectiveness of these structures and processes.

2. Achievements to date

Review the numbers of hard outcomes that have been delivered to date by the project. Present in a table the numbers of key deliverables achieved. Present the outcome ratios for the participants supported.

Where the project is delivered by a partnership or involves the use of sub-contractors show separate figures for each partner organisation.

Include an analysis of these numbers by gender, disability, age bands and the priority groups for the project set out in the LSC's original tender specification for the project (this is not needed for the separate partners).

Review the numbers of soft outcomes that have been delivered by the project.

Review the impact of the project through the selected measure of satisfaction or participant progress.

Note – Key deliverables would be starts and outcomes as a minimum but also include any other events that are critical measures or milestones for the progress of the participants such as partial qualifications achieved or retention of participants for at least half of the programme.

Age bands should be under 25 years, 25-49 years and 50+ years.

3. Comparison of performance with expected results

Compare the delivery with profiled numbers.

Comment on the various aspects of the performance as presented. Make an assessment both of the measured numbers of soft and hard outcomes and of the outcome ratios. Describe any variation within the figures, such as differing results between locations or sectors.

Where appropriate, compare the performance with established benchmarks.

Where ESF is funding a programme of additional support to participants taking part in a mainstream programme, compare the results with those for students that did not receive support to assess what improvement can be demonstrated. Assess how instrumental the additional support has been in your participants completing their mainstream-funded training.

Please also comment on partner performance based on sub contractors' outputs. Where their activities are similar, compare partners' contributions to those activities; also note complementarity and levels of cooperation between partners.

4. Impact

Present and assess the results from the selected measures of satisfaction and impact. Describe the methodology used for the measurement. Describe any variation within the figures, such as differing results between locations or sectors.

For projects funded under priorities 2 and 5, ensure that you assess the impact both for participants and employers.

Provide details of the support measures implemented including numbers receiving the various forms of support and a description of the services provided. Identify any trends in the types of support required by particular groups. Identify distinctive types

or trends in support that has been matched to the needs of particular groups that you have worked with.

5. Summary of delivery

Present your conclusion on the performance of the project as demonstrated by the information set out in the earlier sections.

Include details of any significant barriers that have arisen and how these have been addressed. Feedback on the support that you have received from the LSC is welcome.

Please also comment on how well the project is performing against the initial sustainability plans as outlined in your original bid. Revisit sustainability approaches, give details of their implementation and describe how well they are working in practice.

6. Identified changes and improvements

Set out the changes to processes and procedures that you will implement to address any of the areas for improvement identified in the evaluation, together with timescales for their introduction.

7. Case studies

Enclose up to 4 case studies of participants that have been on the project in the period covered by the report.

Use of the additional document - Guidance Notes for the Evaluation of ESF Projects

We understand that providers will have differing experience of evaluation and may not have access to technical expertise to assist with this work. For this reason the Marchmont Observatory of Exeter University has kindly produced a set of guidance notes to explain the concepts of evaluation and how they might be applied to the LSC's ESF projects.

These notes are made available to you as background support and it is not an absolute requirement that all of the suggested approaches set out in the notes are adopted. However it is our expectation that appropriate techniques are selected that enable the formal evaluation of project delivery going beyond the monitoring of delivery volumes and simple analysis of learner data recorded in the ILR. You should consider a strategy for conducting evaluation and in doing so adopt a suite of measures that is applicable to the objectives of your project ensuring that the critical elements of hard and soft outcomes, impact and customer satisfaction are addressed by the measures selected. We expect that you will implement processes that collect the information that measures these variables.



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Questions on this document

If you have any questions on the requirements described in this document please contact your nominated contract manager in the LSC ESF team.