

SEMLEP

South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership



European Union

European
Social Fund

Consultation on the SEMLEP European Social Fund Programme 2017-2020

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Introduction

The European Social Fund (ESF) to date has invested around £30 million in employment, skills and social inclusion projects across the historical SEMLEP and NEP areas which will come to an end between 2019 and 2020 (see annex 1).

We are now planning for the remainder of the ESF Programme which will cover the enlarged SEMLEP area following the merger with NEP.

In doing so, we assume that the United Kingdom will officially leave the European Union (EU) in Spring 2019, possibly shortening the time available to commit the remaining £22m¹ of ESF. New projects will only be guaranteed funding from the ESF if a funding agreement is in place before the UK leaves the EU, therefore the timetable for funding applications should start no later than Autumn 2017.

There are several unknowns affecting the ESF Programme not least the future of match funding from Opt-in organisations, whether LEPs will be allowed to commit 100% of funds and make virements between the key Investment Priorities (unemployment, skills and social inclusion) to reflect changes in the local labour market and the economy.

Irrespectively we are keen to hear views from stakeholders as to the future of the second half of the ESF Programme, as we are acutely aware there is a degree of duplication between current ESF projects, and with other statutory provision.

The purpose of the stakeholder consultation is to seek views on the key issues not addressed by the SEMLEP ESF Programme² so far, so that any future activity is targeted where most need it. SEMLEP is also undertaking an ESF Data Refresh which will underpin future calls alongside the ESIF Strategies and an updated Implementation Plan.

At the same time the Department for Work and Pensions, the Managing Authority for the ESF Programme, will be undertaking a review of the ESF Operational Programme³ and is consulting stakeholders on changes that may be needed to reflect differences in the labour market, the economy and national policy (like for instance the introduction of the Universal Credit) from when the Operational Programme was first written. The aim of the consultation exercise is to review what is required in the 2nd half of the programme working within the current OP requirements.

¹ An approximate figure using 0.78p exchange rate; sums can go up as well as down if Programme is revaluated in light of changes to the exchange rate

² [SEMLEP and NEP ESIF Strategies](#)

³ [ESF Operational Programme 2017-2020](#)

Q1. In your opinion what are the current gaps in provision, either geographic or thematic, which have not been addressed by ESF to date?

Q2. In your view where can ESF add most value and why?

Q3. How can we ensure duplication between ESF Projects and other statutory provision is minimised?

Q4. Do you think the allocations by Investment Priorities detailed below reflect current need? If not what should the balance be and why? Please note these figures are approximate and maybe subject to change due to Funding Agreements yet to be signed off.

Access to Employment	£ 6.7m
Young People not in education, employment or training	£2.4m
Social Inclusion	£3.7m
Skills for Growth	£6.9m
Edu & Training Systems	£2.8m
TOTAL	£22.5m

Q5. Should future projects be large and covering the whole of the SEMLEP Area? Or is it best to allow for small, localised interventions?

Q6. Drawing from your knowledge of current ESF Provision in the SEMLEP area, what has worked well? What has not and how could it be improved?

Q7. The labour market has changed considerably since the ESF Operational Programme was written – in what way could a future programme be different to the current one. What are the current needs in the SEMLEP area which are not being addressed and could be reflected in a future programme?

Annex 1 List of current projects

SEMLEP

Funder	Activities	Provider
SFA Opt-in	Support for Redundancies; Apprenticeships Services Skills Support for the Workforce-Higher Level Skills Support for the Workforce- Basic Level NEETs and pre-NEETs; Community Grants	Learndirect Northampton College SERCO SERCO People Plus Futures
DWP Opt-in	Access to Employment for job-seekers and inactive people <i>(including basic skills)</i>	Maximus
Big Lottery Opt-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support into employment - Financial Inclusion - Community Investment 	Luton Borough Council Voluntary Works TCHC
Open Calls <i>(projects bring own 50% match funding)</i>	Access to Employment for job-seekers/inactive people; NEETs and pre-NEETs; Active Inclusion; Lifelong learning/upskilling the workforce; Improving labour market relevance of education and training systems	PBIC & CBC Luton Borough Council PBIC and VCASB Call closed 24/1/17 Call closed 24/1/17

NEP

SFA Opt-in	Workforce- Intermediate/Higher NEETs and pre-NEETs; Enterprise Skills for the unemployed Community Grants	TCHC TCHC Working Links Futures
DWP Opt-in	Access to Employment for job-seekers and inactive people <i>(including basic skills)</i>	Working Links
Big Lottery Opt-in	Neets, ex-offenders, complex needs Troubled families, 50's +, homeless	Goodwill Solutions University of Northampton