

European Funding - Update October 2007

EU Funding 2000 - 2006 - Objective 1 and Interreg 111a

- The majority of funding available in the current round has already been allocated
- Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) is tracking delivery of projects very closely, with the aim of identifying potential under-spends at the earliest opportunity
- Under-spends are generally being offered to existing projects for either enhancements or extensions of time
- Voluntary/community groups running existing projects are advised to register an expression of interest with WEFO, in the event that additional monies do become available
- Some unallocated monies may remain in “indirect” funds e.g. Social Risk Fund administered by WVCA and Cydcoed administered by the Forestry Commission

EU Funding 2007 - 13

Wales plans for the next round of funding have been submitted to the EU. Following negotiations most plans have now been agreed.

Pembrokeshire will benefit from 4 main EU funding streams

- Convergence - the replacement for Objective 1
- Ireland /Wales Cross-Border Co-operation - the replacement for Interreg
- Rural Development Plan
- Fisheries

As it becomes available WEFO is publishing up-to-date guidance on it's website [www.wefo.wales.gov.uk]

Convergence

Following a review of the 2000 - 2006 programme, many changes are to be made.

- Projects will need to contribute to the Lisbon agenda [jobs and growth] and the Gothenburg Agenda [climate change and environment sustainability]
- Projects will need to address Welsh Assembly Government strategy, especially *Wales A Vibrant Economy*
- Projects will be fewer, larger, often regional, and linked together through Strategic Frameworks
- Processes will be simplified with a single on-line application form and named WEFO staff allocated to individual projects
- There will be a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation
- More investment in R&D, innovation, skills, entrepreneurship, ICT, sustainable transport and environmental technologies
- Less investment in general urban, rural and community led regeneration and non-employment focused social inclusion measures

Programme Vision— ‘To create a high skill, knowledge driven economy, with full employment, a skilled, adaptable workforce and responsive businesses, at the cutting edge of sustainable development.’

9 main priorities have been identified. These are being developed into operational programmes. There will be no ‘measure level’ as with Objective1, but there will be ‘themes’ which are being developed into Strategic Frameworks by named lead coordinating organisations - either WAG Directorates or Spatial Planning Partnerships. Draft Strategic Frameworks are currently being consulted on prior to approval by the Programme Monitoring Committee.

It proposed that there will be 5 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) [largely capital - funded] priorities and 4 European Social Fund (ESF) [largely revenue-funded] priorities. Technical assistance monies will be used to fund administration of the programmes. This will include the provision of regional Spatial European Teams, who will provide locally accessible support.

NB The figures in brackets show the % allocation and the indicative EU grant value.

ERDF Priority 1: Building the knowledge based economy (25.1%)

- R&D, innovation and technology (£155m)
- ICT infrastructure and Information society for all (£60m)

ERDF Priority 2: Improving business competitiveness (15.4%)

- Entrepreneurship and business growth (£62m)
- Business finance (£70m)

ERDF Priority 3: Developing strategic infrastructure (26.4%)

- Sustainable transport (£147m)
- Strategic infrastructure (business and education) (£79m)

ERDF Priority 4: Creating an attractive business environment (18.4%)

- Renewable energy (£54m)
- Environmental risk management (£52m)
- Environment for growth (£52m)

ERDF Priority 5: Building Sustainable communities (12.6%)

- Physical regeneration (£77m)
- Community economic development (£31m)

ERDF Priority 6: Technical Assistance (approx 2%)

ESF Priority 1: Supplying young people with the skills needed for employment (19.8%)

- Tackling underachievement in schools (£79m)
- Raising skills and aspirations (£34m)

ESF Priority 2: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity (34.4%)

- Helping people into sustainable employment (£180m)
- Helping people to remain and progress in employment (£16m)

ESF Priority 3: Improving skills levels and improving the adaptability of the workforce (39.9%)

- Raising the skills base of the workforce (£136m)
- Higher level skills and systems for workforce development (£79m)
- Promoting gender equality in employment (£11m)

ESF Priority 4: Modernizing and improving the quality of our public services (4%)

- Transforming public services through collaborative working (£9m)
- Building capacity to deliver higher quality services (14m)

ESF Priority 5: Technical Assistance [approx 2%]

There will also be 2 cross cutting themes:

- Equal Opportunities for All
- Environmental sustainability

Details of the draft Strategic Frameworks have been published on the WEFO website. [<http://www.wefo.gov.uk/resource/Strategic%20Framework%20Contact%List8855.pdf>]

Points to note:

- Collaborative planning is considered essential—project collaboration is highly valued. Potential applicants are, therefore, invited to share their project ideas by posting them on the WEFO website.
- Formal Expressions of Interest will be requested later in October following a Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) meeting on 18 October. WEFO Project Development Officers will be allocated to project sponsors to provide ‘cradle to grave’ support and a single point of contact.
- Match funding—intervention rates vary
 - ERDF—overall 46.46% (range 44.73% to 50.64%)
 - ESF—overall 55.56% (range 50% to 57.34%)
- WEFO will require ‘delivery’ work to be offered through open tender on the ‘Sell2Wales’ website – this may provide opportunities for some groups
- Project selection and prioritisation criteria have been developed and published on the WEFO website. Most importantly, projects must demonstrate how they will contribute to delivery of Strategic Frameworks. Value for money, added value to existing provision, ability to deliver, partnership working, innovation and sustainability are among other essential criteria.

Ireland/Wales Cross Border Programme

Building on the success of Interreg 111a, the new funds (£36.9m) will continue to encourage cross border partnerships between Wales and Ireland. It is proposed that there will be a common intervention rate of 75% and that there will be only 2 priorities, each with 2 themes.

Priority 1 - Knowledge, Innovation and Skills for Growth

- Innovation and competitiveness
- Skills for competitiveness and employment integration

Priority 2 - Climate Change and Sustainable Regeneration

- Climate change and sustainable development
- Sustainable regeneration of communities

The first meeting of the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) is planned for 19 October 2007 with the first call for projects expected shortly afterwards.

Implementation plans will be posted on the WEFO website will be posted shortly. An Expression of Interest form is already available.

Rural Development Plan

The Rural Development Plan is not administered by WEFO but currently by the Rural Development Branch of WAG.

4 priorities have been identified:

Axis 1 - Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector

Axis 2 - Improving the Environment and the Countryside

Axis 3 - Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Axis 4 - LEADER - sustainable regeneration of communities through direct involvement of communities themselves

Axes 1 and 2 will be administered centrally but WAG has required the establishment of local partnerships to coordinate Axes 3 and 4. Pembrokeshire Advance, comprising representatives of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, first met in November 2006 and has had its high level Strategic Plan approved by WAG. Work is currently on-going to develop a detailed Business Plan 2008-10 for submission by the end of November 2007. Organisations who have previously delivered Objective 1 funded projects have been invited to submit project proposals. Pembrokeshire County Council is the overall Lead Body and has responsibility for Axis 3. PLANED, Pembrokeshire's LEADER group, is responsible for Axis 4.

Who to talk to?

PAVS has established a 3rd Sector Economic Development Network in order to update the voluntary and community sector on European Funding developments and to provide a reference group for voluntary and community sector representatives sitting on the Spatial and Rural Development Plan Partnerships.

If you wish to receive further information on EU funding, the 3rd Sector Network or to discuss your project ideas please contact

Fiona Walder, Assistant Director at PAVS Tel: 01437 769422

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Other sources of help include:

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