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Voscur*Supporting Voluntary & Community Action*

Skills, Worklessness and Employment bulletin

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Dear colleague,

Welcome to the sixth European Social Fund (ESF) bulletin for Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) in the South West Competitiveness area.¹ This bulletin summarises current ESF developments, with the intention of connecting regional policy makers with frontline organisations.

Supported by



1. The relevance of European Social Fund to Voluntary and Community Organisations

Voluntary and Community Organisations will have an opportunity to relate the relevance of ESF to their communities and constituents in October 2009 through an online survey. Your contribution to this survey will become part of a strong regional voice for VCOs across the South West, which will be championed by South West Forum with regional policy makers.

If you would like to influence the survey (are there some questions that need to be asked?) please contact Stephanie Guirten Stephanie@voscur.org with your ideas and we will pass them on.

2. Find out about the ESF 2010 programme

From 2010, ESF will change: a new regional framework will re-define the funding priorities. Come and find out about these changes, and discuss their implications with other providers and sub-contractors. The contribution of VCOs as sub-contractors will be championed, as will the unique benefits that they bring to ESF delivery.

The event will take place on 3rd December 2009 at Somerset College of Arts and Technology in Taunton. To receive an invitation to this event, please register your interest with Simon Charters at South West Forum simon@southwestforum.org.uk

SWF is inviting case studies in which a local VCO has successfully or unsuccessfully attempted to access ESF, either as a provider or a sub-contractor. What were the barriers that you faced, and how did you attempt to deal with them? Further details on the case studies will be issued in the next bulletin.

3. You can influence ESF policy – have your say now!

VCOS have an important voice in the development of regional ESF delivery. You can feed your concerns and recommendations to policy makers by commenting on the priorities listed below.

These will then be sent on to South West Forum and championed at the ESF Steering Group – a group that comprises of the principal ESF decision-makers.

Currently, the Regional Framework is being re-written for the second half of the ESF Programme, from 2010 to 2013. This

Framework describes the type of activities that ESF funds, and which VCOs (as providers or sub-contractors) will be invited to bid for. VCOs who wish to speak out about the types of projects they see emerging from ESF should think about whether the funding priorities listed below will fit with the needs of their communities and constituents.

The list is long , so we recommend that you:

(i) Name the 5 most important activities from your organisation's point of view (quote the number on the left-hand side that corresponds to the activity), and/or

(ii) Describe those activities not listed here which your community or constituents need in the area of skills, employment and worklessness.

Send your comments to Stephanie Guirten Stephanie@voscur.org

South West Forum will represent your views at the next meeting of the ESF Competitiveness Steering Group on 2nd November 2009.

Priority 1 (Extending employment opportunities)

- 1.Active and preventative measures which ensure early identification of needs, including individual action plans and personalised support.
- 2.Job-search help, advice and guidance.
- 3.Work search and work preparation activities, including labour market orientation and work experience placements.
- 4.Advice and support for self-employment, entrepreneurship, business creation and social enterprise.
- 5.Skills for Life, including the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages, ICT skills and, and financial literacy skills.
- 6.Activities to provide pathways to employment such as pre-vocational and access training, community based activities. Volunteering, environmental activities, practical soft skills (such as improving aspirations and motivation), work skills, and workplace skills (such as team working).
- 7.Vocational training and qualifications for employability.
- 8.Improving job brokerage to enable a better match between supply and demand.
- 9.Access to childcare and care for dependent persons, where caring responsibilities are a barrier to labour market participation.
- 10.Early interventions to help people at risk of redundancy to adapt their qualifications and skills for other employment opportunities.
- 11.City and other area-based strategies and initiatives to tackle worklessness in urban areas.
- 12.Activities to tackle specific barriers to work faced by unemployed and inactive people in rural areas.
- 13.Small grants for voluntary and community organisations to support their capacity to mobilise unemployed and inactive people who are disadvantaged or excluded and to facilitate their integration into the labour market (ESF community grants, formerly known as global grants).
- 14.Activities to help disadvantaged people who persistently return to Jobseekers Allowance, address barriers to their retention in suitable employment.
- 15.Activities to help unemployed and inactive people with disabilities or health conditions to enter and remain in work, and appropriate support to retain in employment people who become disabled or develop health conditions.
- 16.Activities to prolong working lives by re-engaging inactive older workers or retaining older workers longer in employment, including workers who become disabled or develop health conditions.
- 17.Activities to help lone parents, Jobseekers Allowance recipients with children and other disadvantaged parents enter and make progress at work, and so contribute to alleviating child poverty.
- 18.Mainstreaming and specific action to improve access of women to employment and increase sustainable participation and progress of women in employment, and to help men and women access occupations or sectors where they are underrepresented.

Specific to the South West

- 19.Activities to increase participation by people from ethnic minorities in employment including where appropriate training to meet basic English language skills needs.
- 20.Activities to develop the employability and skills of offenders and ex-offenders to facilitate labour market entry and, thus, contribute to reduced re-offending.
- 21.Activities my address the specific needs of people who experience multiple disadvantage, in particular those who fall within two or more of the indents above (for example older workers or lone parents with disabilities or health conditions). Activities may also address specific barriers to work faced by workless people who are homeless, refugees or have substance abuse, alcohol or drug problems.
- 22.Activities to prepare young people for working life, in particular 14 to 19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET may include:
- 23.Initiatives to reform vocational routes for, and develop vocational skills among, 14 to 19 year olds, including developing the vocational curriculum to improve employability.
- 24.Initiatives to help raise awareness of the world of work, enterprise and entrepreneurship among young people (from age 14), including work experience placements.
- 25.Activities to engage 14 to 19 year olds not in education, employment or training, tackle their barriers to learning, and help

them access mainstream provision.

26. Activities, including vocational training and preventative work, for young people at risk of becoming NEET to provide pathways to employment.

27. Activities to reduce youth unemployment by developing the employability and skills of young people.

Priority 2: Developing a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce

28. Activities to support access to and provision of apprenticeships.

29. Skills for Life including basic literacy and numeracy skills, ICT skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages and ICT skills.

30. Activities to support access and progression from foundation level up to level 3.

31. Training leading to level 2 qualifications (especially for people without current or relevant level 2 qualifications, part-time workers and workers in sectors with weak training records).

32. Training leading to level 3 qualifications in sectors where there are skills shortages at level 3, in small and medium sized enterprises (up to 250 employees), and for women and ethnic minorities in sectors and occupational areas where they are under-represented at level 3.

33. Lifelong learning and vocational training for low skilled and low paid women workers to improve their progression.

34. Training, mentoring and supporting men and women in occupations or sectors where their gender is underrepresented, in order to tackle gender segregation.

35. Training older workers in order to update their qualifications and skills and prolong their working lives.

36. Training for workers who face redundancy or have been made redundant.

37. Training in ICT and e-learning skills.

38. Skills for entrepreneurship, self employment and social enterprise.

39. Training in environmental management and protection skills and in eco-friendly technologies, including training which supports renewable energy sectors, energy efficiency and recycling.

40. Initiatives by the social partners to promote lifelong learning and skills in the workplace.

41. Initiatives to ensure the supply of skills are relevant to employers' needs.

42. Training of childcare and other care workers.

4. ESF as part of the broader Skills, Employment and Worklessness agenda

ESF fits into the broader context of skills, employment and worklessness for VCOs across the region. South West Forum sends out a monthly round-up of these issues aimed at the VCOs community in the South West. Subscription is free – just email sue@southwestforum.org.uk and request a subscription to the 'Skills, Employment and Worklessness' bulletin.

5. ESF ICEBreakers merge in Somerset and Dorset

Two ESF projects (branded as 'ICEbreaker' projects) which ran in Dorset and Somerset have been amalgamated to cover a single region-wide project managed by Kingston Maurward College. The justification is that this will enable the project to reach more employers and migrant workers. For further information, please see http://www.kmc.ac.uk/Student_Info/ICE

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