

Report on	1. Update on ESF Call 3 Match Funding Requests 2022/23
Date of Meeting	6 April 2022
Reporting Officer	Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism & Strategic Programmes

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Update on ESF Call 3 Match Funding Requests 2022/23</p> <p>The strategic aim of the European Social Fund (ESF) is designed to combat poverty and enhance social inclusion. It supports participants to progress into further education, training and ultimately employment through funding organisations to deliver programmes for the unemployed and the economically inactive as well as people with disabilities and young people not in education, employment or training.</p> <p>In May 2021, the Economy Minister launched a third and final call for projects to apply for funding under the NI ESF programme for the period April 2022 to March 2023.</p> <p>In July 2021, following receipt of four requests for match funding, Council agreed the provision of the following contributions, subject to the organisations being successful in their ESF funding bids to the Department for the Economy. The full amount of match funding each organisation was provisionally allocated from Council was reduced to fit within Council's £50,000 available budget.</p> <p>i) SUSE+ Up to £25,000 to South West College to deliver the SUSE Programme</p> <p>ii) Women Towards Education and Employment Programme Up to £12,500 to First Steps Women's Centre to deliver the Women Towards Education and Employment Programme.</p> <p>iii) Up for Work Programme Up to £6,250 to Network Personnel to deliver the Up for Work Programme.</p>

iv) Job Match Programme Up to £6,250 to Network Personnel to deliver the Job Match Programme.

These organisations required match funding support from a range of sources as part of a wider cocktail of funding to allow the employability schemes to commence. It was noted at the meeting that lead organisations may have the opportunity to secure match funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and that option was being explored by the Department for the Economy.

Council subsequently then also received four additional match-funding requests from Enterprise NI, NOW Group, Specialisterne Northern Ireland and Bytes, and it was agreed at a meeting of the Development Committee in September 2021 to defer consideration of these until further information on the provision of match funding is received from the Department for the Economy and the applicant organisations.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Update on ESF Call 3 Match Funding Requests 2022/23

Each organisation has now provided updated confirmation to Council of their match funding status for 2022/23, and details of their programmes and targets as outlined below (full detailed Proposals are attached in Appendices 1 – 4)

- i) **SUSE+** – Council offered up to £25,000 towards the project and South West College has confirmed that all other match funding is now in place

SUSE+ delivers skills development and employability support to help participants into further development, training, education and employment. The SUSE+ programme is a mentor led initiative with six mentors employed to support participants across the district. Whilst the initiative supports citizens in the urban areas of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon, assistance for rural dwellers is a key focus (& target) of the programme and is reflected in the spread of mentoring resources across the district.

SWC has secured ESF funding for a 1 year extension to the current programme. This will continue to be delivered in its current format and will again be collaborative in its approach and it is envisaged that the partnership, which was developed to deliver SUSE+, will be retained to deliver any new programme. It is now confirmed that all current partners including the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Radius Housing will continue to support SUSE+ for the year 2022/23.

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

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| ● 200 Participants (unemployed and economically inactive people) |
| ● 425 Qualifications achieved at Level 1 |
| ● 35 Essential Skills Level 1 Qualifications to be Achieved (Literacy, Numeracy and a strong focus on ICT) |

- 44 participants or 22% of participants to Enter Employment on Leaving the Programme
- 44 Participants or 22% of Participants in Employment Six Months After Leaving Programme
- 16 Leavers From the Programme Join Education or Training Programmes
- 294 Specialist qualifications attained

Programme Funding (2022-23)

Source	%	Amount	Status
DfE/ESF	65%	£543,685.23	Confirmed
DAERA	10.2%	£85,065.82	Confirmed
MUDC	2.99%	£25,000	Conditional
FODC	4.78%	£40,000	Confirmed
Radius Housing	2.99%	£25,000	Advised intend to support
SWC	14%	£117,687.82	Confirmed
Total	100%	£836,438.82	

The SWC has provided confirmation that, should Radius funding be less than intended, funding will be provided from SWC's own resources.

Recommendation: SUSE+

Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £25,000 to South West College for the period 2022-23, subject to the SWC providing confirmation of the final match funding package, verifying their capacity to deliver and commitment to the targets outlined.

- ii) **Women Towards Education and Employment Programme** – Council offered up to £12,500 towards the project. First Steps Women's Centre has now confirmed all their match funding is now in place

Women Towards Education and Employment Programme (WTEEP) (Lead organisation: First Steps Women's Centre)

This request is for match funding for their 'Women Towards Education and Employment Programme' (WTEEP). The Programme will provide a range of training including interview skills, ESOL, literacy and numeracy, health & wellbeing, progression and mentoring as well as a Job fair. FSWC will employ a Progression Worker to guide participants into further education and employment. The Progression Worker will also assist women in setting training and employment targets and working towards them.

Since 2015 FSWC has drawn down £2.5million into the Mid Ulster Council area, the majority from the European Social Fund programme, (£479k was for a capital refurbishment programme 2017-18). This capital investment has doubled the size of the Centre transforming it into a modern Centre with facilities including 4 training rooms and an onsite crèche. Furthermore, 219 women gained employment since 2015 as a result of attending FSWC. The additional

development of Wellbeing programmes has created a positive environment for many women to consider employment who had previously been labelled “Economically Inactive”. FSWC has now secured ESF funding of £287,146 for the year 2022/23.

Projected Outputs (2022-23)

- Interview & CV Skills – FSWC has liaised with Terex to provide Interview Technique training;
- 1 X Literacy & Numeracy – up to Level 1 for 25 women
- 12 X IT Courses for 120 women. These courses will range from Level 1 Sage Accounts & Sage Payroll, Microsoft Office, Excel and Beginners IT. There will also be introductory programmes including: iPad & Tablet, Digital Photography;
- 20 X Health & Wellbeing Programmes for 175 women – These are aimed at building up the soft skills such as Confidence, Resilience, Assertiveness and Communication;
- Progression & Mentoring work – FSWC will employ a Progression Worker whose role is to guide women into further education and employment. The Progression Worker will assist women in setting training and employment targets and working towards them;
- 1 X Job Fair – 25 organisations and 200-300 people attending.

Programme Targets (2022-2023)

Targets	2022-23
Job Creation	42
Qualifications	145
Number of Courses	39
Participants - places	264
Job Fair	1 event with 200-300 in attendance
Improvement in Soft Skills	225

Programme Funding (2022-23)

Source	Percentage	Amount	Status
Total Project costs	100	£441,763	
ESF	65	£287,146	Confirmed
First Steps Women’s Centre	16	£69,877	Confirmed
MUDC	3	£12,500	Conditional
The Pathway Fund	4	£15,000	Confirmed
Garfield Weston	6	£30,000	Confirmed
Weslyan Assurance	2	£9,940	Confirmed
Volant Charitable Fund	4	£17,300	Confirmed
TOTAL		£441,763	

FSWC have also submitted applications for match funding to the Dept for Communities’ Women’s Centre Childcare Fund and Community Initiative Fund and are awaiting the outcome of these. If these are successful, the contribution required from FSWC will reduce accordingly.

Recommendation: Women Towards Education and Employment Programme

Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £12,500 to First Steps Women's Group for the period 2022-23, subject to FSWC providing confirmation of the final match funding package, verifying their capacity to deliver and commitment to the targets outlined.

iii) Up for Work Programme (Network Personnel)

iv) Job Match Programme (Network Personnel)

Network Personnel has advised Council that it no longer requires Council match funding requested for these programmes, totalling £12,500 as this will now be provided by DfE

As noted above, four additional requests were received by Council, however, due to the limited budget available, Council is only able to offer the first two received up to £6,250 each, subject to confirmation of their final funding package being in place.

v) Exploring Enterprise Programme (Enterprise NI)

Exploring Enterprise Programme (EEP) is a pre-enterprise programme which supports participants from disadvantaged groups who are unemployed / economically inactive, or working or in training less than 16 hours per week to explore self-employment, to enter or return to the labour market. The programme is a mixture of group training and one to one mentoring support.

Participants do not need to have a specific business idea to join; the programme provides an insight into starting a business whilst allowing participants to work towards achieving the OCN endorsed Level I qualification in Understanding Business Enterprise. In addition, there will also be an emphasis with regards guiding and assisting individuals into and through the mainstream business support/further education options. Pre-enterprise support is an essential first stage in the continuum of support required to encourage entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland. The EEP will help boost the economy by initiating business start-ups and skilling individuals to become more employable.

EEP flexible design allows participants to receive support which meets their individual needs whilst remaining within the framework of a structured and programme offering, as follows:

Stage 1: Pre-Training Mentoring (6 hours per participant)

Stage 2: Training in groups (45 hours)

Stage 3: Post Training Mentoring (10 hours per participant)

Enterprise NI is in receipt of a ESF Letter of Offer from DfE for EEP (please see breakdown below).

Programme Targets (2022-2023)

Targets	2022-23
Courses delivered	4
Participants Enrolled (Receiving Pre-Training Personal Development Plans)	40

Participants receiving OCN Level 1 Understanding Business Enterprise Qualification	28
Participants exiting Into Employment (Including Self-Employment)	15
Participants exiting Into Further Education and Training	3
Participants In Employment 6 months after exit	17

Programme Funding (2022-23) – Mid Ulster

Source	Percentage	Amount
Funding from ESF / DfE	65%	£28,500.50
Enterprise NI own resources	21%	£9,096.42
Mid Ulster Council	14%	£ 6,250.00
TOTAL		£ 43,846.92

Regional match funding position

Funder	%	£	Status
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	100%	£459,892.20	
Department for the Economy	65%	£298,929.93	
Match funding (breakdown listed below) 24% Councils + 11% ENI/LEAs	35%	£160,962.27	
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	4.9	£22,741.31	<i>Going to committee in March 2022</i>
Ards & North Down Borough Council	2.1	£9,614.50	<i>Pending outcome of competitive process.</i>
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon borough council	3.3	£15,049.00	
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council	4.3	£20,000.00	<i>Agreed at L&D committee Feb 2022, to be ratified at full council in March 2022</i>
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	0.5	£2,500.00	
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	1.5	£5,852.31	<i>Pending outcome of competitive process.</i>
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council	3.9	£17,787.52	
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council	2	£10,000	
Mid Ulster District Council	1.4	£6,250.00	<i>Conditional offer</i>
Total Councils Match Funding	24%	£109,824.64	
Enterprise NI & LEA's	11%	£51,167.63	

Recommendation: Exploring Enterprise Programme

Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £6,250 to Enterprise NI for the period 2022-23, subject to ENI providing confirmation of the final match funding package, verifying their capacity to deliver and commitment to the targets outlined.

vi) Project VERVE (NOW Group)

Verve, NOW Group's flagship employment and training programme, is funded by the European Social Fund and has just completed its fourth year of delivery in March 2022. Verve is targeted at participants with learning difficulties/disabilities and/or neurodiverse conditions who need additional support in order to access sustainable paid employment opportunities or sustained voluntary opportunities. In March 2020 Project Verve was awarded the prestigious OCN Provider of the Year Award - <https://www.ocni.org.uk/learner-awards/learner-awards-2020>

VERVE provides participants with opportunities to avail of innovative pre-employment academy training courses, which fall in line with labour market trends. The academy model is a 12-week training programme that consist of both theory and practical learning methodologies. The experiential learning process, along with classroom-based theory allows participants to gain a holistic perspective of the vocation and delivers well trained, qualified participants ready to explore employment opportunities. Other tailored interventions include:

- A dedicated Employment Officer to help participants prepare for employment or volunteering
- Assistance to find the job participants want and support to sustain them in the new position
- Access to a range of training courses to help participants prepare for work, including; CV building, job search techniques, customer services skills, effective communication skills and essential skills
- Tailored career guidance and access to a job club

The amount requested will allow for the appointment of a full-time staff member, dedicated to the operational delivery of service provision within the Mid Ulster area. The match funding will also allow for a part time Skills Trainer, who will deliver accredited training within the Mid Ulster council area.

The NOW Group is in receipt of an ESF Letter of Offer from DfE for the VERVE Project (please see breakdown below).

Programme Targets (2022-2023)

Targets	2022-23
Participants supported	20
Participants increasing skills	20
Paid employment secured (over 10 hours)	5
Voluntary Jobs Secured	5
Jobs sustained over 6 months	4
Participants gaining a vocational qualification (Level1 / 2)	16
Participants gaining work experience	16
Local employers engaged and offering support	45

Programme Funding (2022-23)

Source	%	Amount	
Total Project costs	100	£1,301,526.48	
Department for the Economy	65	£845,992.21	
DfC (Department for Communities)	13	£175,000	<i>Confirmed</i>
Ards & North Down Council	2	£25,000	<i>Conditional offer</i>
Antrim & Newtownabbey Council	2	£25,000	<i>Conditional offer</i>
Mid & East Antrim Council	2	£25,000	<i>Confirmed</i>
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	2	£25,000	<i>Confirmed</i>
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	2	£25,000	<i>Conditional offer</i>
Mid Ulster District Council	0.5	£6,250	<i>Conditional offer</i>
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	0.7	£10,000	<i>Confirmed</i>
BHSCT	7	£90,000	<i>Confirmed</i>
Self-Match (NOW)	3.8	£49,284	<i>Confirmed</i>
TOTAL		£455,534	

Recommendation: Project VERVE

Based on current budget constraints, projected outputs / outcomes and funding package, it is recommended to approve a financial commitment of £6,250 to the NOW Group for the period 2022-23, subject to NOW Group providing confirmation of the final match funding package, verifying their capacity to deliver and commitment to the targets outlined.

Requests from the organisations below were also received, however, there is no match funding now remaining in Council's budget to resource these.

vii) Specialisterne NI - £8,225

viii) Bytes Project - £25,000

Members should note that, going forward, funding of this nature (i.e. for the provision of employability and skills support) would be within the remit of the recently established Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership. It is anticipated that the LMP's 3-Year Action Plan will have a specific budget set aside for a competitive process whereby submissions will be invited from organisations to outline how they propose to meet the objectives of the Mid Ulster LMP in addressing employability and skills issues in Mid Ulster.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial:

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£50,000 is available from Council's economic development budget for the period 2022/23

Human:

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Officer time in managing and monitoring the programmes

	Risk Management: Programmes are regularly monitored by staff.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <p>Update on ESF Call 3 Match Funding Requests 2022/23</p> <p>Approve the four contributions as outlined below for the period 2022/23, subject to the project promoters providing confirmation of their final match funding package being in place, verifying their capacity to deliver their projects as outlined and committing to achieving the targets as detailed in their proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Approve up to £25,000 to SWC for the SUSE+ Programme for the period 2022/23 (ii) Approve up to £12,500 to First Steps Women’s Centre for the Women Towards Education and Employment Programme for the period 2022/23 (iii) Approve up to £6,250 to Enterprise NI for the Exploring Enterprise Programme for the period 2022/23 (iv) Approve up to £6,250 to the NOW Group for the VERVE Project for the period 2022/23 (v) Approve that officers write to Specialisterne NI and Bytes to advise that Council has no available budget in 2022/23 to fund their requests.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 – SUSE+ Programme (South West College)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Women Towards Education and Employment Programme (First Steps Women’s Centre)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Exploring Enterprise Programme (Enterprise NI)</p> <p>Appendix 4 – VERVE Programme (NOW Group)</p>