

BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

ESF OBJECTIVE 3

TENDERING PROSPECTUS PHASE 2

APRIL 2002



INDEX

1	Introduction	3
2	The Role of the LSC	3
3	What is ESF?	3
4	What is Co-financing?	4
5	Invitation to Tender.....	5
6	Submission of Applications	7
7	Soft Outcomes.....	8
8	Appraisal and Selection framework.....	10
9	Appraisal and Selection of Projects.....	12
10	Tender Results	13
11	Tendering Timetable	13
12	Additional Information and Support	14

1. INTRODUCTION

This tender prospectus sets out the priorities of Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Co-financing Plan and requirements for the next bidding round.

2. THE ROLE OF THE LSC

The LSC is a national organisation with 47 local offices. The role of the LSC is to raise participation and attainment through high quality education and training that puts learners first. Its key objectives are to:-

- I Extend participation in education, learning and training.
- li Increase engagement of employers in workforce development.
- lii Raise achievement of young people.
- Iv Raise achievement of adults.
- V Raise quality of education and training.

Birmingham and Solihull LSC have developed a local strategic plan to address these key objectives within the context of the local economy. A summary of the Birmingham and Solihull strategic plan is available from Birmingham and Solihull LSC.

For the third tendering phase, in June 2002 work has begun to ensure that the activity for co-financing more accurately reflects the priorities of the Birmingham and Solihull LSC strategic plan.

3. WHAT IS ESF?

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of four main structural funds set up to help reduce differences in living standards between the regions of the European Union (EU), by:

- Reducing unemployment;
- Improving and developing the skills of employed people;
- Investing in industrial or rural areas which are in decline; and
- Investing in areas with low economic development.

This prospectus deals with Objective 3 ESF which is a national programme and applies to all of the West Midlands region.

ESF Objective 3 between 2000 and 2006 aims to support 5 policy field activities:-

- Active labour market policies;
- Equal opportunities for all and promoting social inclusion;
- Improving training and education, and promoting lifelong learning;
- Adaptability and entrepreneurship; and
- Improving the participation of women in the labour market.

4. WHAT IS CO-FINANCING?

In the past there have been difficulties in the way ESF resources have been administered. ESF pays for a proportion (usually 45%) of a project's costs. The remaining amount (usually 55%) is known as match funding. Colleges, training providers and others had to bid and subsequently account to separate bodies for ESF money and 'match funding'.

This has increased their administrative workloads and costs. Some providers have been unable to secure the necessary match funding with the effect that potentially valuable projects have not been delivered. ESF support is available on a project-by-project basis. This has made it difficult to strategically plan and allocate funds in a way that adds value to the programme.

Co-financing is the bringing together of both ESF money and the required match funding in a single pot for providers to access as a single funding stream. Co-financing organisations (CFOs), are approved organisations who are given ESF budgets direct from the Government Office, to act as intermediaries for co-financing.

As a Co-financing Organisation the LSC is responsible for:

- Submitting the Co-financing Plan to Government Office
- Drawing down funds from Government Office
- Contracting Co-financed projects with local providers
- Collating and reporting monitoring information to Government Office
- Preparing the project closure report and final claim
- Ensuring that ESF publicity regulations are met
- Making payments to providers
- Audit, performance and quality monitoring of provider
- Overall evaluation

It is intended that Co-financing will:

- Promote greater co-ordination and targeting of provision;
- Reduce bureaucracy, and the administration burden on providers;
- Allow for innovation and creativity at regional and local levels;
- Place more emphasis on the quality of provision;
- Ensure more systematic monitoring of provision; and
- Ensure that ESF money adds more value to the delivery of Government programmes

The LSC has submitted its Co-financing Plan to the Government Office for the West Midlands. This Plan explains Co-Financing priorities for the Birmingham and Solihull area for the next 3 years. To submit an application it is essential you familiarise yourself with the summary of the Co-Financing Plan to ensure your project fits in with local priorities.

Birmingham City Council is also a Co-financing organisation. They have invited proposals and are selecting their first phase projects. For further information please contact Audrey Holly 0121 303 3751.

5. PHASE 2 – INVITATION TO TENDER

Phase 2 is a very limited and targeted bidding round and aims to support proposals in only 2 measures for the period July 2002 – December 2003. It is designed to utilise the remaining 2002 co-financing budget and part of the 2003 budget and to support projects that meet gaps in proposals to date.

The details below explain the opportunities for applications in this phase.

NB A full tendering round will be launched on 10 June 2002 for all measures and for activities from January 2003 – December 2004.

5.1 TENDERING OPPORTUNITIES

“1.2.1. Tendering Opportunity”

Policy Field 1	ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES
Measure 2	To improve the employability of the long term unemployed, returners and young people of working age through targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and removing external barriers to labour market entry.
LSC Action 1	To provide customised training based on employers needs particularly in growth sectors (Medical Technology, Engineering Design, Food & Drink, Leisure & Tourism, Creative Industries, Retail, Construction and Health & Care) leading to employment opportunities. This training would include occupational skills development and would also include life, key and job preparation skills to maximise trainee employability. We would particularly welcome proposals supporting clients from within the Regeneration Zones.

ESF Allocation	£250,000
Beneficiaries	227
Job Outcomes	35
Progression to FE/HE	120
NVQs (Lvl 1/2)	136

Target Groups for Policy Field 1:

- 16-18 year olds in the labour market without qualifications, skills or work experience
- people without relevant work experience
- people who without guidance, counselling and training will remain unemployed
- people who are long-term unemployed
- returners to the labour market
- people who need integrating into the labour market, particularly lone parents
- those wishing to upgrade limited or inappropriate skills
- those with no or low qualifications
- people who previously worked in declining industries
- people preparing for employment transition to different work situations
- people experiencing a process of skills intensification in their current employment
- part-time, temporary and contract employees

Policy Field 1, Measure 2 RDP Actions being addressed:

- *Improving employability throughout the development of basic skills and recognition of prior learning.*
- *Providing support through integrated approaches, including the provision of vocational social and key skills.*

“3.1.1. Tendering Opportunity”

Policy Field 3	LIFELONG LEARNING
Measure 1	Promoting wider access and participation in lifelong learning (especially for those groups least likely to take part in lifelong learning activities and lacking basic and key skills).
LSC Action 1	To provide disadvantaged groups with enhanced access to key economic sectors (Health & Care, Professional & Financial, Construction and Creative Industries) by offering new routes into career specific training.

ESF Allocation	£300,000
Beneficiaries	362
Job Outcomes	22
Progression to FE/HE	135
NVQs (Lvl 2/3)	217

Target Groups for Policy Field 3:

- *unskilled and semi-skilled people with low or no levels of training*
- *employees of SMEs*
- *those without previous experience of learning beyond compulsory education*
- *older workers (where vulnerability is exacerbated by age)*
- *those wishing to upgrade limited, inappropriate or outdated skills*
- *those who require training to multi-skill or interdisciplinary training to develop their careers*
- *managers and technicians in growth sectors*
- *managers, owner managers, enablers and facilitators of change within SMEs*
- *employees in the supply chain of large companies*
- *part-time workers*
- *those wishing to acquire business skills essential for self-employment*
- *unemployed graduates/post-graduates*
- *those with no qualifications.*

Policy Field 3, Measure 1 RDP Actions being addressed:

- *Improving the quality and flexibility of local training including participation in lifelong learning partnerships*
- *Extending access through more innovative means, focusing on delivery to the community, family, and those in rural areas.*

- *Improve the positive inclination to train and for individuals to take greater responsibility for their own training, including the use of Lifelong Learning Partnerships and University for Industry*
- *Improving the employability of individuals, particularly low achievers and older workers*
- *Activities which seem to improve the positive inclination towards training which targets women and disadvantaged groups*

6. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

All tenders/applications must be submitted using the LSC Co-financing application form.

A word version of the application form can be obtained from Birmingham & Solihull LSC European Unit (contact details as below), or from the following internet site:-

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/localarmsdocs.cfm?contactid=33>

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that their application is legible. Birmingham and Solihull LSC requests that applicants use a word processor to complete their application where possible.

All tenders/applications received will be subject to a thorough appraisal and selection process.

The selection process has been designed to make sure that the best projects are chosen to meet the needs of the sub-region within the available budget. The system is also designed to avoid the duplication of activities.

Step One

To enable the LSC to plan the workload generated by applications following the deadline, applicants are requested to register their intention to apply by e-mail or fax to Birmingham & Solihull LSC by 10 May 2002, with the following information:

- Name of Applicant Organisation
- ESF Policy Field and Measure that your Application will be submitted under (see Co-financing plan summary for details)
- Estimated Total Project Costs

E-mail: andrew.dicken@lsc.gov.uk

Fax: 0121 345 4517

Step Two

Complete your application form. Please note that only legible forms will be accepted preferably typed/word processed (note that we will accept no more than 12 pages in total - Ariel font size 10). The application form is available electronically or on paper from the European Unit at Birmingham and Solihull LSC, or can be downloaded from the GOWM website at the following address: **<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/localarmsdocs.cfm?contactid=33>**

Step Three

Return the original application form (only hard copies of the form with original signatures will be accepted) along with two copies to:

European Unit
Birmingham & Solihull Learning + Skills Council
Chaplin Court
80 Hurst Street
Birmingham
B5 4TG

The deadline for receipt of applications in this round is 4:30pm Friday 31 May 2002. All application forms must be received by Birmingham & Solihull LSC by this time and date to be considered for funding.

7. SOFT OUTCOMES

The outcomes identified in this Prospectus relate mainly to hard outcomes (e.g. qualifications attained), however the importance of soft outcomes is recognised and we want to encourage these in addition to qualifications. So, whilst the LSC will be looking primarily for hard outcomes to be delivered, if a project can fully justify focussing solely on soft outcomes because of the nature of their client group, then the application will be considered on its own merits against the local strategic priority areas and ESF objectives.

Soft outcomes are outcomes from training, support or guidance interventions, which unlike hard outcomes, such as qualifications and jobs, cannot be measured directly or tangibly. The headings or groupings that may be useful in classifying 'core' soft outcomes are:

- Key Work Skills
- Attitudinal Skills
- Personal Skills
- Practical Skills

These outcomes, and some of the indicators that you might use to measure them, are highlighted in the table below.

Key Work Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acquisition of key skills, e.g. team working, problem solving, numeracy skills, information technology. • Numbers of work placements. • Lower rates of sickness related absence.
Attitudinal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased levels of confidence. • Recognition of prior skills. • Increased levels of self-esteem. • Higher personal career aspirations.
Personal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved personal appearance/presentability. • Improved levels of attendance. • Improved timekeeping. • Improved personal hygiene. • Greater levels of self-awareness. • Better health and fitness. • Greater levels of concentration and/or engagement.
Practical Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to complete forms. • Ability to write a CV. • Improved ability to manage money. • Improved awareness of rights and responsibilities.

This information has been extracted from the Institute for Employment Studies document 'Guide to Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled'. This document can be downloaded from the ESF News website. The website address is provided in the Sources of Information Section in this Prospectus.

8. APPRAISAL AND SELECTION FRAMEWORK

S = Criteria to determine the selection of projects

A = Additional information to support the appraisal and selection of projects and to identify where the project fits within the approved CFO bid.

O = Optional information

1	S	Activity focus	<i>How closely the proposed activity relates to what is described in the Birmingham & Solihull (B&S) LSC co-financing plan summary.</i>
2	S	Activity summary	<p>This should clearly identify:- <i>what</i> the project intends to do <i>who</i> is the target group for this project <i>how</i> it will support the B&S LSC co-financing plan summary <i>why</i> this is needed <i>how</i> the need will be addressed <i>who</i> is responsible for each element of delivery, evaluation and accountability.</p> <p>Innovative and creative approaches that fit in with the proposed activities will be welcomed.</p>
3	A	Geographic Area of Delivery	Identify which areas will be covered by this project: e.g. Birmingham and Solihull, Boroughs, Districts, Wards etc
4	S	Timescales Include start and end dates of project	Timescale should be realistic and, where relevant, should include sufficient lead in / development time to allow for activity design, planning, development of partnership etc. [Unless there are exceptional circumstances, they should fall within the dates specified in the B&S LSC co-financing plan summary].
5	S	Linkages / Partnership	<p>Where appropriate, proposals should provide evidence of a strong and effective partnership, involving key/ lead organisations where relevant.</p> <p>If linkages are not fully established then proposals should include details of which organisations will be expected / invited to participate and how this involvement will be secured.</p>
6	S	Added Value	This section should demonstrate how the activity will support and contribute towards the added value to mainstream provision, as described in the B&S LSC co-financing plan summary. It must be clear how the activity fits with mainstream activity if appropriate.

7	S	<p>Outcomes Please list the expected outcomes of the project (both hard and soft)</p>	<p>Outcomes should be realistic and clearly linked to strategic aims and activities. Total number of beneficiaries must be specified.</p>
8	S	<p>Activity Management</p>	<p>This section should demonstrate who, where and how the activity will be managed and delivered. As a minimum it should contain detail on the design and delivery of the activity, including information on supporting systems, where possible.</p>
9	S	<p>Financial Information Summary of costs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown of activity costs e.g. training, marketing, child care - Total costs <p>NB Where appropriate please indicate a unit price for activities to be undertaken.</p>	<p>Costs should be realistic and demonstrate good value for money. They should be clearly linked to aims and activities.</p>
10	S	<p>Cross-Cutting Themes (Please refer to the B&S LSC co-financing plan summary for more detail on these themes and the types of activity that should be included in this section.)</p>	<p>Proposals should clearly demonstrate how they will contribute to the cross-cutting themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Opportunities • Information and communications Technology • Sustainability
11	A	<p>Do you currently hold a contract with the Learning and Skills Council?</p>	<p>If providers do not currently have a contract with the B&S LSC, a separate contract capability exercise will need to be undertaken, if their project is selected. This may influence the future development of the project, for example, proposals may have to include/ increase capacity building activities. A contract will not be rewarded until Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council have satisfactorily assessed the contract capability of an organisation.</p>
12	O	<p>Other information</p>	<p>Other information felt to be important and not included elsewhere.</p>

9. APPRAISAL AND SELECTION OF PROJECTS

All applications received will be subject to a thorough appraisal and selection process. The selection process has been designed to make sure that the best projects are chosen to meet the needs of the sub-region within the available budget. The system is also designed to avoid the duplication of activities.

Appraisal and selection guidance notes have been included in this prospectus for information. It is essential that you read these along with the application guidance to maximise the chances of your proposal being successful. The appraisal and selection guidance shows the following categories against each question on the application form:

S – Question relevant to selection. Your response to these questions will be used to allocate the appropriate grade to your bid.

A – Additional Information. Although these questions will not be graded. This additional information is supporting text that is needed for the appraisal and selection process.

O – Optional Information. Other information felt to be important and not included elsewhere.

For information, an appraisal and selection sheet has been included in this application pack. This sheet will be used to award A, B+, B- and C status to applications.

A – Meets criteria; negotiate contract if funding available

B+ - Meets most criteria; could negotiate contract if some queries are satisfactorily answered

B- - Potential to be developed into a fundable bid in future rounds

C – Does not meet criteria; cannot be funded

Each project will be appraised by at least 2 members of Birmingham and Solihull LSC operational team staff who have some expertise relevant to the application, against the appraisal and selection framework (see section 7). Technical eligibility checks will be carried out by the European Unit.

When there has been consensus by at least 2 LSC staff members, all proposals relating to a particular measure will be reviewed at an appraisal panel where gradings will be justified with all staff involved in appraisals for each measure and the European Unit.

Projects will then be recommended for selection to the Birmingham and Solihull selection panel. This includes Birmingham and Solihull LSC Senior Managers and Executive Director.

GOWM and the RDA have been and will be invited to oversee the appraisal and selection process as well as additional actional scoutineers as appropriate. A full record of all the stages of the process and outcome will be documented.

The number of approved projects will be subject to funding availability, and where appropriate ranked according to the number of 'A's awarded.

10. TENDER RESULTS

Selected projects will receive a letter to engage in a negotiation process. **Selection is not a guarantee of funding.**

All selected applicants will be requested to submit a monthly profile of expenditure and outcomes/outputs before contract negotiation can commence. The speed of contract negotiations is reliant on the prompt submission of this information.

All applicants will receive feedback on their applications and a list of selected applications.

11. TENDERING TIMETABLE

Call for applications for Phase 2:

24 April 2002

Applicants to indicate their intention to submit a proposal:

10 May 2002

Applicants complete and return application forms:

31 May 2002

LSC staff undertake appraisal and selection process:

June 2002

Applicants are notified of appraisal and selection decisions and given feedback on outcome of decisions:

July 2002

Contract negotiations begin:

July 2002

Project activity begins from:

July 2002

12. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

As an additional support measure for potential applicants, please contact a member of the European Unit at Birmingham and Solihull LSC who can direct applicants to relevant support.

European Unit
Birmingham & Solihull Learning and Skills Council
Chaplin Court
80 Hurst Street
Birmingham
B5 4TG

For technical advice:

E-mail: Andrew.dicken@lsc.gov.uk or Paul.Harrington@lsc.gov.uk

Telephone 0121 345 4510 or 0121 345 4513
Fax 0121 345 4517

For general enquiries:

E-mail: Sue.Court@lsc.gov.uk

Telephone 0121 345 4508
Fax 0121 345 4517