

European Social Fund
Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan
For England and Gibraltar 2007-2013

**Updated for the second half of the ESF programme
period
(2011-2013)**

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Investing in jobs and skills

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1. Aim of this plan

1.1 This plan aims to provide the national European Social Fund (ESF) Sustainable Development (SD) Committee with a management tool and point of reference that will help it assess the progress that is being made in mainstreaming sustainable development in the England and Gibraltar ESF programme.

1.2 The aims and objectives of the plan are designed to help ensure that the ESF programme:

- complies with structural fund regulatory requirements concerning sustainable development and the environment; and
- fulfils its commitments to promote sustainable development through a dual approach to mainstreaming (by promoting the use of SD policies and plans as well as the delivery of a number of specialist projects - as described in the ESF Operational Programme itself).

1.3 Ultimately, the mainstreaming approach should help ensure that the ESF's key strategic priorities of promoting work and skills are delivered in a way which minimises any negative impacts on the environment by ESF providers as well as maximises positive impacts. In addition, the mainstreaming approach should help to support a number of environmental projects which promote jobs or skills.

2. Sustainable development in the context of the England and Gibraltar ESF programme (2007-2013)

2.1 In the operational context of ESF, sustainable development can be defined as development which provides:

- opportunities to allow everyone fulfil their potential (social justice);
- environmental protection and enhancement through the delivery of projects (environment); and
- skills that businesses demand and require – now and in the future (economy / labour market).

2.2 The strategic aims of ESF are to promote jobs and skills and to do so by targeting those with greatest need. These aims help to ensure that two of the three strands of sustainable development described above are at the forefront of the programme (with employment as a route out of poverty and the provision of skills training to support and sustain business). Legal and regulatory requirements concerning the promotion of equality and human rights also help to reinforce the social justice strand.

2.3 Given that two of the three strands of sustainable development are

inherent to the focus and delivery of the ESF programme, the main focus for sustainable development mainstreaming work in the current programme is on promoting the third strand of environmental protection and enhancement.

2.4 All ESF providers are required to consider how they deliver their services in terms of trying to reduce negative impacts and increase positive impacts on the environment. The ESF guidance manuals explain the main areas that need to be covered and in order to meet these requirements, CFO providers will need to:

- prepare environmental sustainable development policies; and
- prepare and deliver sustainable development implementation plans which turn the sustainable development policy commitments into action.

2.4 As far as possible, match-funded providers running under existing CFO contracts will be encouraged to introduce the environmental sustainable development standards described above and in the ESF guidance.

2.5 The ESF programme will also support a number of environment-specific projects (vertical mainstreaming) through both the innovative transnational mainstreaming strand of funding as well as through funding from Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5 where appropriate, for example, where they may support skills needs in key sectors in key sectors likely to impact on the environment.

3. How this plan supports Government policy on sustainable development as well as regulatory requirements

3.1 In February 2011 the Coalition Government published its vision for sustainable development : 'Mainstreaming Sustainable Development'. The Coalition Government aims to make sustainable development central to the way Government operates by:

- enhancing ministerial leadership and oversight;
- embedding sustainable development into policy making;
- leading by example through operations and procurement; and
- transparency and independent scrutiny.

3.2 Integrating sustainable development into the ESF programme supports a number of the measures described above. For example:

- the mainstreaming of Sustainable Development in ESF will be covered in the DWP mainstreaming business plan (which is currently being revised / developed);
- the mainstreaming approach also ensures that sustainable development is embedded in the planning delivery monitoring and evaluation of ESF; and

- the operational focus to mainstreaming sustainable development in ESF means that the procurement and contract management processes act as important levers for helping to ensure that sustainable development policies and implementation plans become an operational reality.

3.3 ESF Division and its CFO partners lead by example by integrating sustainable development into procurement and contract management processes within the ESF programme and in terms of wider procurement. DWP is one of the leading 'green' departments and has won awards for its commitment to promoting sustainable development. For example, DWP is the largest public sector organisation to achieve the Carbon Trust Standard.

3.4 Integrating sustainable development into ESF helps support the DWP's DWP Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which aims to achieve its vision of 'a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development' by ensuring that:

- sustainable development and climate change is mainstreamed within policy, planning and operations;
- legal compliance is maintained; and
- greening Government commitments are maintained.

3.5 The current ESF programme and future ESF programme will also aim to support the EU 2020 strategy which promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

3.6 The following website links provides details about structural fund regulations 1083/2006 (Article 17) and 1081/2006 Article 2 para 2):

<http://dwp.gov.uk/docs/reg-1083-2006.pdf>

<http://dwp.gov.uk/docs/esf-regulation-2007-13.pdf>

4. Progress made in the first half of the ESF programme (2007-2010)

4.1 Good progress has been made in mainstreaming sustainable development during the first half of the programme. Key achievements include:

- preparation and delivery of an agreed sustainable development mainstreaming plan, with regular meetings of the ESF sub committee and updates on progress for the national PMC;
- an annual reporting process in place with annual progress reports prepared and published;
- training on sustainable development delivered to all key CFO and MA staff in the first half of the programme through a national ESF technical assistance project part-funded by DWP;
- toolkits prepared for sustainable development which support the preparation and monitoring of sustainable development policies and implementation plans; and
- an increase in the importance attached to the cross cutting theme of sustainable development.

4.2 GHK Consulting Ltd who were commissioned by the ESF Evaluation Team to undertake an evaluation of the mainstreaming of sustainable development was published in June 2011. The evaluation report concluded that in terms of progress made against the original ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan:

- the profile of the sustainable development theme had been raised considerably in the current programme, following the increased emphasis from the Managing Authority (ESF Division) and leading to enhanced commitments at all levels. However, understanding of what the theme meant in detail varied;
- efforts to increase the knowledge and capability of MA and CFO staff to provide support have been successful , however, on-going organisational changes pose a risk in terms of losing these skills and experience, raising questions for subsequent activity concerning this theme;
- while sustainable development has become a highly visible cross-cutting theme, a series of issues were identified:
 - the process followed by many CFOs to monitor the implementation of sustainable development plans was often light-touch and piecemeal;

- CFOs faced the challenges of monitoring in the absence of quantified measures or good practice examples to measure provider progress against;
- despite efforts to promote vertical projects, comparatively few appear to have been funded, and those that were tended to be clustered in a few regions.

5. Key sustainable development mainstreaming issues for the second half of the ESF programme

5.1 The Sustainable Development Sub Committee agreed at its last meeting in December 2013 that the main focus for mainstreaming sustainable development for the remainder of the programme should be on carrying forward the lessons learned from the current programme into the next programme period 2014-2020. Aim 4 of the mainstreaming action plan below highlights this focus and refers to the working group that will be set up to consider how best to mainstream sustainable development into ESF in 2014-2020.

5.2 The national evaluation published in June 2011 made a number of recommendations which this plan aims to respond to, as far as possible, for example:

- continue to support commissioners and providers in understanding requirements for environmental sustainability in ESF when developing policies and implementation plans;
- in the context of change in the ESF infrastructure (re-organisation), future support should continue to include the use of the sustainable development toolkit and repeat training for CFO staff, extending the audience for the training to providers via local events should also be considered;
- review the current approach to monitoring providers sustainable development plans - again, in the context of available resources following infrastructure changes;
- seek to develop provider networks focusing on sustainable development – on a virtual or physical basis and funded through Technical Assistance;
- provide good practice examples of sustainable development policies and plans – to allow CFOs and providers to benchmark policies and plans against the best.

5.3 For vertical mainstreaming, the national evaluation made a number of recommendations for the current and future ESF programmes:

- to seek to increase the number of vertical projects in the current and next programme periods;
- to ensure that new guidance materials provide a working definition of what constitutes 'green skills and jobs' and examples of current vertical projects to illustrate potential activities and what can be achieved by participants;

- explore the opportunity to utilise the environment to support progress in other areas, for example, exploring the role of the theme for engaging hard to reach clients and promote effective approaches in new guidance material;
- provide access to specialist support and advice to help develop CFO strategies and prospectuses, where this is not available within the individual CFO; and
- build upon the work undertaken by the vertical projects to develop new CFO strategies and prospectuses where this is not available within the individual CFO.

5.4 The recommendations above are reflected in the aims and objectives of the action plan section of this document.

5.5 The original mainstreaming plan aimed for 100% of CFO providers and non-CFO provider organisations to have satisfactory SD implementation policies and plans in place. Although the latest progress report explains that good progress has been made towards this aim, it is still 'work in progress' and work will need to continue during the second half of the programme to improve delivery and performance in this area, in particular in terms of measuring progress in a way which is easier to understand than the benchmarking approach adopted in the first half of the ESF programme. A copy of the original ESF sustainable development mainstreaming plan is available at the following web-link:

<http://dwp.gov.uk/docs/esf-sd-main-plan.pdf>

5.6 Ideally, the second half of the programme may see more providers becoming 'exemplar' organisations whose approach to promoting sustainable development can be shared with other providers through the use of case studies and good practice examples.

5.7 The lessons learned from mainstreaming sustainable development in the current programme period will need to be used to inform the on-going development of this theme in the next ESF programme.

6. Arrangements for reporting progress

6.1 The method for reporting progress on mainstreaming sustainable development will continue to be through the annual progress reports presented to the national ESF sustainable development sub committee. Mainstreaming progress will also be reported to the national ESF programme monitoring committee by ESF Division on behalf of the sub committee.

7. ESF Sustainable Development Action Plan

<p>Aim 1 : To provide stand-alone guidance for new and existing CFO contract monitoring and compliance monitoring officers on assessing sustainable development policies and plans and to improve guidance for ESF providers as well – to ensure consistency with new sustainable development training delivered.</p>			
Objectives	Indicator (to be achieved)	Indicator Profile	Who / When?
<p>2. To produce stand-alone guidance on ESF Sustainable Development Policies and implementation plans, particularly on monitoring progress.</p>	<p>Number of guidance manuals on ESF website updated for SD policies and plans.</p>	<p>Target : Two guidance manuals (CFO and non CFO)</p> <p>Profile Achieved : TBC</p>	<p>ESFD March 2013</p>
<p>3.CFOs to tailor and pilot the guidance.</p> <p>The guidance to be reviewed in light of the pilot exercise.</p>	<p>Number of CFOs tailoring guidance</p> <p>Number fo CFOs piloting guidance</p> <p>Joint ESFD/CFO review meeting on guidance</p>	<p>Target : 3</p> <p>Profile achieved : TBC</p>	<p>ESFD and CFOs March – June 2013</p>

Aim 2 : To increase the `specialist' ESF provision which supports green skills and jobs or has some other environmental focus (e.g. recycling) whilst helping disadvantaged people find work or learn basic skills.

Objectives	Indicator (to be achieved)	Indicator Profile	Who / When?
<p>1. To prepare and publish good practice guidance in delivering specialist / environmentally-focused ESF projects. The guide to draw upon examples of ESF projects, including, where possible / available, examples of sub-contractors who have an environmental focus, including ESF Leader Award winners.</p>	<p>Good practice guidance produced.</p>	<p>Target : 1 Profile: TBC</p>	<p>ESFD, April 2013</p>
<p>2. To ensure that CFOs notify their providers of the guidance produced above and encourage their providers to consider the merits of working with local, environmentally-focused providers / organisations when delivering their projects .</p>	<p>Number of CFOs who have notified their providers of the guidance</p>	<p>Profile : NOMS - TBC SFA -TBC</p>	<p>ESFD / CFOs with bidding rounds, April – May 2013</p>

Objectives	Indicator (to be achieved)	Indicator Profile	Who / When?
3. To promote specialist sustainable development provision through the annual ESF SD Mainstreaming Leader Awards	Number of specialist national awards presented at 'National skills showcase 2012'	Target : 1 Profile : 1 / year (since 2010)	ESFD, Awards to be launched May 2013, date of award ceremony TBC

Aim 3: To continue the high level of commitment to promoting and embedding the mainstreaming approach for the sustainable development theme in the second half of the programme.			
Objectives	Indicator (to be achieved)	Indicator Profile	Who / When?
1. To continue to report annually on the progress that is being made in mainstreaming sustainable development – with progress to be covered in the AIR and the annual ESF SD mainstreaming progress report. The report will include indicators on policies and plans .	Number of progress reports produced	Target : 1 (annually)	ESFD, December 2012
2. To identify, share and publicise good practice in mainstreaming SD in ESF and to highlight specialist provision in publicity material and guidance material during the second half of the programme. Publicity material to include Leader awards to promote examples of projects delivering specialist provision.	Number of new examples on ESF-works website (by calendar year)	Profile : TBC	ESFD, ongoing ESFD, ongoing

Aim 4: To identify lessons learned from mainstreaming sustainable development during 2007-2013 programme period and to ensure that these are used to inform proposals for mainstreaming sustainable development in the next ESF programme period (2014-2020).

Objectives	Indicator (to be achieved)	Indicator Profile	Who / When?
<p>1. The evaluation synthesis report, which is due to be prepared in 2013, to include a section reviewing the mainstreaming of sustainable development in ESF.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>ESF Evaluation Team, 2013</p>
<p>2. ESF Division to set up a working group to consider the lessons learned from mainstreaming sustainable development in the current programme and how these lessons can best be used to inform the development and ex-ante evaluation of the new ESF programme in 2014-2020. The working group to prepare a brief report for the national ESF SD sub-committee and the national ESF Programme Monitoring Committee.</p>	<p>Working group established</p> <p>Report on findings with recommendations for future action.</p>	<p>Target = 1 Profile= TBC</p> <p>Target = 1 Profile = TBC</p>	<p>ESFD – working group to be established by April 2013</p> <p>Report on findings and recommendations to be prepared and circulated to relevant partners by June 2013</p> <p>Working group to report to ESF SD sub committee by December 2013.</p>