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EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND ENGLAND 2014 TO 2020 PROGRAMME

Questions and Answers in relation to the Lump Sum Digital Interventions Calls published by the ESF Managing Authority and the Greater London Authority – Call references: OC00S20X1772 and OC23S20X1774

This Q & A published by the ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority relates specifically to the Lump Sum calls for Digital Interventions, and needs to be read in conjunction with the Call Specifications. It has no application to any other calls / activity within the ESF Programme.

Question 1

The call refers to equipment being loaned to participants – is there an expectation of what will happen to the equipment at the end of the loan period?

As the published call states the equipment is made available to participants via a loan arrangement. This is not based on project length and may be determined by factors including individual employment and economic status. The equipment remains the property of the Grant Recipient running the project.

Question 2

As the devices are to be retained as assets held by the Grant Recipient, are we able to re-use them?

Once the project identifies that the participant has no further need of the equipment, it should be returned to the project, as they are owned by the Grant Recipient – not the participant. In addition, when they are returned, if they are still useable, they should be re-used for other eligible groups after that original loan – although we agree they would not form part of the outputs of the project, as this re-use would be long after the project is closed.

Question 3

Regarding the device tracking can you clarify if you are thinking of an internal tracking system (database or paper system) to see which participants have been allocated which device at that time or some type of GPS device tracking type system?

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An internal tracking system is required to keep track of the device. In addition, with regard to the device itself, device tracking is available for all devices and is a common feature for all operating systems such as Android (Google) IOS (Apple) and Windows10 (Microsoft). These features should be enabled as this also allows for devices to be remotely wiped should the device be stolen or lost.

Taking into account data privacy, applications should outline their measures to ensure that the tracking features are only enabled when devices are stolen / lost etc.

Question 4

Can you confirm whether every participant must be provided with a digital device and dongle or are we able to provide some participants with just one or the other?

Participants should be provided with the devices and data that they need. An individual may have a device, but no access to the internet or may have Wi-Fi accessibility, but be without a device. Therefore, it may be appropriate to provide some individuals with both a device and data whereas others may only require one or the other. The target value is the number of participants supported not devices or data issued.

Question 5

In the call it says it will support 'human resource to assist participants to set up the equipment and understand basic functions'. Given the likely additional costs that will need to be incurred by organisations to administer the loans of equipment, set up costs before the equipment is distributed and cleaning / digitally wiping equipment afterwards, is it acceptable to include an administrative cost to help bidding organisations with these support elements?

Applicants are responsible for working out project costs based on all activities associated with the procurement of equipment, and the staffing / set-up costs. When developing a draft budget, it is important to factor in all activities to ensure it is realistic and offers value for money.

Question 6

As an organisation we currently have more than one ESF project. Do we need to submit an application for each specific ESF project separately or would it be

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possible to submit one organisational application and participants on any ESF project are then able to access this bolt-on digital support?

Yes, one application can be submitted. Your application should focus on how you will engage with mainstream ESF projects to offer support to their participants.

Question 7

When making the application, do we need to make clear which ‘mainstream’ projects are linked to the digital project and what the number of participants from each ‘mainstream’ ESF project will be?

A single Lump Sum Digital Intervention Project can deploy devices/dongles to eligible ESF participants in any number of projects; the ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority are not asking, in applications, for confirmation of which ‘mainstream’ ESF projects are linked to the digital project, nor do they need precise numbers from each mainstream project – these will only be needed at claim stage as part of the monitoring return. However, the project is required to provide the Managing Authority / Greater London Authority with some information/assurances about how they will ensure they are not duplicating the provision of other Digital Intervention Projects which may operate in the same area or target the same ‘mainstream ESF projects’.

Question 8

Can you please confirm that an application can provide kit to more than one ESF project?

Yes, a single digital intervention project can be the ‘bolt-on’ for several ESF projects.

Question 9

Do we have to know, specifically, which ESF projects will be allocated which number and if this changes is there flexibility to accommodate these changes?

You do not need to confirm which ‘mainstream’ ESF projects are linked to the digital project, nor provide precise numbers from each mainstream project – these will only be needed at claim stage as part of the monitoring return.

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Question 10

Do recipients have to register with the new – umbrella - project to receive the ‘kit’?

Recipients are required to register (using a referral process from the mainstream project) for the project to test that they actually need the equipment / data in order to be able to access online services. Participants should also have signed a declaration to indicate that they understand that the device is on loan.

Question 11

How should the connection with the original ESF project be evidenced on the new programme – will any ESF project live during the project period be eligible if named in the application?

As part of the claim process Grant Recipients will be asked to submit a tailored Dual Forecast form, which includes specific detail on the participants, the ‘mainstream’ ESF project they are working with and their unique identifier from that project – which will be checked (along with the referral paperwork from that mainstream project) as part of the verification process. As previously stated, the ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority are not asking, in applications, for confirmation of which ‘mainstream’ ESF projects are linked to the digital project, nor do they need precise numbers from each mainstream project – these will only be needed at claim stage as part of the monitoring return.

Question 12

We have a query regarding applicant eligibility. We want to know if this call will accept bids that bolt-on to existing ESF contracts, for which the organisation applying is not the lead delivery organisation? In other words, can a delivery partner/subcontractor submit an application under this call as a lead applicant, or does the application need to be submitted by the lead delivery organisation for the contract that this additional service would be bolted-on to?

A delivery partner/subcontractor can submit an application under this call as a lead applicant.

Question 13

Can you confirm that the digital devices/data/support can be made available to ESF participants supported via Co-financed Education and Skills Funding

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Agency (ESFA) projects as well as those on projects funded directly by the Managing Authority / Greater London Authority?

The call is seeking applications to provide digital intervention support to ESF participants including those receiving support via a Co-financing Organisation or a Direct Bid project.

Question 14

We are in receipt of ESF funding through a Community Led Local Development (CLLD) project.

We are keen to apply for the Lump Sum Digital Interventions Call to work alongside our grant. Is this something we can directly apply for or would it have to be through CLLD?

Whilst Lump Sum Digital Intervention Projects may seek to support participants already enrolled in specific current ESF projects, for example a CLLD project, they are treated as a completely independent project. Therefore, the potential Grant Recipient would need to apply by submitting an application directly in response to this call.

Question 15

The call specification says that this is a 'Lump Sum' does this mean that if we fail to deliver the outputs we forecast in our application, our entire claim will be invalid and we would not therefore receive any payment in arrears?

The Lump sum is based on achieving the minimum target criteria that you have specified in your application. In order to draw down funding you must achieve your minimum forecast. If you fail to deliver the forecasted Outputs, then you cannot draw down any funding. If an applicant fails to meet their minimum forecasts, then they would not be eligible to claim. To use the example in the call, if you forecast 500 participants supported and achieve 450 you would not have met the requirements to make a claim.

Question 16

Can you please tell me if there is an advance payment to this grant or what is the payment schedule to this?

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The payment is made wholly in arrears, after the first (and only / final) claim is made in February 2021 – there is no advance, and no ‘stage’ payments – and applications will only be eligible to claim if they deliver their minimum number of outputs.

Question 17

As the call is clear all activity must be completed by 31st December 2020 can you give any guidance on what would be the best procurement route to take?

The ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority cannot provide specific procurement advice. Applicants are advised to follow the procurement guidance provided in paragraph 1.2 in the call.

Question 18

Existing clients - At what point/date is a client existing? The day after the date of the application submission? If we sign up new clients in the period and can deliver the equipment etc. in time – are they counted?

The ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority have confirmed in the call specifications that in order to be assisted under this call, individuals should be participants in another ‘mainstream’ ESF project – therefore the eligibility of an individual is based on whether they are an eligible participant on a mainstream project at the point at which the digital project helps them. They do not need to have been registered on that project before the application for the digital project was submitted, but they must have completed their ‘registration’ and eligibility checks on the mainstream project before they can be referred to the digital project.

Any individuals referred from those ‘mainstream’ projects can be counted as being assisted by the digital project, as long as they have received the device / data before the end of the project activity in December 2020.

Question 19

These devices are on loan. Where is the liability if lost, stolen or none recoverable?

The call requires projects to procure the equipment and equip ESF participants through a loan agreement. Projects are responsible for any costs related to equipping participants with the equipment and its retrieval. The equipment remains the property of the Grant Recipient and safeguards must be built in to cover eventualities such as loss, damage or theft. As set out in section 5.16 of the

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applicant guidance, published alongside the call, applicants are required to complete a risk assessment to include mitigating actions to manage the risk of loss of equipment for participants and staff.

Question 20

Is there a need to get the devices insured or is this included in the funding?

Applicants are responsible for working out project costs based on all activities associated with the procurement of equipment, and the staffing / set-up costs. When developing a draft budget, it is important to factor in all activities to ensure it is realistic and offers value for money. The devices are the property of the project, any costs for insurance should be factored as part of the project costs prior to submitting an application.

Question 21

If a device is stolen from a recipient can this be replaced?

As the devices are the property of the Grant Recipient, it is entirely at their jurisdiction whether to replace the device or not. It should be noted that this would be at their own cost. It is important to note that only one participant could be claimed for Output CV31. As set out section 5.16 of the applicant guidance, published alongside the call, applicants are required to complete a risk assessment to include mitigating actions to manage the risk of loss of equipment for participants and staff.

Question 22

Will the project need to produce job descriptions for required roles?

Organisations applying against this particular call specification are not required to provide job descriptions as part of their application.

Question 23

Can claims for the procurement of laptop or tablets include refurbishment costs for existing equipment currently owned by delivery organisations?

The procurement arrangements as set out in the call will enable projects to secure devices which are fit for purpose. Equipment / data devices must be procured in line with the guidance as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the published call and with EU

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regulations. Refurbished devices must not have been previously bought with ESF funds, funds from any other public grant or public money and the refurbishment costs must not be more than a new device. Refurbished devices must have a useful asset life, with supported operating systems and software, which meet the technical requirement of the call.

Question 24

In regard to the timescales of these projects, is there any flexibility?

There is no flexibility to extend call closure dates or project timescales. Priority Axis 4 has been established to specifically fund support needs which respond directly to the impacts of COVID-19. In line with the terms of the easement provided by the European Commission, the Priority Axis is valid for the European Commission's 2020/2021 Financial Year only.

To ensure we are able to submit claims to the Commission by the June 2021 deadline, all activity for participants to take receipt of the equipment must be completed and all expenditure defrayed by 31 December 2020. The ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority recognise that use of the device and the data allowance will continue past 31 December 2020, dependent on the date the equipment is provided.

Question 25

Are we able to use frameworks to procure or direct award or if we are bound to tender for this work for a period of 30 days?

The ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority cannot provide specific procurement advice. Applicants are advised to follow the procurement guidance provided in paragraph 1.2 in the published call.

Question 26

Can we have mirror agreements with all delivery partners re: Procurement requirements? If we do that would the ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority challenge us that we should have done that as one procurement activity because it is perceived as a 'value for money' issue?

The ESF Managing Authority / Greater London Authority cannot provide specific procurement advice. Applicants are advised to follow the procurement guidance provided in paragraph 1.2 in the published call. However, robust and transparent

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procurement is required to ensure that Grant Recipients consider value for money with regard to delivery partners and this must be reflected in any service level agreements.

Question 27

Can you please confirm how many participants you are expecting to support in London through the Lump Sum Digital Intervention programme? In the first email received, it stated that you were expecting to support 5,000 participants in London and in the most recent emails received this is now 10,000 participants in London. Please confirm so that we can gain a rough idea of budget available per participant? If we take the 5,000 participants figure against the £5,000,000 budget available this would be £1,000 per participant. If this is 10,000 participants then it would be £500 per participant.

Apologies, there was an error in the content in the original email sent. The number we anticipate in London is 10,000 participants. The correct figure was included in the call specification when it was launched.

Question 28

Please clarify what happens in the case of ESF Careers Cluster programmes. Here individual learners/pupils are not registered in the same way and do not have individual learner records (although their details are logged and retained for audit purposes). So, in these cases, through our liaison with the participating schools, equipment would be distributed to individual pupils where a need is identified and this would enable them to continue to engage with the Careers Cluster project and benefit from its activities. But because in this case it is the school and the individual pilot activity that is the recorded outcome and not the individual learners, there is not an existing ESF record for pupil. Would these learners still be eligible to receive digital support through this programme?

To be eligible for this call, participants must be claimed on a mainstream ESF project. Unfortunately, as you mention in your query, it is not the individuals that are claimed but the Careers Cluster itself so they are regrettably not eligible for this call.

Question 29

The call details states: However, it must be noted that, as a 'Lump Sum' project, if an organisation anticipates supporting 500 participants through the provision of the equipment and data, but only supports 450 by the end of the

project activity, it would not be able to draw down the funding, so you must ensure that you accurately forecast the outputs in your application.

a. For clarity does this mean that if you underachieve on the number of participants supported against your initial forecast you will receive no funding at all?

Yes, you must meet all the targets you apply for in order to claim any of the ESF grant. Any underperformance will result in no funding being reimbursed.

b. Are potential Kick start participants eligible to be supported through this programme?

Only participants that are eligible for ESF can be supported through this call. The participants must already be enrolled on a mainstream ESF programme at the time of receiving support.

c. Is digital skills assessment a suitable tool for evidencing need?

Participants can self-declare their digital needs for this call.

d. As long as all spend is defrayed by the 31st December 2020 can participants still be engaged and supported before the final claim submission on the 4th Feb 2021?

All participants must be engaged and equipment issued before the 31st December 2020. Any support after this date will be at the organisation's own cost.

e. Can you confirm that the 3 month support provided does not need to be completed before the claim submission date?

All equipment must be distributed to participants before the 31st December 2020, so this could be for 3 months from the 31st December.

f. Can you confirm that the equipment purchased can be used to support additional participants after the end of the scheme at Clarion and partners own expense? For example providing the equipment and 3 month data allowance to a whole new cohort of participants from February 2021?

The equipment will be owned by the Grant Recipient so can be used to support further participants, at the organisation's own cost.

g. If we engage more participants than forecast and the pot of funding is under spent will we be able to claim additional funds?

No additional funding will be available.

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Question 30

Within the ESF Lump Sum Digital Interventions Call MI Guidance it states on page 3 that the unit of measurement is in Euro. However the application form states that costs must be provided in GBP (£). Please can you confirm.

This is an oversight on our behalf. The currency is GBP (£).

Question 31

If the above programme fails to deliver due to a pandemic related issue like a second lockdown preventing delivery is there any contingency or does all risk associated with this scenario sit with a potential bidder?

Unfortunately not. As I am sure you can appreciate, there is a very limited timeframe to deliver any project. You must deliver what is agreed within the timescale laid out in the call specification. There is no room for slippage.