

Withdrawn

Delivery of The European Social Fund (ESF) 2014 to 2020 Programme ended on the 31 December 2023.
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European Union

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Social Fund

2014-2020 ESF Programme

Action Note

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New ESF Single-Stage Application Process

Who

LEP Area ESIF Sub-Committees and local partners, ESF Direct Bid applicants, ESF Managing Authority, Greater London Authority.

What

Introduction of new, Single-Stage Full Application processes across the ESF Programme for all Direct Bid projects.

Cleared

Dr Catherine Blair

Background

From the start of the ESF 2014-2020 Programme, the standard application process for Direct Bid Projects has involved two separate stages – an Outline Application and Full Application stage.

Whilst this approach has supported complementarity with the same two-stage process operated by other European Structural and Investment Funds in England, the ESF Managing Authority has been constantly seeking ways of increasing speed and efficiency across the application and appraisal processes.

Following recent use of Single-Stage Full Application processes for isolated, specific elements of the ESF Programme – e.g. Youth Employment Initiative calls, the ESF Managing Authority has agreed to adopt this approach across the whole of the Programme.

The use of a Single-Stage Full Application process aims to simplify access to ESF funding for applicants. It will also reduce the overall timescales from call publication to Funding Agreement, whilst continuing to ensure the quality and compliance of project proposals against the ESIF Core Selection Criteria.

The ESF Managing Authority is working with LEP Area ESIF Sub-Committees to ensure that calls already in development are adjusted to reflect the new, simplified, single-stage application process in line with the implementation date below.

Calls already submitted to the Managing Authority for publishing will also be amended to reflect the new single-stage process in line with the existing, expected timescales for call publication.

The current, business as usual process for Co-Financing Organisations is already a single-stage Full Application process, so there will be no change in this respect.

Timing

For all new ESF open calls published from Monday 29th October onwards, applicants will no longer need to submit an Outline Application. Instead they will be invited to submit a Full Application Form in response to each open call.

Gateway Assessment & Due Diligence

Applicants applying under a Single-Stage Full Application will still be subject to an initial Gateway Assessment and also Due Diligence checks.

If an applicant is rejected based on the Gateway Assessment or Due Diligence Checks, the applicant will be notified and their Full Application will not progress any further.

Effective Date of Expenditure

For organisations applying for ESF funds through the Single-Stage Application process, the effective date for incurring eligible ESF expenditure will be the day after the relevant open call closing date. Any expenditure incurred by an ESF Direct Bid project prior to this date is ineligible.

However, any expenditure incurred by an ESF applicant, up to and including the date on which an ESF Funding Agreement is fully executed, will be at the applicant's own risk.

Existing Outline Applications

For organisations who have applied for ESF funds or are in the process of doing so against a call specification which sets out a Two-Stage Application process this will be retained. This includes the existing definition on effective date for incurring eligible ESF expenditure.

The Managing Authority will seek to expedite the assessment of residual Outline Applications where possible, and will apply the guidance in place at the point the call was launched to Outline Applications already received or due to be received as a result of current open calls.

Contact

If you have any questions on the content of this Action Note, please contact ESF.2014-2020@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK