



EUROPEAN UNION

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European Regional  
Development Fund 2007-13

# Yorkshire & Humber ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-2013

## Technical Assistance Strategy

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## **1. Purpose of the Strategy**

This strategy sets out how Technical Assistance (TA) will be used within the Yorkshire & the Humber (Y&H) ERDF Programme 2007-2013 to fund activities that increase the quality and achievements of the Programme in line with the stated purpose and objectives of Priority 5 of the Y&H Operational Programme.

## **2. Background**

This strategy is in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of the European Commission. Specifically Article 46 which states that:

*'At the initiative of the Member State, the Funds may finance the preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control activities of operational programmes together with activities to reinforce the administrative capacity for implementing the Funds...'*

In accordance with the above, the key objective for TA in the Y&H Programme is to facilitate effective implementation and management of the ERDF Programme through supporting the work of the LMC, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) ERDF Programme Delivery Team, and where appropriate Y&H Programme partners, in implementing, monitoring, publicising and evaluating the programme.

The Y&H Programme has allocated the maximum 4% (€23,3743,238) of the total Programme allocation to TA.

TA cannot be used to support individual project delivery itself which must be funded from Priorities 1 to 4. Following guidance from central government TA can be used by partners to provide development and delivery support to project sponsors. This activity would be undertaken alongside the support provided by the ERDF Programme Delivery Team, rather than replacing this.

The Y&H Programme has two allocations, one for the phasing-in area of South Yorkshire and one for the rest of Y&H outside of South Yorkshire. Activity under each of the allocations must be monitored separately.

## **3. Activities**

The TA budget in the Operational Programme financial tables is 4% of the overall South Yorkshire phasing-in region allocation (€10,841,653) and 4% of the Y&H non-phasing-in region allocation (€12,501,585).

The ERDF Programme Delivery Team will ensure that the South Yorkshire ring-fenced TA resources are used to support the phasing-in region, and that the costs of regional initiatives (such as publicity) are apportioned commensurately with the level of investment within the relevant area.

***Funding will be across the following activity areas:***

### **i) Core Programme Delivery Team**

TA will be used to provide additional staffing resources within DCLG to support the delivery of the Programme. Staff may be based in either Leeds or South Yorkshire, depending on need. Phasing-in TA will be used to support staff based in South Yorkshire. Match funding for this activity will be drawn from DCLG funding for ERDF Programme delivery.

Staff will be used to undertake the following activities:

- ERDF Programme management;
- Development of investment frameworks;
- Provision of technical ERDF advice and support to project applicants;
- Support and advice to partners on identifying priorities, funding packages, partnership working, best practice and other specific themes and issues in the Programme as they arise;
- Overseeing the project selection process;
- Completing ERDF appraisals;
- Monitoring and evaluation at project and Programme level;
- Managing administrative systems and record keeping;
- Processing and payments of claims;
- Servicing the Local Management Committee (LMC) and LMC sub committees;
- Audit and compliance support;
- Article 13 verification work;
- Programme communications and publicity;
- Preparatory work on the Operational Programme for 2014-2020.

## **ii) Partner support**

Partnerships will require resourcing to enable them to engage fully with the administration of the ERDF Programme. The ERDF Programme Delivery Team will include staff with a specific partner support remit, however DCLG resources are limited and partners have expressed a desire to supplement the administrative capacity of the region for implementing the Programme with their own teams.

TA will also be available to communities of interest to support their involvement in the administration of the Programme, in particular the expenses incurred by the voluntary and community sector in supporting the Programme.

The strategy will include funding for the above by putting in place mechanisms for partners to bid for TA to support their work on ensuring the effective management of the Programme. TA cannot be used to directly support the delivery of partners' proposals.

Funding will be given for activity that has clear deliverables, is ERDF specific and demonstrates the added value resources will bring to Programme management. Partners must work closely with the core delivery team to avoid duplication of effort. Activity may include:

- Promotion of ERDF opportunities and awareness raising
- Assisting organisations to engage with the ERDF Programme and building ERDF capacity in local partnerships
- Supporting partnerships to integrate ERDF activity with relevant thematic and local strategies and activity
- Identifying, facilitating and supporting consortia/partnership proposals and alignment of resources

- Detailed and intensive support to project deliverers over and above that provided by the Core Delivery Team in relation to:
  - Application development and project design
  - Effective project implementation
  - Compliance with ERDF rules and regulations and Funding Agreement conditions
  - Addressing delivery and performance issues
  - Managing audits
  - Closing projects
- Provision of intelligence to inform Programme strategy
- Sharing best practice
- Preparatory work on the 2014-2020 Operational Programme

In order to deliver economies of scale, the presumption of this strategy will be that partnerships will pool resources wherever possible and appropriate (for example at local level). Partners will need to provide their own match funding, which will also need to be ERDF specific.

### **iii) Embedding Cross-Cutting Themes**

Activity under this theme will resource project developers and deliverers to ensure that activity funded through ERDF supports the cross-cutting themes of the Programme (Environmental Sustainability and Equality & Diversity).

Key areas of work undertaken will include advice and guidance on project design, implementation, awareness raising and knowledge sharing. Other activities funded through this theme may include: running cross-cutting theme related events, developing case-study material, contributing to bi-annual reviews, and resourcing reference groups in support of the LMC.

### *iv) Publicity and Best Practice*

The need for effective publicity for the contribution made by ERDF to the region is enshrined in the EU regulations. A publicity strategy will be drawn up to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of ERDF are widely publicised. The publicity strategy will identify the detailed activity, in short it will cover:

- Activities to inform and raise awareness of the opportunities available through ERDF
- Activities to inform and raise awareness amongst project organisers and programme managers of the responsibilities they have and the regulations they must comply with.
- Activities to inform and raise awareness amongst citizens of the role that ERDF plays in European Regional Policy and how ERDF management is executed in Yorkshire and the Humber.

- Activities to inform the programme partners and stakeholders about the programme's management, progress being achieved and raise awareness of issues that may impact upon its management and delivery.
- Publicise the achievements of the Programme.

#### **v) Linkages with other European Initiatives**

Technical assistance may be used to promote best practice and to improve linkages between ERDF and other EU initiatives. Example proposals include:

- Under 'CREST' guidelines, development of a strategy for joining up ERDF & non-ERDF funds. To be linked to European Strategy Board/Lisbon agenda priorities. Specific priorities could include climate change, demographic change and innovation to enable the region to position itself better for 2013.
- Support for the exchange of best practice including support to the Regional Interreg group. Opportunities to learn from best practice and where appropriate "roll-out" this experience.
- Support, communication, dissemination and awareness raising of activities that align to other European funding sources for example, ESF, FP7, RDPE, EFF, URBACT II and the SEN@ER network.
- Help raise awareness (through seminars, workshops and surgeries) among regional partners of non ERDF funding opportunities that can be linked to ERDF investments.

#### *vi) Evaluation, ongoing review and evaluation systems*

The EC regulations commit the Member State to undertaking an ex-ante and final evaluation of the Programme. Effective evaluation will however require that a programme of work is undertaken from the outset. It is envisaged that individual proposal evaluations will be funded as part of the overall costs of the intervention. TA will be used to fund Programme level evaluations.

The Evaluation Strategy will plan the evaluation requirements of the Programme, to be agreed by the LMC. DCLG may also seek Programme TA resources to contribute to the costs of evaluations commissioned nationally.

Evaluation work will be carried out by independent organisations identified by tender. Programme evaluation activity and the associated TA funding will be managed through the core Programme Delivery Team outlined in (i).

#### **vii) Monitoring systems**

Programme monitoring systems will be used to:

- collect data systematically;
- provide management information on a regular basis;
- monitor progress towards targets and aggregate these at higher levels;
- clean data, identify problems, inconsistencies, duplication and gaps in delivery;
- provide reports for onward transmission to the Managing Authority and the EU

Costs of the systems may include software development costs and data collection costs over and above the staffing resources provided through (i).

#### **viii) Indicator framework**

This theme may draw on TA to help develop the indicator framework for the Programme, in particular the indicators for the cross-cutting themes which have to be agreed by June 2008. Project sponsors will also need support in a number of areas, namely:

- Definitions and terminology
- Specialist support in setting and collecting gender and environmental indicators
- Taking remedial action where performance lags behind targets
- Self-appraisal and self-monitoring

Match funding for this theme is likely to come in the main from the core programme budget. However, partners may be asked to provide match funding for activities which are specific to their own projects or localities.

#### **Review**

The LMC will review progress towards delivering this strategy, and agree any amendments, at six monthly intervals.