



European Regional Development Fund

Yorkshire and The Humber ERDF Programme 2007-2013

**(includes South Yorkshire as a phasing-in region)
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Communications Action Plan 2012

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1. Introduction

Operational Context:

Article 69 of the Council Regulation (EC) n° 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 establishes the obligation for the Member State and Managing Authority of each operational programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund to provide information and publicise its operations.

Article 2 of Council Regulation (EC) n° 1828/2006 8 December 2006 establishes the Managing Authority's responsibility to prepare a communications plan to include, as a minimum, the following:

- the aims and target groups;
- the strategy and content of the information and publicity measures to be taken by the Managing Authority, aimed at potential beneficiaries, beneficiaries and the public, having regard to the added value of Community assistance at national, regional and local level;
- the indicative budget for implementation of the plan;
- the administrative departments or bodies responsible for implementation of the information and publicity measures;
- the indication of how the information and publicity measures are to be evaluated in terms of visibility and awareness of operational programmes and the role played by the Community.

The Communication plan has been reviewed and updated within the context of:

- 3 years operational experience of the 2007- 13 Programme
- Transfer of ERDF Programme management responsibility from the regional development agency, Yorkshire Forward, to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- Standardisation of ERDF processes and procedures across English ERDF programmes with a target implementation date of 1st April 2012.

2. Communications Aims and Objectives

2.1 Communication Objectives

In accordance with **Commission Regulation (EC) n° 1828/2006** Article 2 (a) the information and publicity measures in the Communications Plan of the Yorkshire and The Humber Competitiveness and Employment Programme for 2007-2013 will :

- inform and raise awareness of potential beneficiaries, authorities and organisations of the opportunities and benefits of joint assistance from the European Union and UK Government contained in the programme;
- inform and raise awareness amongst citizens of Yorkshire & The Humber of the role that European Structural Funds play in European Regional Policy .
- Update and inform Programme partners and stakeholders about Programme progress and raise awareness of issues that may impact on its management and delivery;
- Inform and raise awareness amongst ERDF Practitioners of the regulations and associated responsibilities in respect of information and publicity providing guidance and advice to help ensure compliance;
- publicise the achievements of the Yorkshire and The Humber programme to inform and raise awareness amongst citizens locally, in the UK and across the European Union of the projects benefiting from ERDF investment and the impact that ERDF projects have on the people , businesses and localities in Yorkshire and The Humber,

2.2 Specific communications objectives 2012

Communications in 2012 will take full account of the needs of the Programme given progress to date, and specifically address:

- Articulating the focus for the Programme 2012-13 taking account of progress to date and availability of resources;
- Promoting alignment with local investment priorities in order that the ERDF programme makes a significant contribution to the local growth agenda;

- Embedding the revised standardised ERDF business process in 2012, seeking to achieve greater consistency in approach;
- Establishment of an ERDF Practitioner Network for the Yorkshire and The Humber Programme, supporting ERDF practitioners through the provision of information, advice and training.

2.3 Communication Messages 2012

Key communication messages for 2012 include:

- ***Transition complete – business as usual***

DCLG has completed the transition of ERDF from RDAs to DCLG, demonstrated by performance in 2011. The Department is committed to the ongoing success of the Programme and views ERDF as pivotal in supporting local growth.

- ***ERDF is an effective tool to support locally driven growth, providing targeted investment to support economic infrastructure growth and jobs***

Local Partners, including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Authorities and Universities have increased responsibility and ownership of Yorkshire and the Humber ERDF Programme, and are mandated to take a leading role in ensuring that the Programme has sufficient robust, eligible projects coming forward to take up remaining ERDF investment and deliver the greatest impact for the people and businesses of Yorkshire and The Humber.

- ***Stronger focus for remaining resources to ensure best possible impact***

The Yorkshire and The Humber 2012-13 Programme has seven quarters to commit remaining resources. The Programme has developed a reasonable pipeline of projects; however it is important that remaining resources are focussed carefully to deliver the best impact and benefit to meet both the objectives of the ERDF Operational Programme and local aspirations for growth:

- ***Challenging year for ERDF spend - increase in pace and quality of ERDF claims needed***

2012 will be a challenging year for the Programme, a further £73m must be compliantly spent in order to achieve the 2012 N+2 target. This will require all

partners to improve the pace of compliant spend and submission of admissible claims throughout the year.

- ***Greater focus on contract management***

The Programme is not performing strongly in the delivery of Programme outputs and results. The ERDF Delivery Team, Programme Management Boards and Local Management Committee will more closely monitor performance in 2012 in order that the Programme and ERDF investments clearly demonstrate value for money and are making a demonstrable impact in Yorkshire and The Humber;

- ***Significant scope for improving compliance***

Failure to comply fully with EU regulation and guidance results in financial penalty for the project and impacts on Programme error rates. Partners in receipt of ERDF investment must ensure that they take full cognisance of and follow regulation and guidance, and ensure that they have appropriate capacity to maintain a robust audit trail. Procurement and overhead apportionment are key areas where there remains significant risk of non compliance. The ERDF Delivery Team will, through the ERDF Practitioner Network, promote better understanding and share good practice and learning.

2.4 Target Audiences

Sections A-C set out the range of target audiences categorised by the key communication message.

A) Information about ERDF investment opportunities:

- Potential and current beneficiaries
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Local authorities
- Statutory organisations
- Non-governmental organisations and agencies
- Businesses
- Trade, business and commercial associations and organisations
- Educational institutions
- Voluntary and community organisations

- Project operators and promoters
- Programme managers

B) Information about the programme, its policy context, its management, achievements and progress:

Programme Partners (including):

- ERDF practitioners (current and potential)
- Local partners (as above)
- European Commission and officials
- Department for Communities and Local Government (Managing Authority) and other UK Government departments as appropriate
- European, national and local politicians and other representatives

C) Awareness of the use, benefits and impact of ERDF investment;

Citizens in:

- Yorkshire and The Humber
- UK
- European Union

Communication to with and the range of target audiences seeks to:

- strengthen the understanding of the role that the European Regional Development Fund plays in the lives of the region's citizens;
- Raise awareness of the actions financed through European funds by providing appropriate and timely information on the way in which the funds are invested;
- Support compliance through disseminating information and learning;
- Demonstrate openness and transparency through providing information on Programme progress and how the Programme is managed.

c) Information activities relating to the management, monitoring and evaluation of Structural Funds Programmes

The programme managers will:

- Organise or participate in meetings related to aspects of European Funds management.

- Inform those working on the programme about any modification and updates of the European Fund Regulations and guidance issued by the European Commission.
- Publish and disseminate the findings of any intermediate evaluations and reviews of the Yorkshire and the Humber Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013
- Participate in seminars and courses provided for future candidate countries relating to Structural Funds management.
- Participate in seminars and courses provided for managers of the different aspects of Structural Funds by the Member State or European Commission.
- Participate in seminars about the future perspectives for European Structural Funds management including any intermediate evaluation process.

3. Management Arrangements

3.1 Responsible Unit for Information and Publicity

In accordance with **Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 Article 2(d)** the administrative department/body responsible for implementing the information and publicity measures in the Yorkshire and the Humber ERDF Programme 2007-2013 is the Yorkshire and The Humber Local ERDF Programme Delivery Team. Dedicated resource and expertise is designated for the management of ERDF Communications functions. Details provided below :

Team:	Programme Delivery Team: Yorkshire & The Humber
Organisation:	Department for Communities and Local Government
Address:	Vulcan House, 6 Millsands, SHEFFIELD, S3 8NU
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3.2 Communications Process

The communications function will co-ordinate communications to help ensure that all communications produced by the Programme comply with European Commission regulations and meet guidelines set out by the Programme Local Management Committee, DCLG Head of Programme Delivery Team Yorkshire & The Humber or other senior managers. The function will support and liaise with DCLG's communications team who establish the national framework for ERDF communications and act as first response to media enquiries.

The ERDF Communications function will operate within the context and protocols set out by the DCLG Communications Directorate the Programme's Communications Manager.

DCLG will facilitate networking on communications issues across the English programmes to discuss issues, share intelligence and good practice and to pursue a shared workplan. There will be sharing of expertise experience and learning across the network.

The ERDF communications function will:

- Refine communications strategy on an on-going basis
- Provide core communications about the programme
- Co-ordinate internal communications for programme staff and facilitate the European team's contribution to the wider internal communication in DCLG;
- Provide guidance for programme staff, partners and project promoters about publicity matters including compliance with publicity requirements
- Liaise and advise and consult with DCLG's communications team on all media enquiries about the programme
- Issue press releases, in consultation with senior managers, as appropriate
- Act as spokesperson for the Yorkshire and The Humber Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013 or determine when senior management should have involvement in media issues
- Manage issues and crises as they arise
- Manage the programme's identity

- Devise and manage specific communications campaigns to meet emerging needs
- Advise DCLG's Head of Programme Delivery Team Yorkshire & The Humber and the executive management team about impending issues and concerns that may impinge on the programme's activity and/or reputation
- Monitor media coverage and respond as necessary. Collate the media coverage of the programme and share with the programme's managers and staff as appropriate
- Manage the communications budget and any external communications suppliers
- Provide feedback on the suitability and compliance of project publicity actions
- Act as focal point for FOI enquiries within the Programme. Research and develop first draft responses to Ministerial and Parliamentary correspondence and Questions
- Coordinate Ministerial and Commission visits to the programme
- Provide a proactive and reactive service for the media so that their questions are answered quickly and accurately and to ensure that they have access to timely and appropriate information about programme activity.
- Provide briefings for the media targeted at their needs and interests.
- Develop a working relationship with the media channels and journalists in the region, nationally and internationally to raise the programme's profile, ensure that journalists know where to come for information, and that the programme managers can help to influence their coverage and the news agenda.
- Seek opportunities in the media for interviews and editorial coverage so that programme activity is regularly reported.
- Organise events, ministerial visits and photo opportunities on appropriate occasions in order to gain media coverage for the programme and its activities.
- Work with funded projects to help them publicise their activities and maximise positive coverage of the programme

4. Performance Management

Evaluation for communications activity will be undertaken by the ERDF communications function. This will include:

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- **Surveys**

Where appropriate and practical, opinion survey work may be undertaken using free software such as SurveyMonkey

- **Media monitoring**

using web-based analytic tools (like Google Alerts) to track media take up of stories

- **Website use evaluation**

Statistics indicating website use, including number of visits, page visits and downloads collated

- **Communications Outputs Indicators**

Information will be collated about the number of meetings and events held, audiences attending, partners engaged, presentations and speeches made, public enquiries answered etc

- **Feedback**

All events will be evaluated via participant questionnaire

Communications channels will include feedback loops to provide data for analysis, benchmarking and comparison

- **Best practice**

The communications function will play an active role in regional, national and international communications best practice exchanges to continually update and refresh its offering.

- **Review**

An analysis of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Information and publicity plan will form part of the Communications report included in the Annual Implementation Report.

5. Communications Activity 2012

The range of communications activities to be employed in 2012 to deliver on teare summarised in the following table.

Yorkshire and The Humber ERDF Communications Activity 2012

Communication objective	Target Audience	Activity
<p>Ensuring compliance with EU regulation including:</p> <p>Commission Regulation (EC) n° 1828/2006 Article 5</p> <p>Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 Article 7.2 (d)</p> <p>Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 Article 67</p>	<p>EU DCLG Centre ERDF Practitioners Local partners Citizens</p>	<p>The Yorkshire and The Humber Competitiveness and Employment Operational Programme 2007-2013 published and widely disseminated and available on DCLG website www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/regenerationfunding/europeanregionaldevelopment/yorkshirehumberside</p> <p>Comprehensive range of information published on DCLG website including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conditions of eligibility to be met in order to qualify for financing • description of the procedures for examining applications for funding and the time periods involved; • criteria for selecting the operations to be financed; • contacts for information and advice • list of all beneficiaries including the name of the project, the organisation promoting it, the amount of ERDF and other public contribution and brief description of the project <p>Advisory helpdesk to provide information, advice and guidance to potential beneficiaries via telephones and email established: Enquiry line Tel: 0303 444 6640 Email: YH.ERDFenquiries@communities.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>Call for Proposals/Commissioning Frameworks promoted through briefings, seminars, newsletters and bulletins, media and published on the Department's website</p> <p>Annual Implementation Report produced and published on the website.</p>
<p>Inform and raise awareness amongst ERDF Practitioners of the regulations and associated responsibilities in respect of information and publicity</p>	<p>ERDF Practitioners Potential ERDF applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and advice to the Programme Delivery Team and Technical Assistance colleagues to ensure that they understand the requirements of the regulations concerning information and publicity measures and deal with matters that arise directly with projects when appropriate. • Maintain a log of advice provided to projects and issues raised to provide evidence for assessments in accordance with Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 Article 4.2 • Undertake briefing/workshop sessions on publicity compliance for project promoters if requested. • Provide a publicity helpdesk service to advise and consult with projects especially providing feedback on the suitability and compliance of project publicity activities.

Inform and raise awareness amongst citizens of the Yorkshire and The Humber of the use, benefits and impact of ERDF investment and its contribution to EU policy implementation	Citizens in Yorkshire and The Humber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include reference to European Regional Policy in material produced by the programme available to download from the website. • Press releases to include notes to editors to explain the policy context. • Participate, where possible, in any events targeted at citizens, including those to celebrate Europe Day, in order to place the programme in its policy context. • Programme annual event to place ERDF and its activities within the context of European regional policy
Publicise the achievements of the Yorkshire and The Humber programme to inform and raise awareness amongst citizens locally, in the UK and across the European Union of the projects benefiting from ERDF investment and the impact that ERDF projects have on the people, businesses and localities in Yorkshire and The Humber,	<p>Citizens in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yorkshire and The Humber ▪ UK ▪ European Union <p>Press ERDF Practitioners Local Partners incl. LEPs, Local Authorities, HEIs, OGD's private sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish details of all projects securing ERDF investment on the DCLG website • Development of case studies that demonstrate the impact and benefits of ERDF investment • Publication and dissemination of quarterly electronic newsletter (European Focus) containing information about the programme and projects undertaken with European Regional Development Fund support. • Hold an annual event to discuss progress, share good practice and provide an opportunity for citizens to learn more. • Seek opportunities to provide speakers for appropriate conferences, seminars and public meetings organised by others. • Answer any questions raised by citizens in correspondence or by telephone. Comply fully with the requirements of the Freedom of Information legislation in accordance with established government procedures. • Publish material to explain how the European Regional Development Fund is managed in Yorkshire and The Humber on the website including membership of the local management committee, its calendar of meetings and the minutes of these meetings. Membership of any other group established by the programme is similarly made public • Provide clear, signposting on the website for further information requests. • Provide links from its website to those of the Commission and other partners so that the relationship is endorsed and promoted and citizens can seek further information. • Adhere to best practice and accessibility standards for websites ensure that all citizens have access to web-based information. • Draft and issue press releases to local, national and EU media and publish on the DCLG website including press releases in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ every project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The press release will include the name of the organisation that is receiving the funds, the name of the operation, the amount of

		<p>European and other public money committed and a description of the project, how it fits with the programme and contributes to its goals and targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ to announce and promote each Call for Proposals ~ to promote significant achievements ~ to demonstrate the impact of ERDF on the people and businesses of Yorkshire and the Humber. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide material on request for use by partners or projects in press releases arranging ministerial quote if appropriate
Update Programme partners on programme progress and raise awareness of issues that may impact on its management and delivery;	Local Partners DCLG MPs MEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive reports to LMC and PMBs detailing progress in respect of progress towards financial and non financial Programme targets • Publish Programme performance data in partner and practitioner e-bulletins and newsletters • Publication on the website of any reports analysing progress against spend and output targets and analysis of the emerging impact of activity. • Publish and disseminate the findings of any intermediate evaluations and reviews of the Yorkshire and the Humber Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013 • Provide prompt, timely and appropriate communication between the Programme management and the European Commission about any questions or issues relating to the management of the Yorkshire and The Humber Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013. • Provide prompt, timely and appropriate communication for Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and Local Authority Councillors about any questions or issues relating to the management of the Yorkshire and the Humber programme. • Provide briefings as required to update MPs and MEPs on programme progress and any issues. These briefings will be in the way that the MPs/MEPs find most appropriate whether it is face to face, individually or in groups, or in written briefs. • Provide briefing for councillors and members of local economic partnerships as appropriate •
Articulate the focus for the Programme 2012-13 taking account of progress to date and availability of remaining ERDF resources;	LMC PMBs TA Teams Local Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise existing sector networks to cascade mid term evaluation findings and how these will impact on the future delivery of the Programme • Work with through and with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Authorities, HEIs and third sector to ensure that key partners are aware of and understand the lifecycle of the Programme and how it impacts on the approach to management and delivery • Ensure stakeholders and practitioners are aware of the outcome of Programme reviews through meetings and e-bulletins

Promoting alignment with local investment priorities in order that the ERDF programme makes a significant contribution to the local growth agenda;	Local Enterprise Partnerships BIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) as a key conduit for communication to and from localities • Ensure appropriate LEP representation on LMC and PMB to ensure localities play a major role in the strategic oversight of the Programme • Involve LEPs (via the PMBs) in the selection and endorsement of projects in order they can articulate local needs and the degree to which project applications meet these • Work with Local Enterprise Partnerships in the development of Calls For Proposals (Prospectus) in order that Calls for remaining ERDF resources are informed by local need and opportunity and reflect local aspiration • Engage LEPs in the promotion of ERDF and its investment in order that the Programme has visibility in local economic development and investment plans • Develop case studies to illustrate local delivery of activities that successfully deliver growth and jobs • Promote ERDF as a vital component of locally driven action to support growth and jobs
Embedding the revised standardised ERDF business process in 2012, seeking to achieve greater consistency in approach;	ERDF Practitioners Potential ERDF Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all partners are aware of changes to the ERDF Business Process, and the improvements and benefits the changes will bring through e- bulletins, newsletters, briefings and dissemination via the Technical Assistance funded resources. • Development and delivery of a programme of awareness raising and training • Provide up to date information and documentation on the DCLG website • Seek partner feedback on the new process as appropriate in order to contribute to continuous improvement
Establishment of an ERDF Practitioner Network for the Yorkshire and The Humber Programme, supporting ERDF practitioners through the provision of information, advice and training.	ERDF Practitioners Potential ERDF Applicants ERDF Delivery Team	<p>Establishment of an ERDF practitioner Network that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Provide an effective conduit for communication with ERDF practitioners engaged in all aspects of Programme and project delivery ~ Ensure that ERDF Practitioners receive regular, timely and up to date information on all aspects of the Programme ~ Provide a forum for ERDF Practitioners to discuss delivery issues and provide feedback to the ERDF Delivery Team/Managing authority • Promote an increased role for capacity funded through Technical Assistance in addressing the issues and challenges of the Programme in its final stages, assisting projects and applicants • Facilitate regular meetings between the ERDF delivery Team and TA colleagues to discuss progress, exchange information, highlight issues and agree actions. • A monthly e-bulletin focussing on practical information on processes, claims issues, lessons learnt through inspection and audit, good project practice and information about training or briefing opportunities. • A regular programme of briefings and practical workshops to disseminate information to the Practitioner network , raising awareness of issues and provide practical training as appropriate.