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| **Question Received** | **Answer**  |
| 1 | Regarding the recent opening of the UK SPF People and Skills, given the size of the minimum submission have any lead partners come forward to lead a region wide or local authority wide collaborative partnership. We would be very keen to be a delivery partner but as a smaller charity we would not look to be a lead partner – is there a way of convening with other eligible VCSE organisations to develop a delivery partnership? | Eligible VCSE organisations are able to work together in a partnership approach to create a coordinated and well-integrated delivery structure of employability provision.  The Local Authorities are arranging workshops in week commencing 16th January that eligible VCSE organisations will be invited to which would allow networking to take place.  Contact details for each Local Authority will be updated on the NTCA website.   |
| 2 | [Our organisation] was part of a wider North Tyneside delivery partner for ESF funding.  This partnership ended on 30th September 22.  Would this end date preclude us from applying for part of the UKSPF funding? | Applicants who have delivered on ESF-funded employability support programmes since April 2022 are eligible to apply for funding under this call. Applicants are required to provide the ESF Project Reference number(s) on the project application form. Please refer to Section 8 of the Open Call Specification document for eligibility criteria. |
| 3 | Do you have (and are able to pass on) a list of VCSE organisations that are eligible to apply for this opportunity?  | NTCA does not hold a list of eligible VCSE organisations. Please refer to Section 8 of the Open Call Specification document for eligibility criteria. The Local Authorities are arranging workshops in week commencing 16th January that eligible VCSE organisations will be invited to which would allow networking to take place. |
| 4 | Do VCSE delivery partners also need to be defined as VCSE organisations and currently delivering (i.e., in the 2022/ 23 financial year) an ESF funded employability support project supporting unemployed or economically inactive residents to progress towards and / or into the labour market across the North of Tyne area | Please refer to Section 7 of the Project Application Guidance document:* All organisations involved in direct delivery of support to beneficiaries must also be VCSE organisations.
* Administrative / back-office support can be provided by non-VCSE organisations
* Not all VCSE delivery partners need to be currently delivering ESF-funded employability support projects (in the 2022/23 financial year)
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| 5 | [Our organisation] submitted a tender application last month for the NTCA Flexible Procurement Agreement for Post 16 Skills Framework.  Can you confirm if this open call is related to this application, and if so, if we are eligible to apply?  Our ESF funding finished last year and I wanted to confirm we were still able to apply for this due to funding ending recently. | The UKSPF People and Skills Open Call is not related to the NTCA Flexible Procurement Agreement for Post 16 Skills Framework.Applicants who have delivered on ESF-funded employability support programmes since April 2022 are eligible to apply for funding under this call. Applicants are required to provide the ESF Project Reference number(s) on the project application form. Please refer to Section 8 of the Open Call Specification document for eligibility criteria. |
| 6 | Has a unit cost been established, and what is the expectation for the number of outputs / outcomes that will be delivered? | The unit cost should be on a sliding scale between £5000 minimum - £8000 maximum per beneficiary, depending on the level of support required.It is expected that 40% of E33 outputs/outcomes will be achieved. |
| 7 | Are VCSE Organisations who delivered as part of the Newcastle CLLD programme eligible to apply to this open call (as a delivery partner) and if so, can we use the ESF project numbers assigned to the overall CLLD project? | Yes, the overall project should make the ESF Project Number available to organisations involved in project delivery. |
| 8 | On the website it states ‘currently delivering’ whereas the call spec states ‘organisations who have delivered or are currently delivering an ESF employability support programme’. We do not currently receive ESF funding but have previously been a delivery partner and received funding through ESF projects so I would like to know if we are eligible to apply for this fund? | Applicants who have delivered on ESF-funded employability support programmes since April 2022 are eligible to apply for funding under this call. Applicants are required to provide the ESF Project Reference number(s) on the project application form. Please refer to Section 8 of the Open Call Specification document for eligibility criteria. |
| 9 | You’ve said that 40% of outputs for E33 should be achieved in this call – can you explain further? What is the relationship between the outputs and outcomes?  | E33 is the UKSPF intervention for support for economically inactive residents. The headline output figure for the number of participants supported, across two years of delivery and for the whole employability element of the people and skills funding is 878. It is expected that 40% of this number is achieved through this call – so approximately 350. All of the other outputs are sub-sets of this headline figure. Outcomes are not subsets of the output figures and are more directly related to the participant. Some participants may have more than one outcome, and some may have none, depending on how far they are from the labour market and the level of support required.  |
| 10 | Is it likely that successful applicants will cover one geographical area each? What happens if a few organisations apply to cover the same areas? | Not necessarily, it could be that all applicants cover specific areas only, or all cover all three areas, or something in between. In order to ensure residents in one area don’t miss out on access to this support, the assessment panel will make sure that the whole North of Tyne geographical area is covered when confirming successful applicants – this may lead to moderation discussions with applicants if required.Applicants should ensure they clearly specify geographical areas covered and delivery partners involved in the project in the application form. |
| 11 | Because of the preference for a collective approach, who determines the collective? Do lead and delivery organisations match up before making an application? | Yes, collectives (or partnerships) should be made before submitting applications, and only the lead organisation needs to submit the application. The workshops held in each local authority area in January 2023 provided opportunity for organisations to network and form partnerships as appropriate. |
| 12 | Who can be a lead organisation? It’s difficult to understand the parameters of a lead organisation set out by the NTCA - will they look at turnover? | The lead organisation needs to be a VCSE who is delivering or has delivered an ESF contract since April 2022. The size of the organisation doesn’t matter, and turnover is not considered, but lead organisations should have sufficient capability to deliver, demonstrate social value and value for money, and have a good track record of delivering ESF projects.  |
| 13 | VCSEs often don’t have a huge structure with lots of back-office support as we’re quite small organisations, so are we eligible for this funding? | Yes, any VCSE that meets the criteria is eligible. Organisations are able to bring in non-VCSE organisations to support back-office functions, where they lack the appropriate structure or capacity, but non-VCSE organisations cannot be lead or delivery partners on the project.  |
| 14 | Is there a maximum number of delivery partners allowed in an application? | No.  |
| 15 | Can you be a lead partner on your own, with no delivery partners? | Yes, however NTCA recognise that different organisations bring different specialisms and experience so the preference is for a partnership approach. |
| 16 | There is hesitation from some VCSE’s about being the lead organisation as there is often a delay in the funding coming through meaning delivering at risk (from experience). How will lead organisations be paid – will this be through local authorities and is it performance based? | As detailed in section 16 of the Open Call Specification document, NTCA’s claim process operates quarterly in arrears, with projects able to claim for actual expenditure on project activities on a quarterly basis after the money has been spent. Lead organisations are required to cashflow the project prior to receiving the first payment. Once a complete claim is received as described, NTCA will pay the lead organisation. Advice is currently being sought regarding whether this standard process will apply to the UKSPF People and Skills priority. |
| 17 | If payments are made in arrears based on actual expenditure in the previous quarter, this isn’t a grant agreement as we know it – is this not a recovery of costs contract? | Advice is currently being sought regarding this – the answer to this question will be updated in the next published Q&A Log week commencing 30th January 2023. |
| 18 | Can smaller organisations be part of lots of different lead organisation bids? | Yes – however, lead organisations will need to consider if they have the capacity to deliver on lots of separate projects, if successful. NTCA would also not fund duplication of delivery so in each bid the smaller organisations would need to focus on something different (e.g. geographical area, specialism etc).  |
| 19 | Who is the link person for the Community Partnerships, under the Communities and Place priority? | In Newcastle, the contact is Asia (Joanna) Lopart-Chlasciak joanna.lompart.chlasciak@newcastle.gov.ukThe Northumberland Community Partnership contacts are still being finalised however in the meantime queries can be directed to Kevin Higgins kevin.higgins@northumberland.gov.ukThe North Tyneside Community Partnerships contacts are still being finalised – details will be updated here in due course. |
| 20 | Are we expecting any further guidance or evidence requirements from the Government, in addition to the specific evidence requirements already received and shared? | We are awaiting the publication of the full UKSPF Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, which is expected in January 2023. The government has stated that output and outcome definitions will continue to be refined as the programme continues. NTCA will communicate any changes to bidders and successful applicants. |
| 21 | Based on the lessons learned from BBO (Building Better Opportunities) projects being highlighted in the specification document, is there a sense that BBO delivery partners would fit the requirements of the people and skills funding better? | No, however lessons were learned from the BBO projects and the external independent evaluation of these demonstrated areas of best practice – like the importance of partnerships, the benefits intensive wrap around support, etc. NTCA is keen that partners consider this learning in their applications, but they can also demonstrate learning from CLLD or other employability projects.  |
| 22 | How is this linked to the Flexible Procurement Agreement for Post 16 Skills Framework.? Can NTCA provide an update on the framework? | The UKSPF People and Skills Open Call is not related to the NTCA Flexible Procurement Agreement for Post 16 Skills Framework.There have been a high number of applications received - NTCA are currently in the process of evaluating these applications and aim to have agreements in place with providers by 1st March 2023. |
| 23 | If someone is a lead organisation, can they do 3 applications in different areas up to the value of £1million each, or can they only apply once? | There’s nothing to stop an organisation from applying a number of times but it is unlikely that all bids would be successful – NTCA is keen to have a range of organisations with different experience and specialisms in order to ensure successful applications cover required geography and outputs. |
| 24 | Is the intention to award each local authority area £1m worth of funding / projects each? | Not necessarily, areas of deprivation/need will be into account alongside geographical coverage and achievement of outputs.  |
| 25 | With the final list of applications going to the Government for approval, will this delay the start of delivery? Is there a best-case scenario date for a response to applications?  | Applications will be assessed on 21st February, after which there may be some moderation discussions required with successful applicants. A final list of preferred applications will then be sent to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for approval. At the same time the list of preferred applications will be taken to internal NTCA meetings on 2nd and 13th March. Once DLUHC approval is received, successful applicants will be confirmed. |
| 26 | Does TUPE apply to these projects? | Advice is currently being sought regarding this – the answer to this question will be updated in the next published Q&A Log week commencing 30th January 2023. |
| 27 | Is this call intending to prioritise quality / impact over quantity?  | Yes, quality and impact are critical to this call. There’s a focus on qualitative support and making a real difference in the North of Tyne. |
| 28 | Is there a definition of Key Worker, as referenced in the documentation? | Yes, in the Outputs Definitions Sheet: ‘Key Workers are frontline staff supporting residents as part of the UKSPF intervention.’ |
| 29 | If you are successful in the year 2 Open Call, could you also apply for the year 3 Open Call? | Yes, however it should be noted the year 3 call for funding will be open to any organisation not just VCSE’s. |
| 30 | Would a self-declaration form from a resident that is economically inactive be sufficient evidence of their status?  | Yes - successful applicants are required to check the economic status of participants accepted onto the project, and the form provided with the Open Call documents has a tick box to confirm this.  |
| 31 | Does delivery have to start on the 1st of April? | No, delivery can begin after this date, but this is the first eligible delivery date.  |
| 32 | Where does Ofsted fit within UKSPF? | The Department for Education are not involved in the UKSPF People and Skills priority therefore Ofsted will not be involved in projects funded through this open call. |
| 33 | Once in delivery, if a gap in service is identified, can projects take on additional partners? | It is important for projects to engage with the Employment Partnerships so that where gaps are identified during delivery, support can be discussed and sought from providers within the partnership where possible. However, applicants can also consider including costs within the budget for spot-purchases of additional support where required on a case-by-case basis. |
| 34 | Can applicants / delivery partners partake in AEB and UKSPF activity concurrently? | Yes. |
| 35 | Will a universal IT system be provided for use by the successful applicants/projects? | Successful applicants will be required to have systems and processes in place to collect output and outcome data and report this to NTCA via the quarterly claims process. |
| 36 | Is evaluation a requirement for successful applicants, and is this within the budget? | NTCA will be commissioning an overall UKSPF People and Skills evaluation. If projects wish to conduct their own evaluation, they can include this within the application budget, but this is not a requirement of the funding. |
| 37 | It has been detailed that the decision of award will take place mid-March 2023 and expectation to start delivery from 1st April 2023, what are NTCA’s expectations on mobilisation of contract period and expectations of registering first participants? | As this open call is focussed on maintaining VCSE delivery infrastructure at risk of ending due to the tail off of EU funds, and resource/infrastructure should already be in place in most eligible organisations, NTCA anticipates that the mobilisation period will be fairly short with first participants being registered in April or May 2023. |
| 38 | Looking over the ITT questions there is no clear indication of “word count” for each question. Can you provide some guidance on any expectations of amount of information NTCA are looking for to assess? | Word counts have not been provided so as not to restrict the information lead applicants can provide, however lead applicants should ensure answers are clear and all parts of each question are answered. The assessment criteria explains how scores will be awarded by the assessment panel. |
| 39 | Can you confirm that rental costs for premises can be claimed? | This depends on how the premises are used – please refer to section 15 of the Project Application Guidance document. |
| 40 | When will we receive the copies of the slides from the presentations from 2 events over the past 2 weeks? Require the breakdown of customer volumes, outputs, and outcomes to allow for us to plan the operational delivery. | These will be published by on the UKSPF People and Skills Open Call section of the NTCA website by close of play on Wednesday 25th January 2023. |
| 41 | We are ideally placed for the Programme’s spec, outputs and outcomes. We deliver employability programming for adults with complex learning disability under grant aid, but not ESF.  This looks as though it knocks us out of the eligibility criteria at first stage. Is there a reason for restricting this only to currently ESF funded VCS providers? | As detailed in section 8 of the Open Call Specification document, the eligibility criteria for UKSPF People and Skills funding has been set by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and is as follows:*Lead local authorities have the flexibility to fund targeted people and skills provision in 2022-23 and 2023-24 where this is a continuing priority for 2024-25 and may be at significant risk of ending due to the tail off of EU funds. This flexibility may only be used where provision is currently delivered by voluntary and community organisations, having regard for the focus of the Fund and available funding.*Organisations not currently delivering ESF-funded activity are eligible to apply as a delivery partner, provided that the lead organisation meets the criteria set out in Section 8 of the Open Call Specification document. |