



European Programme 2014-20 - Opportunities for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to deliver the Greater Manchester ESIF plan

What is the ESIF plan?

Greater Manchester has an allocation of £356 million of European Structural Funds for the 2014-20 programme. The arrangements for how to plan and spend under this programme are different from anything done previously.

The Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has responsibility to design a detailed *European Structural Investment Funds* (ESIF) plan and find match funding.

Actual commissioning will be carried out by 'co-financers' (i.e. organisations offering match funding); these will include the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Big Lottery Fund.

Whose plan is it?

The GM ESIF plan is the responsibility of the GM LEP. The LEP is a very high level board comprising private sector leaders (7 members), council leaders (4) and the Vice Chancellor of Manchester University. Its priorities are those of the Greater Manchester Strategy, and its executive support is provided by New Economy, which also supports the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The plan went to formal consultation in December 2013: <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/consultation-greater-manchesters-draft-european-investment-plan>.

What's in the plan?

The European Structural Funds overall are designed to reduce economic inequalities by targeting additional resources at developing skills, jobs and enterprise for those people and areas which need extra help. There is also clear acknowledgement of the importance of social inclusion and social innovation as necessary conditions of economic inclusion; this is similarly acknowledged in the Greater Manchester Strategy, which also acknowledges the importance of our sector in delivering this.

The view of the Greater Manchester voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector is that in view of the priorities of the GM Strategy and the European Structural Funds it has a role in the delivery of the whole plan. The LEP strongly supports delivery by VCSE organisations, and New Economy is aware of the need for careful commissioning to ensure real VCSE inclusion in successful tenders.

There are however two 'lots' which in practice will be delivered more or less exclusively by the VCSE:



- 1) a **'social innovation driver'** to encourage new social enterprise around needs brought about by public service reform, through a loan/evergreen fund (match funding from Social Investment Business); and
- 2) a **programme to engage 'marginalised groups'** and support them towards economic activity (match funding from the Big Lottery Fund).

There are also real opportunities to deliver under other lots, including accredited and unaccredited training for young people, marginalised people and people already in the workforce; enabling start-ups (including social and community enterprise); and low carbon and capital works on community buildings.

How do we get funded?

This is becoming clearer, although the process and systems for commissioning are still being worked out at national and local levels. Lots' on a fairly large scale will be tendered for on a Greater Manchester footprint. These could be won either by a single organisation, which could be a 'lead body' with a 'supply chain' of organisations to which it will sub-contract, or by a partnership/consortium of named organisations, which could also have a supply chain. Some lots may work on some version of payment-by-results which leads to cashflow needs. This means that for individual organisations, the way in is most likely to be within a supply chain of some sort. All organisations delivering under the ESIF plan will have to be able to evidence sustainability and quality, and cope with collecting and providing data.

At the moment it looks as if ESF tenders may start to come out in February 2015, with ERDF a little later. This means we need to get ready now!

How can we get better prepared?

The Big Lottery Fund has made available fixed amounts of funding per LEP area proportionate to its investment in the area. Greater Manchester was allocated £20,000. This funding, under the BLF's *Building Better Opportunities* programme, is to raise awareness within the VCSE sector of the opportunities available through the European Social Fund. GMCVO and Network for Europe are leading this work.

Latest Update

Currently the European Commission and the UK Government are in discussion about the UK's partnership agreement and operational programmes for the 2014-20 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The nature of the negotiations may have an impact on the shape of the programme and governance structures, but are not expected to lead to fundamental changes to the Greater Manchester ESIF strategy. These negotiations are expected to continue throughout 2014 with formal agreement of the Operational Programmes expected in early 2015.



While these negotiations are ongoing, and the final shape of the programme is decided, **Greater Manchester has decided to wait a few weeks before issuing draft calls for wider stakeholder input.** The Greater Manchester ESIF team is continuing with preparations to deliver the new programme, so once agreement has been reached nationally it will be ready to start delivering Greater Manchester's ESIF strategy.

Further Information

GMCVO continues to advocate for the interests of the VCSE sector formally and informally and are talking with other potential lead bodies to try to ensure they understand the value and requirements of VCSE organisations.

If you are interested in keeping up-to-date with the development of the plan and emerging opportunities, please sign up here: www.gmcvo.org.uk/european-programme-2014-20-greater-manchester

GMCVO also have limited resources to provide technical help to assist organisations deliver under the ESIF programme. To inform GMCVO of the areas of support they may require assistance with complete this short questionnaire: www.surveymonkey.com/s/7H8GR98

For further information visit: www.gmcvo.org.uk/european-programme-2014-20

Macc may also be able to provide Manchester based VCS groups with additional guidance and support through our Capacity Building Team. The Capacity Building Team provides information and support to build the capacity and sustainability of voluntary and community sector groups in Manchester. The service works closely with other local infrastructure organisations to offer a co-ordinated approach to support across the city.

Information and support is available through our dedicated telephone information service **0333 321 3021** and via its website: <https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/about-capacity-building-support>