



August 2009

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prosperous, inclusive and self-sustaining communities, where the unique cultures, traditions and environments are enhanced ...



Welcome to the August €bulletin

Stage 2 Submissions

Stage 2 applications are now in for Round 4 and demand for structural funds remains encouraging with forty-eight Stage 2 applications submitted, 24 ERDF and 24 ESF, covering a wide range of activities and requesting over £20m of ERDF and over £4m of ESF. There have also been a number of ERDF and ESF Fast Track applications taken forward during August that are due for decision in September.

Applicants for ERDF have requested over £20m, including support for green initiatives in small businesses, renewable energy projects, improving provisions for outdoor access, promoting the economic benefits of the natural and cultural heritage, provision of enhanced community facilities and road improvement projects targeted at benefiting rural communities. ESF applicants have requested over £4m and, as well as providing support for those facing multiple barriers to entering employment, applications include: support training for young people struggling to get into work, skills development for existing employees, development of new course content and ways of accessing training through colleges in the Highlands & Islands, and continuing

support for migrant workers and their families.

The next month will be an important one for anyone who has submitted a Stage 2 application. All applicants should be receiving feedback on applications in the near future and the final deadline for technical corrections is 2 October 2009. A number of applicants appear not to have taken on the guidance offered at Stage 1. It is essential that applicants understand and act on all guidance given in the Stage 2 feedback; failure to do so could jeopardise projects being recommended for approval. The majority of feedback will be on the need for technical corrections. It is essential that applicants respond timeously and make these corrections when requested. If corrections are not undertaken and the application resubmitted in time, the project might not be considered by the Advisory Group. Contact will be made in the forthcoming weeks.

Progress Reports and Claims (PRCs)

The IAB is currently working to ensure that all projects are up to date with submission of Progress Reports and Claims. This is a high priority, to vouch progress with projects and not least to maximise reported expenditure to meet N+2 targets. We would encourage all projects to submit overdue Progress Reports as soon as possible and ensure that *electronic* transaction lists are submitted. This is particularly relevant to projects hoping to submit applications in the future as assessment of all projects now includes scoring on past performance. This score is based on the quality of both project applications and delivery, so repeated late submission of Progress Report and Claims will not work in your favour.

Round 3 ESF Multi-Annual Approvals

Some ESF projects that applied for more than one year of funding were given conditional approvals on the basis that match funding need only to have been confirmed for Year 1 but subsequent years funding had to be confirmed on an annual basis to the IAB. Please ensure you notify the IAB when your next year's match funding has been confirmed and provide the necessary evidence.

Reviews/Evaluations

Some projects were given approval on the condition that a review or evaluation had to be undertaken at a certain point within the project cycle. If you have such a condition, it is important to plan for this work so it can be undertaken by the required timescale. If you need any assistance or would like to discuss any issues, please get in touch with the IAB.

Publicity

Previous ebulletins and newsletters have highlighted the importance of compliance with the publicity

guidance. This is a condition of grant and we have some projects that have reached final claim stage but have very poor evidence of publicity. It may be too late to correct this at final claim stage when a project has completed and so it is essential that applicants regularly publicise the project and retain evidence throughout the project operation and provide copies of these to the IAB on a regular basis. If you need any assistance, please just contact IAB staff.

Scottish Rural Development Programme

The Scottish Government announced changes to the assessment of forestry proposals under the Rural Priorities funding stream. These will now be assessed on an ongoing basis where cases are deemed to be non-contentious. Small changes have also been made to the processing of small-scale renewable energy projects. Previous guidance requested that home electricity consumption for the development had to be 80 per cent. However, the minimum requirement is only 51 per cent. The news release with further details can be found here:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/SRDPNews/August2009/RPAug09ForestryRenew>

IAB Contingency Plan

To help ensure continuity of service in the event of any increased sickness absence rates, HIPP has developed an Influenza Pandemic Contingency Plan. The Plan will be discussed with the Scottish Government and then distributed to partners when finalised. Our plan is designed to ensure that as close to normal service as possible will continue in the potential absence of staff.

