

To: EDUCATION COMMITTEE	Subject: PROCUREMENT OF THE THIRD SECTOR FOR EU FUNDED EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES
From: HEAD OF EDUCATION (SKILLS, LIFELONG LEARNING & YOUTH EMPLOYMENT)	
Date: 11 January 2017 Ref: LMCM/PK/EW	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence the process of procuring the services of the Third Sector in the delivery of EU funded employability services until December 2018.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 **Prospects for You**

As reported to Committee in November 2016 the Council is the lead partner for two European Social Fund projects delivering employability services until 2018. In relation to one of these, *Prospects for You*, which provides services to unemployed residents who are 30 years of age or over and have multiple barriers to employment, the Scottish Government have made it clear that as a condition of offering grant they wish to see the Third Sector engaged in every EU funded employability service in Scotland which deals with this group of participants.

Since formal approval was received in August 2016 for this project a process for engaging Third Sector organisations has been explored which meets the Council's procurement guidelines and standing orders as well as fits with the Scottish Government's clear direction that the engagement of the Third Sector must be open and transparent.

2.2 **Scottish Government**

At the outset of the bid process the Scottish Government made it clear that as a condition of offering grant they wish to see the Third Sector engaged in every employability pipeline in Scotland. However, they have emphasised repeatedly to every lead partner the need for the actual process of engaging the third sector to be open to all and transparent to ensure that national as well as local third sector organisations have an opportunity to become involved.

3.0 CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 **Third Sector Contribution**

Prospects for You is clearly targeted at those unemployed residents who are further from the labour market and who may have a variety of barriers to securing employment. While the project's normal engagement activity does encourage a large number of potential participants to join our programmes previous experience of our target market for our services tells us that many potential participants may not even consider engagement with employability services, and moving toward the job market, as a realistic option.

However, the broad range of third sector organisations which work within our communities across North Lanarkshire have access to a large number of potential participants and could play a critical role in driving engagement within those groups we wish to support but who may not have considered using our services. Previous EU funded employability programmes in North Lanarkshire have also used the Third Sector to drive engagement or provide training and/ or work experience and it is a well established mechanism within employability services.

4.0 CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Procurement Implications

Discussions with the Council's procurement team have focused on meeting a number of criteria:

- the process of becoming a delivery partner within *Prospects for You* must be open and transparent for all third sector organisations;
- ensuring that North Lanarkshire based third sector organisations have the expertise and capacity to engage in the bid process; and
- ensuring that the delivery partners meet the needs of the project and are outcome driven.

There is a North Lanarkshire Third Sector Employability Forum in place which has representation from both local and national third sector providers and it is proposed to use this as a mechanism for engagement and consultation. In addition, the Council has engaged with the Third Sector support organisation, Ready for Business, which provides free advice and support to the third sector on how to bid for public funding to ensure that all providers have the expertise to bid if they wish to.

4.2 Financial Implications

Prospects for You will end operational delivery in December 2018 and match funding is allocated to support third sector delivery in the existing EU employability project match funding budget of £180,000. This would draw down an additional £120,000 of EU grant meaning that £300,000 of spend on third sector delivery partners is available.

4.3 Next Step

In conjunction with the Council's procurement team the employability services team will commence the procurement process for this employability programme, ensuring that the process meets the Council's own Standing Orders and the conditions of grant.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education Committee is recommended to approve the commencement off the process of procuring the services of the Third Sector in the delivery of EU funded employability services until December 2018.



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Local Government Access to Information Act: For further information please contact Lizanne McMurrich, Head of Education (Skills, Lifelong Learning & Youth Employment) on 01236 812338