

To: City Executive Board
Date: 17 March 2016
Report of: Executive Director Organisational Development & Corporate Services
Title of Report: Proposal to work with young people not in employment, education or training (NEET'S) – application to European Structural & Investment Fund

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To request approval to deliver a project supporting young people into employment, education or training subject to securing funding from the European Structural & Investment Fund.
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	A Vibrant, Sustainable Economy, Strong and Active Communities
Policy Framework:	None.
Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. To grant project approval to allow the Oxford City Council to deliver support for young people into employment, education or training, subject to securing the necessary funding from the European Structural and Investment Fund, as outlined in the report.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	List of Partners
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Initial Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 4	Stage 1 Application

Introduction and background

1. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is responsible for championing and developing the Oxfordshire economy. It seeks to achieve its aims by channelling a range of funding streams into local programmes. These include the Regional Growth Fund, the Local Growth Fund, the City Deal and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESiF).
2. One of the two main ESiF programmes is the Labour Market and Community Development Programme which aims to deliver a series of measures across the County to help local people enter and thrive in the local labour market, and support local communities in tackling some of their economic, environmental and social challenges. It is split into three strands as follows; Young People not in employment, education or training (NEETS), Unemployment and meeting lower level skills gaps, and Furthest from the Labour Market.
3. In October 2015, the Oxfordshire LEP in partnership with the Big Lottery's Building Better Opportunities programme released details of a tender opportunity which targets provision for NEETs. The funding call requested specialist provision across all of Oxfordshire but with a particular focus on priority areas in Oxford and Banbury.
4. The funding available is £734,100 over three years, with half provided through the LEP, and half as match funding from Big Lottery.
5. The project requires 193 participants to be supported, with 14% of participants (27 people) to be moved into work, and 17% to move into training or education (33). At least 27% of people who were economically inactive when joining the project must move into employment with training or job-search by the end of the project.
6. The value of the project requires approval from the City Executive Board (CEB) to go forward.

Project Outline

7. The Council in partnership with Aspire Oxfordshire Community Partnership Ltd have developed a proposal to bid for this funding, with the Council acting as lead partner. Bidding for this funding supports the following key objectives in the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy:
 - Residents will be engaged by partners to support them to learn the skills they need to obtain work
 - Residents will receive training for the type of work which is available locally, so they are best placed to obtain employment
 - Residents will be supported to overcome barriers to work
8. Having recently delivered an employment support project financed by the European Social Fund, the Council has the necessary experience to manage this opportunity. In terms of project delivery, the Council's role will be to provide governance support; expertise in audit, performance management, monitoring and evaluation.
9. Oxford City Council will not be responsible for the delivery of frontline services but will be the lead partner, thereby enabling a number of local charities and social enterprises to access ESiF funding, which would not be possible otherwise. The

Council will also benefit from being able to access the services provided, ensuring they are targeted at priority areas.

10. The bid has been developed in partnership with Aspire, who will lead the operational delivery of the service. They will be responsible for ensuring partners have a shared identity and adhere to a Code of Best Practice, utilise a shared network of employers and partner agencies, common referral forms and processes, a dedicated participant database and shared communication channels and social media platform
11. To achieve the outcomes of the funding call, the Council's bid envisages employment support being offered through a partnership of community-based employment practitioner professionals, employed by a range of local organisations with a countywide reach. It will also support employers to meet the recruitment challenges they are currently facing, due to a shortage of available, skilled people. A list of partners is provided in Appendix 1 with a brief summary of what they will contribute to the project. The majority are based in the priority areas of Oxford and Banbury as it is anticipated the majority of referrals into the project will be from these areas. The Council's proposal assumes working with 220 participants.
12. The delivery model for this work complements both the approach of the Council's Welfare Reform Team and Youth Ambition Programme. A brief summary of project activity is detailed below:
 - A range of group/social activities including sports, outings, film, video and photography and a mobile outreach service in rural areas, to engage NEETs and to help build their initial self-confidence & engage with peers
 - Intensive, long term activities to build young people's self-esteem, aspirations, basic employability skills and work experience, including a diverse range of supported training, volunteering and work experience placements available in the project partnerships' own professional social enterprises ranging from retail, creative industry e.g. film, catering, sport, hospitality, warehousing, property & grounds maintenance and construction
 - Regular, 1-2-1 mentoring and coaching by experienced support workers to understand the young person's individual circumstances and help overcome entrenched barriers to employment and social inclusion
 - Building on strong relationships with local employers to offer real, diverse work experience and tasters, work trials and employment opportunities. Including offering in-work coaching support to both employer & employee for up to 6 months to sustain the transition into employment/education/training
13. In addition to these activities, the project will also provide:
 - Presentations at business networking events, support to participants to attend Jobs Fairs, 'Matchmaking' events to bring work-ready participants and supportive local businesses together, as well as provide support and mentoring to project participants to develop their own enterprise initiatives

- Individual funding will include childcare, subsistence & transport to ensure these young people can engage and sustain their project participation
 - The project will fund regular young persons, family, community & stakeholder engagement and involvement activities. Monitoring & evaluation activities will be funded to reflect regularly on project outcomes and performance
14. Partners for the project were selected following consultation with organisations already providing support to NEETs. Detailed feedback was sought on the initial bid proposals together with a request for what individual organisations felt they could contribute.
 15. There is a two stage bid process to access this funding. The outcome of stage one will be known in March 2016 with shortlisted applicants invited to proceed to stage two. At this point a detailed submission will be required explaining how participants will be supported including statements describing key processes, governance arrangements, and management of the audit requirements. The successful bid will be announced in June 2016 with the project commencing in July 2016.
 16. To support the development of the bid, an application can be made to Big Lottery's Performance Development Fund. The Council has requested £8,700 from this fund to support the development of engagement programmes, promotion of the project prior to commencement of delivery and focus groups to facilitate co-design of the detailed work programmes.

Financial Issues

17. There are no financial costs to the Council in delivering this project. Part of the funding will be used to cover the cost of an officer at Grade 7, to carry out the duties assigned to the Council in this project. This funding is not shown in the Council's budget as the outcome of the application is still pending.
18. As the lead partner the Council will be responsible for the entire project funding, and for ensuring the project is delivered in accordance with European regulations. There is a risk to the Council in taking on this role. Funding can be withheld or clawed back if the correct procedures have not been followed and if evidence is not available for items of expenditure.
19. A failure to deliver on outcomes is not penalised in the same way, providing we are able to clearly explain the reason for under performance. Experience gained in the last year in delivering an ESiF funded project will mitigate this risk. The audit requirements were met in full with no financial penalties being incurred. The risk register at Appendix 2 provides further details of the mitigating actions which will be put in place.

Legal Issues

20. Advice was provided by the Council's legal department to ensure that the project does not contravene State Aid regulations. Further advice will be required from Law & Governance in establishing the governance of the project, including the

establishment of service level agreements between the Council and the partners who will receive funding.

Level of Risk

21. A risk register is included at Appendix 2

Equalities Impact

22. An initial equality impact assessment is included at Appendix 3

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Background Papers: None

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