

## Lowlands and Uplands Scotland ERDF and ESF Programmes 2007-2013 Programme Monitoring Committee

### PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ESF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME REPORT BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's agreement to the proposed changes to the ESF Operational Programme as set out below.

#### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Although the proposed changes are for the most part relatively minor they are important by way of clarifying in particular essential distinctions in terms of eligible participants. The need for this fine tuning has become apparent in the operation of the first approval round, and these proposed changes if approved will be submitted formally to the Commission with a view to achieving an amended decision in due course.

#### 3. ESF Operational Programme – Proposed Amendments

- 3.1 **Food Processing and Forestry Sector:** It is proposed to include the Food processing and forestry sectors for the provision of eligible vocational training activities. Primary agriculture remains ineligible under the Competitiveness Programmes being covered under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Initially there had been an understanding that the Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP) would include provision for the Food Processing and Forestry Sectors in terms of vocational training. (See Section 6.3 of the ESF Operational Programme)

Moreover, the Food and Drink sector is identified as a key growth sector in the economy of the Lowlands and Uplands Scotland area at Chapter 2, Socio-Economic Background in the ERDF Operational Programme.

Indeed it represents one of the largest sectors in terms of overall employment and gross value added. Accordingly, it will be important to align both Programmes in targeting support to this key growth sector, which together with Tourism are seen as significant and complementary economic drivers and the mainstay of rural economies.

- 3.2 **Eligible Beneficiaries:** It is proposed to introduce a sentence clarifying that the key distinction between Priorities 1 and 2 is that Priority 1 participants must be unemployed/workless and Priority 2 participants must be in employment.

## Priority 1: Progressing into Employment

The proposed additional qualifying text is provided in italics.

Page 71

- ♦ *Minimum secondary school aged* Young people identified as being at risk of not entering education, employment or training on leaving school, particularly low attainers and persistent truants.

The proposed deletion of the text in italics on Page 71 to separate re-skilling to retain individuals in the labour market, and assistance for older workers to re-enter the labour market.

- ♦ Older people seeking to re-enter the labour force *or requiring re-skilling to enable them to remain in the workforce*. **This should be moved to ESF Priority 2.**

Eligible Activities, Page 73 (3<sup>rd</sup> para)

- ♦ The distinction between beneficiaries in different priorities is not always clearcut. This is true of ESF Priority 2. **Propose to remove these two sentences to avoid confusion.**

## Priority 2: Progressing through Employment

Targeting, Page 80

- ♦ Specific groups, particularly women returners (replace with *women who have returned to the labour market*)

Individuals requiring re-skilling to enable them to remain in the workforce

Eligible Activities, Page 81

Addressing under-representation in the workforce:

- ♦ Training, mentoring and supporting *employed* men and women who want to enter occupations where their gender is under-represented, in order to tackle gender segregation and the pay gap.

Improving entrepreneurial and managerial skills:

- ♦ Initiatives to provide training for those *in employment* wishing to start up or manage a business, particularly from groups under-represented at managerial levels such as women or individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.

For Decision



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#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1** The Committee is invited to endorse the proposed changes to the ESF Operational Programme.

**March 2008**