

West Midlands ERDF Programme 2007-2013

A Programme Overview

An Introduction to ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)

ERDF is a component of the European Union's Structural Funds. Structural Funds are monies allocated to regions to stimulate economic development.

The West Midlands ERDF Programme will provide £270million of investment to create jobs and assist small and medium-sized enterprises from now until 2013.

Programme Objectives

- Achieve a significant increase in the productivity of the business base in the West Midlands.
- Reduce unemployment and inequalities.
- Ensure that the region's economic growth is achieved in a sustainable manner.

Focusing our Resource

The Programme is focused on five priority areas of activity and underpinned by the two Cross Cutting Themes Environmental Sustainability and Equal Opportunities.

- Priority 1 – Promoting Innovation and Research & Development
- Priority 2 – Stimulating Enterprise Development
- Priority 3 – Achieving Sustainable Urban Development
- Priority 4 – Developing Inter-Regional Activity
- Priority 5 – Technical Assistance

Maximising the Impact

The Programme's objectives are closely aligned with the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) and the priorities identified by the region's Strategic Boards, namely the Innovation and Technology Council, the Enterprise Board and the Regional Finance Forum. This alignment will ensure that ERDF provides the necessary additional and focused resource to help us achieve our shared goals for the region.

Improving the Regional Economy

The Programme will contribute towards closing the region's £10 billion output gap. More specifically, the Programme aims to assist 22,441 businesses to improve their performance, create 10,519 jobs and 2,495 new businesses and support the reduction of regional carbon emissions. 3,288 of those businesses assisted within the region will also engage in new collaborations with the region's knowledge base.

Measuring the Impact

Programme level indicators have been established to ensure the Programme's impact can be measured. Annual and mid-term programme reviews will determine this impact and be expressed in terms of: (i) increase in Gross Value Added (GVA), (ii) increase in employment and (iii) reduction in carbon emissions.

Delivering in Partnership

Working together with regional partners and other Programme stakeholders, Advantage West Midlands, are responsible for management of the Programme. This new role for Advantage West Midlands will provide a greater alignment between ERDF and domestic funds providing an improved co-ordination of investments. The aim is to ensure that the administration of funding is as efficient and simple as possible for applicants and beneficiaries.

A partnership-based Programme Monitoring Committee will oversee progress and performance. Partnership-based working groups will agree and commission activity in accordance with the Programme's objectives.

There are a number of administrative simplifications to help all concerned, particularly recipients of funding and project deliverers.

The 5 Priorities

Priority 1:

Promoting Innovation, Research & Development £98m

Increasing investment in research & development through:

- Stimulating business demand for innovation
- Stimulating knowledge transfer
- Developing and demonstrating technology

Priority 2:

Stimulating Enterprise Development £90m

Increasing enterprise through:

- Improving business performance
- Applied innovation and increased resource efficiency
- Developing a stronger entrepreneurial culture

Priority 3:

Achieving Sustainable Urban Development £70m

Stimulating renaissance within key urban areas through:

- Job creation
- Helping Communities most in need

Priority 4:

Developing Inter-regional Activity £4m

Working with European partners to:

- Learn and improve
- Share and apply best practice
- Solve problems

Priority 5:

Technical Assistance (TA) £8m

Resources to assist with:

- Programme preparation
- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Publicity

Information and Publicity

A comprehensive Programme Communication Plan has been produced that aims to: (i) raise public awareness of the Programme, (ii) publicise funding opportunities, and (iii) help ensure applicants and beneficiaries understand and comply with the Programme's requirements.

How to access the funds

The Programme's operations will be governed by a series of Delivery Plans (or Investment Frameworks), agreed in partnership. These Delivery Plans will set out what's to be done and by when to ensure a successful Programme outcome.

With limited resource compared to previous European Programmes speculative applications for ERDF outside of the above selection processes are not encouraged. Projects will be identified and funded through a suitable mixture of open bidding, limited bidding and non-competitive selection as laid out in each Delivery Plan.

The Cross Cutting Themes

Two Cross Cutting Themes have been established to ensure that environmental respect and social equity are fundamental features of the Programme.

CCT1 Environmental Sustainability

Efforts will focus on: the stimulation of eco-innovation, the improvement of energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

CCT2 Equal Opportunities

Ethnic minority groups, new migrant communities and women are currently all under represented in West Midlands businesses and will be given particular attention to support economic inclusion.

Implementation

For effective implementation, the Cross Cutting Themes must be embedded through all stages of the programme and project lifecycle: through governance, development, appraisal, selection, monitoring, and evaluation.

Suitable guidance, training and monitoring is being established to support all programme stakeholders.

Toolkit

Two tools have been developed to support the environmental assessment of projects:

- Carbon Reduction Assessment
- Built Environment Sustainability Checklist

Contact

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