



SUMMARY

This document represents the London Councils Tower Hamlets Community Employment ESF Programme 2014-2020 (round 1). A total of 18 projects were eligible, but 16 were eventually funded (see annex 1). The programme end predicted results, in the main, show that the programme will be successful with 73% (214 participants) gaining a level 2 or below qualification. This is a considerable achievement for Tower Hamlets residents on the programme, many of whom have no qualifications.

Soft outcomes are a clear benefit of the programme, with several projects commenting on the reduction in social isolation, improved confidence and better communication skills. In addition, the development of a range of other “hard” skills training was given, particularly basic ESOL and ICT skills.

The combination of these outcomes illustrates the value and contribution of small community level organisations in tackling worklessness and making a difference to the lives of those who live in their communities.

The Community Employment Programme also contributes to improving the capacity of small community and voluntary organisations in Tower Hamlets, and in doing so, contributes to the viability and role of the sector. For many groups, the Community Employment Programme represents the first opportunity to apply for, deliver and report on an externally funded project and this learning is often crucial to their development and sustainability. The Community Employment Programmes’ Project Managers and Quality Assurance team offer substantial one-to-one support to organisations to help them deliver their projects successfully.

INTRODUCTION

The Community Employment Programme is part of the 2014-2020 London European Social Fund (ESF) Programme. ESF in London is managed by the Greater London Authority’s (GLA) European Programmes Management Unit (EPMU) who has been designated by Government as an Intermediate Body for ESF and ERDF.

The 2014-2020 ESF Programme has two main Priorities, each with a number of Investment Priorities. The London Councils ESF Community Employment Programme operates under:

- Priority Axis 1 – Inclusive Labour Markets
- Priority 1.4 – Active Inclusion

What is Community Employment?

Round 1 of the London Councils Tower Hamlets ESF Community Employment Programme works under ESF Priority 1.4, to support people furthest away from the labour market. The Community Employment Programme grants are:

- small grants (up to £20,000)



- given to small non-governmental or VCS organisations in Tower Hamlets (eligibility criteria apply)
- for projects which help long-term unemployed and economically inactive people move into or closer to the labour market in line with the Tower Hamlets Employment Strategy
- for projects that will run for a maximum of nine months of delivery, with a further three months to close the project
- for projects that contribute to the 2014-20 London European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) Strategy for London.
- the Community Employment programme aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects. The programme is open to organisations that:
- given to organisations whom have an annual income of less than £150,000 (or £250,000 if the organisation works exclusively with people with a disability)

The Community Employment Programme is aimed at specific groups who are felt to be at highest risk of social exclusion:

- Residents housed by Tower Hamlets in temporary accommodation in neighbouring boroughs
- Those in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payments
- Women, in particular Somali and Bangladeshi women and those who are economically inactive due to parental and/or caring responsibilities
- People with health issues, particularly mental health or a disability
- Lone parents, particularly those living in temporary accommodation
- Residents who are 50+ years old
- Long-term unemployed and economically inactive residents who have not engaged with any projects or developed their skills in the last two years.

Application Process

The Community Employment programme is promoted through mail outs, the Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Services and the London Councils website. The Community Employment team also promote the programme through a series of promotional workshops, where the application process is explained to potential applicants, giving them a chance to ask questions and network with other voluntary sector organisations.

Once the deadline is reached applications are assessed for eligibility using a due diligence framework, then scored by London Councils and Tower Hamlets officers. Individual scores are then moderated. Applications are scored out of 100; a minimum score threshold of over 50 is required for organisations to be funded. All eligible applications are then put before an appraisal panel (internal and external).

Payment of Funding

All successful organisations are paid 50% of their grant on signing their funding agreement (subject to due diligence requirement being met), then 30% of the grant on evidencing 50% of total grant defrayed. The final 20% is paid on submission of evidence of defrayal of 100% of grant expenditure.



At each stage, payment is released once organisations have submitted copies of expenditure, participant enrolment forms and evidence templates to demonstrate that delivery, and expenditure, has taken place.

1. PROGRAMME OUTPUTS AND RESULTS

The programme aimed to support people from a range of key equality and priority groups. Round one's package of provision is due to end March 2019.

Table 1 shows the participants the projects will be supporting through their projects.

Table 1 Programme targets groups (numbers achieved to October 2018)

Target group	Profiled Target (%)	Achieved To Date (against original target)	% of profiled starts
Enrolments (starts)	292	193 (66%)	66%
Long term unemployed	90 (31%)	70 (78%)	24%
Economically inactive	196 (67%)	123 (63%)	42%
Over 50	47(16%)	32 (68%)	11%
Women	214 (73%)	165 (77%)	56%
Lone parents	38 (13%)	25 (66%)	8%
Ethnic minorities	265 (91%)	186 (70%)	64%
Disabled (self declared)	19(6%)	9 (47%)	3%

The targets achieved to-date are encouraging and it is anticipated that by the end of the programme, as we get more enrolment data submitted, that the targets should be met.

Equality Groups

The Community Employment programme contains targets for the numbers within each equality group that the funded projects need to engage with. The figures in table 2 show that the programme is likely to hit the target for supporting participants from the Bangladeshi community, but it is likely to underachieve in engaging with participants in the other equality groups. This is a reflection of the community based within Tower Hamlets, where the Bangladeshi community make up 32% of the populationⁱ.



Table 2: Ethnicity (based on figures submitted up to October 2018)

		Profiled	Achieved
Asian/Asian British	Indian	3	0
	Pakistani	2	0
	Bangladeshi	195	134
	Chinese	0	1
	Other	1	2
Black/Black British	African	6	2
	Caribbean	1	0
	Somali	53	4
	Other	2	0
White	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	19	7
	Irish	0	0
	Gypsy or Irish traveller	0	0
	Other	2	1
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	1	0
	White and Black African	0	0
	White and Asian	0	0
	Other	2	0
Other	Arab	1	0
	Other	4	1

Results

The Tower Hamlets Community Employment Programme expects funded projects to deliver a range of outputs and results. Table 3 sets out the expected and achieved results delivered to October 2018.



Table 3

Result	Profiled Results (%)	Achieved To Date (against original target)	% of Profiled Starts
Enrolments (starts)	292	193 (66%)	66%
6+ hours of support (IAG, job-search, mentoring, training, 1-2-1)	272 (93%)	186 (68%)	64%
Level 2 (or below) qualification	246 (84%)	109 (44%)	37%
Further education or training provider or specified accredited support service within 4 weeks of leaving the project	88 (30%)	11 (12%)	4%
Long-term unemployed participants in employment within 4 weeks of leaving the project	36 (12%)	9 (25%)	3%
Economically inactive participants in employment/ job search within 4 weeks of leaving the project	84 (29%)	10 (12%)	3%
Participants in sustained employment for 26 weeks	14 (5%)	1 (7%)	0.3%

There are clearly barriers to engaging with economically inactive and long-term unemployed participants, given their economic, as well as social exclusion. This illustrates the need for continued support for these organisations that are dedicated to reaching out to people in their community who often feel excluded from other training provision.

The predicted figures for the results achieved by the end of the programme look more promising. We will have a better idea in the coming months, as projects draw to a close and submit their enrolment data, what the final results will look like.

Challenges

The Tower Hamlets projects have been finding it difficult to understand and manage the reporting requirements of ESF. We are providing extra support to projects, where needed to help with this. Our Quality Assurance staff have conducted a minimum of two visits to ensure provider enrolment paperwork is eligible. Also, projects have been assigned a London Councils project manager to visit them on a fortnightly or monthly basis, to check all financial and enrolment data.



There has been an ongoing issue with some groups verifying the employment status of their participants. Due to cultural barriers, some of the female participants in Tower Hamlets have not been able to provide the documentation needed to verify their employment status. To resolve this, London Councils has suggested that verification is sought from their mosque or other third sector organisation they may have received training from.

Successes

Links with Jobcentre Plus have proved invaluable for Wise Youth Trust. The organisation put links in place with Job Centre Plus before their project commenced. They regularly do presentations at the Job Centre to recruit participants. This has resulted in the Jobcentre referring participants to their project and also promptly signing the job centre referral form to confirm employment status.

Betar Bangla are offering a 12 week media presentation course. They are currently working with 10 Bangladeshi women. All the women are economically inactive (in most instances, for over 3 years). They have learnt a new skill in a sector that tends to be male dominated. Their course will culminate with them presenting live in the Betar Bangla studio.

Dorset Community Association, Wapping Bangladesh Association, The Rooted Forum, Weavers Community Forum, Newark Youth London and Olive Tree, have worked to ensure that collectively 71 participants achieve a Level 1 (or below) qualification. This includes employment skills training in Health and Social Care; Food Safety and Hygiene; First Aid and Customer Service.

Effectiveness of Community Employment

If this programme had not been funded, it is unlikely that the majority of activities would not have taken place, although it is not possible to comment on the extent to which organisations would have supported individuals in the absence of funding, as many small organisation's staff often work on a voluntary basis to deliver services in the community.

However, Community Employment can represent the only source of funding some organisations receive. The feedback from many projects funded under the Community Employment Programme suggests the funding and support received has helped them to improve their processes and services, which may lead to them operating more effectively in the future.

2. Application Round 2

Organisations based within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets were invited to submit applications for £20,000 from a total investment pot of £400,000 was the original intention to award up to twenty grants through this second round.

Ten submissions were received by the deadline of 12 noon on 9 November 2018 (see annex 2).



The applicants were subject to a series of 'gateway checks' i.e. eligibility requirements for the programme. The application prospectus highlighted that failure to provide any of the documents or other evidence specified (in the gateway questions or the application process) may result in an application not being scored.

Using the moderated scores, applications fell into the following categories:

- 9 applications scored above 50
- 1 application scored under 50.

Internal Panel

An Internal Panel meeting was held on 28 November 2018. The following officers were in attendance:

- Ellie Kershaw – Tower Hamlets Council
- Robert Mee – Tower Hamlets Council
- Karen Ferguson - London Councils
- Yolande Burgess - London Councils (Chair).

External Panel

An External Panel meeting was held on 29 November 2018 to provide final judgement on application. The following officers were in attendance:

- Sarah Bennett – GLA
- Robert Mee – Tower Hamlets Council
- Ali Ahmed – Tower Hamlets Council
- Karen Ferguson - London Councils
- Yolande Burgess - London Councils (Chair).

3. Next steps

Due Diligence

Due diligence will take place for all 9 applicants. The checks will consist of:

- Credit reference checks
- Financial (e.g. financial history or accounting systems)
- Legal (e.g. governing documents).

The Pre-agreement meeting

The Pre-agreement meeting will take place between the provider and a London Councils ESF officer. The meeting aims to outline the London Councils' project delivery process including:



- Roles and responsibilities between London Councils and the organisation
- Review working relationships with project sub-partners (include SLAs)
- Confirmation of the outputs and results the project will deliver
- Agreement of the Project Delivery Schedule
- Review Risk Register and intended actions to mitigate and manage risks
- Explain London Councils' ESF monitoring and payment arrangements
- Confirm evidence requirements for expenditure, outputs and results
- Confirm evaluation requirements
- Confirm publicity requirements
- Confirm Data Protection requirements

At the meeting, a list of actions for the provider will be drawn up. These actions must be completed before the organisation is issued with a funding agreement. These actions will include but are not limited to:

- Ensuring that the organisations project delivery schedule profile signed and submitted
- Ensuring that London Councils received the organisations completed bank details template
- Ensuring that the organisations cash flow forecast is completed
- Clarification of any outstanding due diligence issues or issues identified in the organisations application

¹ https://www.npi.org.uk/files/6614/7316/1332/Demography_and_deprivation_in_Southwark_and_Tower_Hamlets.pdf