



**West Midlands
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme 2007-13**

15 September – 5 December 2008 – Open Call for Outline Proposals

This document sets out the process Advantage West Midlands ('the Agency') will follow to invite Outline Proposals for ERDF grant funding under a September Open Bidding Call for Proposals under **Priority Axis 2** of the West Midlands ERDF Programme 2007-13.

1. About Advantage West Midlands

- Advantage West Midlands is the Regional Development Agency (RDA) for the West Midlands. We are one of nine RDAs in England that were established to transform the English regions through sustainable economic development.
- Our role is to lead the economic development of the West Midlands, working alongside a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners to help our region to prosper - building upon our many strengths and addressing our unique challenges.
- Advantage West Midlands has an annual budget of more than £300 million to invest in the economic development of the West Midlands and, at any one time, is managing around 2,500 projects which are changing the lives of people right across our region.
- We drive economic development by identifying where the greatest impact can be made either by targeting need or investing in success.
- Our key task is to provide leadership for the development and delivery of the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) - the framework for our region's growth. This enables us to leverage and maximise investment into our region and thereby create a far greater impact than we could do by acting in isolation.

2. About ERDF

- ERDF is a component of the European Union's Structural Funds. Structural Funds are monies allocated directly to regions to stimulate their economic development. The West Midlands ERDF programme is funded under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective.
- Working together with regional partners and other stakeholders, and under delegated authority from UK Government, the Agency is responsible for managing ERDF resources in the West Midlands for the period 2007-13.
- The West Midlands ERDF Programme 2007-13 has an allocation of €400m.

3. ERDF Programme Objectives and Content

- The objectives of the West Midlands ERDF Programme 2007-13 are closely aligned with the WMES and the priorities identified by the region's Strategic Boards. This alignment will ensure that ERDF provides the necessary additional and focused resource to help us achieve our shared goals for the region. The ERDF Programme will contribute towards closing the region's £10 billion output gap through its objectives:
 1. To achieve a significant increase in the productivity of the business base in the West Midlands;
 2. To reduce unemployment and inequalities; and
 3. To ensure that the region's economic growth is achieved in a sustainable manner, which aids its transformation towards both a low-carbon and high-value added economy.
- To achieve these objectives the ERDF Programme is focused on five priority areas of activity, underpinned by two Cross Cutting Themes of Environmental Sustainability and Equal Opportunities:
 - Priority Axis 1: Promoting Innovation, Research & Development
 - Priority Axis 2: Stimulating Enterprise Development
 - Priority Axis 3: Achieving Sustainable Urban Development
 - Priority Axis 4: Developing Inter-Regional Activity
 - Priority Axis 5: Technical Assistance
- More specifically, the Programme aims to:
 - Assist circa 22,000 businesses to improve their performance;

- Create circa 10,500 new jobs and circa 2,500 new businesses; and
 - Support the reduction of regional carbon emissions.
 - Circa 3,000 of those businesses assisted within the region will also engage in new collaborations with the region's knowledge base.
- The strategy and evidence base behind the programme and the areas of activity to be delivered to achieve the ERDF programme objectives are detailed in the ERDF Operational Programme (OP) document which was drawn up by a regional partnership including AWM and other key regional stakeholders in accordance with European and National Guidelines.
 - More detailed information on what can be funded through the ERDF Programme is contained within Chapter 4 of the ERDF Operational Programme document which is available to download from the Agency's website:

<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/working-with-us/ERDF-Programme/default.aspx>

4. ERDF Programme Governance and Initiation of Operations

- Partnership plays a key role in the delivery and management of the ERDF Programme. The ERDF programme is overseen by a Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) the membership of which is drawn from representatives of the bodies of the regional partnership to reflect national, regional, local and sectoral interests of the ERDF Programme.
- The PMC is responsible for ensuring the programme's overall strategic direction and that it meets the agreed spend and indicator targets.
- To assist it to fulfil its responsibilities, and, reflecting the agreed terms of reference and rules of procedure, the PMC has established thematically based Priority Working Groups (PWGs) for each of the Priority Axes of the ERDF Programme with appropriate delegation of PMC tasks.
- Further information on the ERDF Programme's partnership and governance arrangements are available from the ERDF dedicated section of the Agency's website.
- Each Priority Axis is governed by an Investment Framework which sets the activities and operations that the PMC have agreed they wish to see delivered under the ERDF Programme, often broken down into relevant Portfolios of activity. These Investment Frameworks are agreed in partnership through the PWGs and approved through the PMC.

- The Investment Frameworks include the procedure for selecting operations:
 - Open bidding – where an open invitation is published for applications for the support of operations that meet a specified priority or objective of the ERDF Programme;
 - Limited bidding – where a limited number of project sponsors is identified and invited to bid for the support of operations or sets of targets or outputs that meet a specified priority or objective of the ERDF Programme;
 - Non-competitive selection – where a single project sponsor (or perhaps two or more) is either selected as appearing to be the only suitable and capable vehicle for delivering a specific operation or set of programme targets or outputs and invited to submit an application for financial assistance; or applies for financial assistance on its own initiative for the support of an operation or a set of targets or outputs that appears to meet a priority or objective of the ERDF Programme.
- The Investment Frameworks are live documents that will evolve throughout the ERDF Programme period under the oversight of the PWGs under the delegated authority of the PMC. The most up-to-date versions of the Investment Frameworks are available from the ERDF dedicated section of the Agency's website.
- The PWG for Priority 2, at their meeting on 2 September 2008 endorsed a proposal to produce a specification for an Open Bidding Call in relation to a number of Portfolios of activity under Priority 2.

5. Content of the Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals

- The purpose of this Open Bidding Call for ERDF Outline Proposals is to initiate a series of projects under Priority Axis 2 – Stimulating Enterprise Development.
- **Specifically, Outline Proposals are invited under the following portfolios and portfolio subsets:**
 - o **Portfolio 1: Improving business performance**
 - Subset 1: In depth tailored business support to improve overall competitiveness and performance
 - o **Portfolio 2: Developing applied innovation activity and improving resource efficiency**

- Subset 1: Work with businesses to identify and take up opportunities for innovation
 - Subset 2: Actions which assist businesses to become more profitable through uptake of products or processes with reduced environmental impact
- o **Portfolio 3: Developing a stronger entrepreneurial culture**
- Subset 1: Encouraging high growth start ups within the identified clusters
 - Subset 2: Support to groups that face barriers to creating a sustainable business
 - Subset 3: Access to micro finance and business support activity to start up and early stage businesses in areas of low business formation
- The value of the Open Bidding Call will be up to an **indicative £23.25M of ERDF** allocated to Priority Axis 2 – Stimulating Enterprise Development.
 - Indicative allocations have been agreed at the level of the portfolios and portfolio subsets as follows

Portfolio	Portfolio subset	Available ERDF £M
1. Improving business performance	1. In depth tailored business support to improve overall competitiveness and performance	5.0
2. Developing applied innovation activity and improving resource efficiency	1. Work with businesses to identify and take up opportunities for innovation	2.5
	2. Actions which assist businesses to become more profitable through uptake of products or processes with reduced environmental impact/	0.75
3: Developing a stronger entrepreneurial culture	1: Encouraging high growth start ups within the identified clusters	5.0
	2: Support to groups that face barriers to creating a sustainable business	5.0
	3: Access to micro finance and business support activity to start up and early stage businesses in areas of low business formation	5.0
Total		23.25

- Depending on the nature of the proposed activity, applicants may bring forward a project under one or more of these portfolios and portfolio subsets.
- The indicative allocations do not guarantee that projects totalling these amounts will be taken forward under each portfolio subset, as insufficient levels of proposals may be received, or proposals may fail to meet the specification or parameters outlined in the appendices to this document.
- The basis on which (i) Outline Proposals will be reviewed and (ii) the recommendation as to whether or not Outline Proposals are to be submitted into the Agency's project application, appraisal and selection process are defined in Appendices 1 and 2 to this document:
 - Appendix 1 – Specification for Outline Proposals under Priority 2 and
 - Appendix 2 – Indicative criteria for reviewing and recommending Outline Proposals under Priority 2 to proceed to the Agency's application process.
- Appendix 3 to this document contains the Project Selection Criteria and reference to the Eligibility Rules which will be used as part of the appraisal of any projects which proceed to the Agency's application process. In particular, attention is drawn to match funding guidance in Appendix 3.
- Appendix 4 to this document contains useful contact details for those developing proposals under this call.

6. Timescales

- The Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals will be deemed open from the first date of publication of the call, being **15th September 2008** and remain open until **12.00 noon on the 5th December 2008**. During this time, organisations will be able to submit their Outline Proposals at any time before the Open Bidding Call closes in accordance with Section 8 below.

7. Workshops

- To aid applicants to develop projects under this bidding round two workshops will be held as follows:

Workshop 1:

Tuesday 30th September, 2.00pm to 4.00pm, Faraday Wharf, Aston Science Park

The objective of this workshop is to provide information on the call; advice on the products under the Business Support Simplification Programme; information on Business Link West Midlands provision and recommendations on how to ensure appropriate linkages are made and duplication is avoided. It is aimed at those who are interested in developing proposals under the bidding round.

Workshop 2:

Thursday 30th October, 2.00pm to 4.00pm, Advantage West Midlands

The objective of this workshop is to provide a forum for Applicants to ask more detailed questions that have arisen as proposals are developed.

- Representatives from the Agency's European Programmes Management Team and Business Support Policy Team will be available to answer questions at both workshops.
- Applicants are invited to attend both workshops, although attendance is not compulsory. Places are limited so please contact erdf@advantagewm.co.uk by 24th September to book your place, stating your name, telephone number and the organisation you represent.
- For transparency, any information provided at the workshops will be published on our website alongside the bidding documentation following the event.

8. Communicating the Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals

- The Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals will be communicated to partners through:
 1. The dedicated ERDF section of the Agency's website; and
 2. The issue of an e-mail bulletin to relevant Agency stakeholders
- The Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals will be placed on the dedicated ERDF section of the Agency's website from **15th September to 5th December 2008**. This period of notice provides for appropriate public access to information about the Agency's Open Bidding Call for Outline Proposals to ensure that the process is operated in an open and transparent manner.

9. Format for submitting Outline Proposals

- Responses to the Open Bidding Call must be made on the Agency's ERDF Standard Outline Proposal Form. Responses which are not on this form will be rejected.
- Completed Outline Proposals must be returned by no later than **12:00 noon on 5th December 2008** in:
 1. Electronic format to the Agency's European Programme Management Team using the following e-mail address: erdf@advantagewm.co.uk ; **AND**
 2. Signed, hard copy format to the Agency's European Programme Management Team at the address below:

**European Programme Management Team
Advantage West Midlands
3 Priestley Wharf
Holt Street
Birmingham
B7 4BN**

- Receipt of Outline Proposals will be acknowledged by email within 48 hours of receipt and will then be reviewed in accordance with the process set out in Sections 3 and 9.
- Where Outline Proposals are received after the Open Bidding Call closing date they will not be accepted.
- **NOTE: Verbal, faxed or telephone Outline Proposals will not be accepted.**

10. Process for Outline Proposals

- Interested organisations are invited to submit Outline Proposals using the Outline Proposal Pack, which is available from the Agency website at:

<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/working-with-us/developing-your-project/outline-proposal-pack.aspx>.
- Outline Proposals will be reviewed by the Agency's European Programme Management Team to determine if they will be recommended to proceed to the Agency's application process. This will be done using the criteria defined in Appendices 1 and 2 to this document:

- Appendix 1 – Specification for Outline Proposals under Priority 2 and
- Appendix 2 – Indicative criteria for reviewing and recommending Outline Proposals under Priority 2 to proceed to the Agency's application process.
- Those projects which, following review, are recommended to proceed to the Agency's application process will then be progressed through the Agency's application process which consists of:
 - Assessment of the Outline proposal and subsequent endorsement / rejection by the Agency's Investment Decision Group (IDG) or relevant Corporate Director;
 - If successful, followed by submission of a Full Application for appraisal and approval / rejection at IDG.
- Further details on the Agency's two stage application process can be found within the Project Development Pack on the Agency's website:

<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/working%2Dwith%2Dus/developing%2Dyour%2Dproject/>

11. Informing Proposers of Decisions and Providing Feedback

- The European Programme Management Team will inform the Proposer of the decision taken and feedback will be provided in writing and will include the reasons for the decision.
- The decision taken, the reasons for the decision and associated feedback will all be provided within 15 working days of the closure of the Open Call for Outline Proposals.

12. Further Advice and Contact Details

Any enquiries regarding this Open Bidding Call for Proposals can be made to:

Anna Vinsen
ERDF Priority Manager
European Programme Management Team
Advantage West Midlands

Telephone: 0121 503 3211
E-mail: annavinsen@advantagewm.co.uk

Appendix 1

Specification for Outline Proposals under Priority Axis 2 – Stimulating Enterprise Development

Support under this open call will be primarily focused at businesses within the priority business clusters identified in the West Midlands Economic Strategy, namely: Aerospace; Automotive; Building Technologies; Business & Professional Services; Environmental Technologies; Food & Drink; High Value Added Consumer Products; ICT; Manufacturing; Medical Technologies; Rail; Screen Image & Sound; and Tourism & Leisure.

However, an exception to the cluster focus will be made under Subset 2 of Portfolio 3 where activities are focused on increasing the economic engagement of particular under-represented client groups.

- **Portfolio 1: Improving business performance**
The aim of this portfolio is to stimulate and improve the competitiveness and performance of businesses within the priority clusters through actions which improve productivity and support diversification into new products and markets.
 - o **Subset 1: In depth tailored business support to improve overall competitiveness and performance**
This subset of the portfolio aims to make available expert help to companies in the priority clusters offering in depth tailored business support to improve overall competitiveness and performance. This will include support to businesses wishing to diversify into activity covered by the clusters. An indicative £5M ERDF has been allocated to this portfolio subset under this open call.
- **Portfolio 2: Developing Applied Innovation Activity and Improving Resource Efficiency**
The aim of this portfolio is to embed the principles of innovation and sustainability across the business clusters.
 - o **Subset 1: Work with businesses to identify and take up opportunities for innovation**

This subset of the portfolio will support mentoring to enhance awareness and education of the economic benefits of investing in innovation, working with businesses in the clusters to identify and take up opportunities for innovation. An indicative £2.5M ERDF has been allocated to this Portfolio subset under this open call.

- o **Subset 2: Actions which assist businesses to become more profitable through uptake of products or processes with reduced environmental impact**

This subset of the portfolio will support specific actions which assist businesses to become more profitable through resource efficiency savings, waste management, the uptake of eco innovation and processes with reduced environmental impact. An indicative £0.75M ERDF has been allocated to this portfolio subset under this open call.

- **Portfolio 3: Developing a Stronger Entrepreneurial Culture**

This portfolio aims to generate new business in those areas of the regional economy that show the greatest potential for growth and higher value added. In addition activity will be supported which promotes entrepreneurial activity amongst underrepresented groups or within areas of low business formation.

- o **Subset 1: Encouraging high growth start ups within the identified clusters**

This subset of the portfolio focuses on encouraging high growth start ups within the business clusters. This will give important impetus to companies showing the potential for fast business and employment growth. This activity will provide business support measures during their start up phase and initial stages of development, to ensure they have access to the resources they need to reach their potential. An indicative £5M ERDF has been allocated to this portfolio subset under this open call.

- o **Subset 2: Support to groups that face barriers to creating a sustainable business**

This subset of the priority will provide dedicated support, advice and mentoring to those groups that face barriers to creating sustainable businesses, such as women, certain Black Minority Ethnic groups, and the disabled. In particular, it will target additional 'investment readiness' support to help these particular social groups to raise finance. This activity

will be across all sectors of economic activity throughout the region. An indicative £5M ERDF has been allocated to this portfolio subset under this open call.

o **Subset 3: Access to micro finance and business support activity to start up and early stage businesses in areas of low business formation**

This subset of the portfolio will seek to address the low rate of business formation prevalent in areas of multiple deprivation which are concentrated within the two major conurbations, neighbouring districts and the more isolated and remote rural areas. Access to micro finance and business support activity will be available for start up and early stage businesses in these areas, including social and community enterprises. Support will be available to progress LEGI type initiatives. Packages operating under Priority Axis 3: Sustainable Urban Development are particularly encouraged to access funds for enterprise support activities under this subset of portfolio 3. An indicative £5M ERDF has been allocated to this portfolio subset under this open call.

- Priority Axis 2 is required to deliver the following ERDF output and results targets, and proposals should quantify the outputs and results that they will seek to deliver.

Type	Output Description	Total
Output	No of businesses assisted to improve their performance	13,223
Output	No of businesses assisted that are SMEs	887
Output	No of businesses assisted that are social enterprises	67
Output	No of businesses within the region engaged in new collaborations with the UK knowledge base	98
Output	Public and private investment leverage	10,000,000
Output	No of people assisted to get a job	297
Output	No of people assisted to start a business (see note 1 below)	297
Result	No of gross jobs created (see note 2 below)	7,969
Result	No of gross jobs safeguarded	1,125
Result	No of new businesses created and attracted to the region	2,380
Result	CO ₂ reduction per project type	tbc

- Projects may also deliver other available ERDF outputs and results in the programme. The full list of available outputs and results, their definitions and the evidence which will be required to support them can be obtained from the Agency.

Parameters for reviewing Outline Proposals under Priority Axis 2

The basis on which (i) Outline Proposals will be reviewed and (ii) the recommendation as to whether or not Outline Proposals are to be submitted into the Agency's project application, appraisal and selection process will be determined by the proposal's fit with the following parameters:

- Proposals will need to fit with products defined under the Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP). BSSP is being led by the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) and is designed to reduce the number of publicly funded business support products and services. A number of business support products have been defined at national level. After 2010 all publicly funded business support must be aligned to these products, including those supported through the ERDF Programme. Product descriptors are available from the Agency website at <http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/what-we-do/helping-business/business-support.aspx>
- Applicants should ensure that the activity that they are proposing will not duplicate any activity that is delivered by Business Link West Midlands. Business Link West Midlands is the primary access channel for publicly funded business support in our region. The service comprises Information, Diagnostic and Brokerage (including start up). Next year, Business Link West Midlands will also be launching specialist information diagnostic and brokerage services in the following areas: innovation, ICT, resource efficiency, investment readiness, and design. More information on Business Link West Midlands provision is available at www.businesslinkwm.co.uk
- Applicants should demonstrate a commitment to work closely with Business Link West Midlands to ensure appropriate linkages are made in terms of cross referrals and that business support products are branded consistently.
- Similarly, in the field of micro finance, Advantage West Midlands is keen to ensure a minimum of duplication of activity whilst obtaining full regional coverage at the best value for public money. Proposals to deliver micro finance under this call should therefore set out clearly how they complement or enhance the activities of organisations which already deliver micro finance in the West Midlands. In this regard, the Agency is aware of the following organisations active in this field: Aston Reinvestment Trust (ART); Black Business in Birmingham (3b), Black Country Enterprise Loan Fund, Black Country Reinvestment Society, Coventry & Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust, Heart of England Money,

Impetus, North Staffs Risk Capital Fund, Street UK, The Arrow Fund, The Halal Fund, The Prince's Trust, Midlands Community Finance (formerly Derby Loans), The Michelin Fund.

- Projects must provide robust evidence of market failure and present a strong demand led business case.
- In recommending whether or not Outline Proposals are to be submitted into the Agency's project application, appraisal and selection process, account will be taken of the breadth and balance of activities that are being proposed across all the Outline Proposals submitted along with the activities already initiated or identified in the Investment Framework, to ensure there is a balanced level of activities at the Portfolio and Investment Framework level.
- Priority will be given to those projects where match funding is secured. Further guidance on eligible sources of match, and contribution rates can be found in Appendix 3.
- A limited amount of single budget resource has been made available for use as match funding of last resort under this bidding round, specifically for those proposals under Subset 2 of Portfolio 3 offering enterprise support to groups that face barriers to creating a sustainable business. Proposals which are likely to be seeking Advantage West Midlands Single Budget for use as match-funding under this portfolio should ensure alignment with the National Enterprise Strategy. This is available at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/bbf/enterprise-smes/enterprise-framework/index.html> Applicants who can demonstrate a successful track record working with under-represented groups will be particularly encouraged.
- Collaborations of organisations are encouraged to respond in order to facilitate the availability of greater levels of match funding.

Appendix 3

General Guidelines for Applicants for West Midlands ERDF Programme funding

The West Midlands ERDF programme has a strong focus on the knowledge economy, enterprise, sustainable development and economic inclusion. It is 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. The programme is also underpinned by the two cross cutting themes of Environmental Sustainability and Equal Opportunities which run through all aspects of programme and project delivery.

Proposals need to deliver ERDF outputs and results assigned to the relevant Priority Axis and meet the eligibility criteria set out in West Midlands ERDF Operational Programme, relevant European Council and Commission Regulations and National Eligibility Rules, as set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in their role as the Managing Authority.

ERDF Project Selection Criteria

To be deemed eligible for funding through the West Midlands ERDF Programme, proposals must:

- Meet the relevant European and national eligibility criteria as defined in the Commission Regulations and the Communities and Local Government (CLG) User Guide;
- Contribute to the delivery of the strategy and objectives defined within the West Midlands ERDF Operational Programme;
- Form part of one or more of the Investment Frameworks as prepared and agreed by the regional partnership via Priority Working Groups;
- Demonstrate clear additionality;
- Demonstrate market failure to a suitable level of certainty;
- Align suitably with:
 - The West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES);
 - The strategic plans of the relevant Regional Boards; and
 - Regional strategies and sub-regional strategies and delivery plans where appropriate. (This includes the Agency's Sustainable Development Policy, Equality and Diversity Action Plan and Enterprise and Business Support Policy which are available from section E of the Project Development Pack).
- Demonstrate acceptable value for money in terms of outputs and results returned on the investment;

- Have a sound funding package in place either having secured, or demonstrating a strong expectation of being able to secure, eligible sources of match funding;
- Exhibit linkage with the National European Social Fund Programme where relevant;
- Demonstrate a positive environmental impact where possible, or as a minimum limit the negative impacts. Specifically, and where appropriate, this should be suitably articulated within the AWM's Carbon Reduction Assessment and Built Environment Checklist;
- Demonstrate a positive contribution towards equality of opportunity including gender equality;
- Have satisfactorily progressed through the Advantage West Midlands' project process;
- Be deemed a legally and technically sound investment by the AWM Investment Decision Group which operates under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive in his/her role of Accounting Officer for the ERDF.

European and National Eligibility Criteria

The offer of ERDF grant is paid against identified eligible expenditure. Eligible expenditure relates to those elements of a project's costs which conform to the eligibility criteria as defined within European Regulations, National Eligibility Criteria and the Operational Programme.

It is essential that eligibility criteria are strictly adhered to throughout the whole of the project lifecycle as failure to comply with these eligibility rules may lead to financial penalties up to the total value of the approved grant.

Detailed guidance on eligibility is set out in the ERDF Eligibility rules guidance which can be obtained from Advantage West Midlands.

Applicants are advised to consult this document when developing proposals to determine the level of eligible expenditure.

ERDF Outputs and Results

Outputs and Results have been established to ensure that a project's impact can be measured. This will form part of the value for money assessment carried out during appraisal.

Detailed guidance on ERDF Outputs & Results, their definitions and the evidence which will be required to support them can be obtained from Advantage West Midlands.

Match Funding Guidelines

To be eligible for support under the West Midlands ERDF Programme, proposals must meet a number of project selection criteria. These include a requirement to have a sound funding package in place either having secured or demonstrating a strong expectation of being able to secure, eligible sources of match funding.

Match funding is the contribution of another source of finance to the eligible costs of a project. Under this programme, only public funding can be used as match funding. This includes all funding which can be traced back to a public source: such as local authorities, national government departments, Advantage West Midlands, lottery funders, Higher Education Funding for Council for England (HEFCE), Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), and Capacity Builders.

An exception to the above is that public monies which are already matched with European funding such as ESF, ERDF, Leonardo, Framework 7, cannot also be used as match to draw down funds under this programme. For instance, funding through the Co Finance Plans from the Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus should not be used as match, as this element of their grant is already matched with ESF. Similarly, care should be taken with monies received through a sub contract with Business Link West Midlands, as core funding to Business Link is already matched with ERDF.

Private sector funding is no longer reported as match-funding under the 2007 – 2013 ERDF Programme. Private sector finance will be reported as an output of private sector leverage. Proposals may contain private sector funds as part of the total funding package but this will not be reported in the eligible funding package of the project or as part of the eligible expenditure.

Further, contributions in kind are ineligible to be used as match or as private sector leverage, except in cases where a clear valuation can be made, such as the donation of a building or land. SME in-kind staff time will no longer be eligible. This will reduce the administrative burden previously placed on SMEs in recording and reporting staff time and payroll records.

Proposals will, in the main, be funded on a 50% ERDF, 50% public sector match basis, thereby reducing match-funding complications. In exceptional circumstances different intervention rates may be possible, but these will need to be agreed with the ERDF Programme Management Team.

Appendix 4 Useful Contacts

Any enquiries relating to this Open Bidding Call for Proposals can be made to:

Anna Vinsen
ERDF Priority Manager
European Programme Management Team
Advantage West Midlands
Telephone: 0121 503 3211
E-mail: annavinsen@advantagewm.co.uk

Business Link West Midlands have provided a central contact point for applicants developing proposals under this call who have specific concerns relating to duplication with existing or future provision.

E-mail erdfenquiries@businesslinkwm.co.uk stating the topic area and the nature of the enquiry.

West Midlands European Network (WMEN) is a non-profit making organisation funded under the regional structural funds programmes which can provide specific guidance and assistance to support voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises to develop proposals under this call. Contact Andy Stowe on 0121 683 8891, 07961 969464 or andy@wmeuronet.org for further details.

Women's Enterprise Centre of Expertise (WECOE) is a strategic body, funded by Advantage West Midlands in partnership with Prowess, which supports the development and promotion of women's enterprise across the West Midlands region. Applicants who wish to develop a proposal to support women's enterprise activity may wish to contact Marla Nelson at WECOE m.nelson@prowess.org.uk who can advise on existing provision and how to embed good practice in future projects.

The Fair Finance Consortium is a collaboration of 10 independent not-for-profit financial services providers which deliver micro finance in the West Midlands. Applicants who wish to develop a proposal to deliver micro finance under this call should ensure that they complement or enhance existing provision, details of which are available from the fair finance consortium's website: www.fair-finance.net