

Enterprise M3 Board

29 July 2021

EU Programme Update – Item 17

Board members are asked to **NOTE** the progress on the EU Programme.

1. General Update

- 1.1. The ESIF Programme and portfolio of contracted ERDF, ESF and EAFRD projects in the Enterprise M3 LEP area are guaranteed to the end delivery date of 31 December 2023. However, opportunities for new ESIF funding calls are now closed.
- 1.2. Two competitive bids were received under the recent ESF call 'Skills support for employment for armed veterans and Families' that closed on 10th June 2021. We negotiated with the Managing Authority that if both proposals are of good quality, meeting the strategic requirement of the call and complementary of each other, additional funding will be released to fund both projects in our LEP area.
- 1.3. The ERDF kickstart SME grants programme for the Visitor Economy and wider SME community for Enterprise M3, Thames Valley Berkshire and Coast to Capital LEPs and Growth Hubs closed on 30th June 2021. 328 grants have been issued totalling £1,031,299. Exemphas Ltd are finalising the closure of the project and final payment to EM3 for providing the communications for this project. These small grants have made a difference to our SMEs whose businesses were negatively impacted by COVID.
- 1.4. Due to the fluctuation of exchange rate and a recent update on financial forecasts on contracted projects, additional ERDF Funding has become available nationally under the Reserve funding pot. While no further open calls are to be expected, the ERDF MA will offer additional funding to existing projects based on merit

2. European Social Fund (ESF)

- 2.1. Taking into consideration the revised exchange rate, 86.2% of our ESF allocation is published including 63.5% contracted, 29.4% spent and 10.3% in the pipeline.
- 2.2. Following hosting 4 launch events online to promote the last ESF calls in our area, the £1.5M ESF '*Community Grant Programme in EM3*' call received no bids and £1.5m ESF for '*Skills support for employment for armed forced veterans and their families in EM3*' call resulted in 2 partnership bids being submitted with a combined value of £1,838,877. We negotiated with the Managing Authority to be able to fund both bids if complementary. Appraisal decisions due in October. Both applications received are for:
 - Application 1 led by RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity, Project name = EM3 Armed Forces Veterans and Families, Value: £1,4M.
 - Application 2 led by Recruit for Spouses Limited, Project name: EM3 Recruit for Spouses and Buildforce, Value: £400k
- 2.3. We are responding to an audit on our ESF Technical Assistance Project which we anticipate will be completed by the end of September 2021. We have submitted our final claim for this project which will be paid after completion of the audit.
- 2.4. Ross Young Photography have completed the interviewing and filming for the creation of further two case study videos on our ESF projects for promoting the '*EM3 Apprenticeship & skills hub*' project and the '*Fedcap Links to Work M3*'. The videos are now in post-production, to be ready to be published by end August 2021.

- 2.5. Amion Consulting have independently evaluated the ESF technical assistance project. The summative assessment was completed at the end of May 2021 and found key objectives and outputs largely met with a slight underspending at programme level (80%) but re-investment will assist existing projects with granted extensions until the end of the programming period 31 December 2023. All events and awareness sessions run by the Technical Assistance Team were rated 'useful' or 'very good' by 98% of attendees

3. European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

- 3.1. Taking into consideration the revised exchange rate, 100% of our ERDF allocation is published, 3.3% of applications are in process, 37.54% are contracted and 10% of ERDF has been spent.
- 3.2. From the latest ERDF call, one project is still going through appraisals and awaiting decisions - E-taxi worth £700k.
- 3.3. We have completed final outputs for our ERDF Technical Assistance project which closed on 30th September 2020 for activities and 31st December for financial completion. We have submitted our final claim for the administration of the project closure in March 2021.

4. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

- 4.1. 100% of our EM3 allocation has been published with 31.7% projects contracted, 13,4% in the pipeline and 18% spent.
- 4.2. From the last EAFRD Reserve Fund call, there is 5 remaining projects currently going through assessment totaling £600,000.

Kathy Vuillaume/Susan George – 21 July 2021