

LSIS Stepping Up in Sustainability Programme: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

(Last updated on: 1 June 2010)

Leading and Learning for a Sustainable Future is a new LSIS sustainable development strategy and action plan. It is being developed and implemented in partnership with strategic partners and the sector, to support the sector in responding to the challenge of sustainable development.

A key element of the strategy is the **Stepping Up in Sustainability (SuS) Fund**, through which we are inviting bids from providers for financial support to evaluate, further develop, expand and embed effective approaches to sustainable development, and to share these approaches with other providers.

Hence we are seeking bids from individual providers or groups of providers who wish to develop and share their practice in this area. Projects can focus on sustainable development within a specific aspect of providers' operations and provision – such as:

- Curriculum
- Learning delivery and support
- Engagement and capacity building among staff and/or learners and/or stakeholders
- Operations and estates
- Strategy, leadership and business development

or can cover several or all of these themes.

However this is not an exhaustive list and we welcome innovative bids that identify other areas where approaches to sustainability might be embedded, developed and shared.

Please call the LSIS Helpline for any enquiries regarding this new Fund. The number is 0870 211 3434. For any email enquiries, please contact nathan.hawkins@lsis.org.uk.

Summary: what is the new LSIS Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund?

LSIS is pleased to invite bids from learning and skills provider organisations to join the new Stepping Up in Sustainability (SuS) Fund. The fund is designed to support projects to evaluate, further develop, expand and embed effective approaches to sustainable development, and to share these approaches with other providers. Bids, up to a maximum of £25,000, may be submitted by provider organisations working individually or in collaboration with others, but must be for activities that would have transferable learning and benefits for the wider sector rather than just an individual organisation.

How does this Fund fit with other support available?

The Fund is available to support defined projects to review, develop and disseminate practice and learning in sustainable development, and in this respect does not overlap with support available from other bodies.

When are the closing dates?

The closing date for bids is 12:00 midday on Wednesday 30th June 2010.

What are the eligibility criteria?

The LSIS Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund is only open to organisations in England whose primary function is as a provider of further education and training. Eligible providers are SFA/YPLA-funded organisations (other than schools) subject to inspection by Ofsted, with no inspection grades less than satisfactory in their most recent Ofsted inspection report. The only eligible Higher Education Institutions are those with learning and skills provision funded by the SFA/YPLA. This aspect of their provision would also be subject to inspection by Ofsted.

Provider representative bodies are not eligible to bid directly in this funding round, but may be part of a consortium bid submitted by a provider organisation.

Consultancies or other bodies involved in supporting learning and skills providers, student representative bodies, schools and school sixth forms are not currently eligible for awards from this fund.

Non-learning and skills organisations (including providers funded by BIS) may be part of a consortium which submits a bid; provided that the lead organisation is a learning and skills provider, and that the outcomes from the project offer clear and sustainable benefits to other organisations within the learning and skills sector.

All eligible bids will be judged on the published criteria, with particular emphasis on innovation and the enhancement of practice in the learning and skills sector.

What is the size of funds available? How is the amount of funding for each project to be determined?

It is for bidders to determine the amount of funding they require – based on their proposal, what they see as the outcomes, and their own assessment of how it will be carried out. Bids must be for no more than £25,000. Naturally, the assessment of bids will take into account (among other things) the match between the funding requested, the activities proposed and the outcomes being sought, as well as overall value for money.

Can individuals apply for the funds or is it just providers?

Individuals aren't eligible to apply. Bids from providers will need the support of a senior manager within the organisation and will need to be approved by their Principal/Chief Executive.

How will the funding be paid?

Successful projects will receive funding in the form of a grant. Half will be payable once the project funding has been approved. The other half will be paid on receipt of a satisfactory case study and impact assessment report. Funded projects will normally be completed within the 2010-11 financial year – ie by 31 March 2011.

How many bids can an organisation submit?

Provider organisations may only submit one bid in each bidding round. It is not possible for an organisation to lead one bid and then submit another as a partner - a consortium bid is considered a joint submission of an application.

Can I bid into this fund and also bid for other LSIS funds?

Yes. Providers may bid into this fund and also into other LSIS funds such as the Flexibility and Innovation Fund or the Resource Utilisation Network Fund. However, LSIS will not double fund any activity. LSIS is also seeking to spread its resources across the sector so will consider the number of grants received by a provider as part of its evaluation of bids.

What should the duration of the project's activity be?

We would expect projects to be completed within the current financial year – ie by 31 March 2011.

How does LSIS define sustainable development and sustainability?

The Stepping Up in Sustainability Fund is not founded on a single definition of sustainable development or sustainability, but on a number of common and traditional interpretations, such as the 'Brundtland' definition¹. These definitions, while varied, share a focus on the principle of meeting needs and maintaining quality of life both in the present and for future generations. They also share a focus on systems thinking, which takes into account the economic, social and environmental needs and considerations that 'development' should address or take account of, and the economic, social and environmental impacts and outcomes of such development. Bids for the Fund should therefore be focused upon and demonstrate such an understanding of sustainable development, and the activities proposed should have a focus on short-, medium- and long-term economic and social outcomes as well as environmental sustainability. For more background information, please visit <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/about-sustainable-development.html>.

What type of project/activity is LSIS looking to fund?

We are interested in supporting a range of projects. Bids can focus on sustainable development within a specific aspect of providers' operations and provision – such as:

- Curriculum
- Learning delivery and support
- Capacity building among staff and/or learners
- Operations and estates
- Strategy and leadership

or can cover several or all of these themes.

¹ "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." – *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, 1987

Successful bids, while having a focus on sustainable development, will also reflect an awareness of and commitment to other cross-cutting themes such as community development, equality and diversity, learner engagement and social inclusion, which are strongly allied to sustainable development within the learning and skills sector. Bidders are also encouraged to set out how learners, the local community and other stakeholders can be actively engaged with and contribute to the proposed project or activity.

Bids should show how the projects will support outcomes in teaching and learning - the core mission and purpose of the bidding organisation(s) and the sector as a whole.

Another essential feature will be the ability to produce quantitative and qualitative evidence of impact.

Are there any examples of projects/activities that LSIS has funded in the past?

This is a new area of funding and there are no previous examples of successful bids.

Can the funding be used to fund research into this area?

It can be used in part to fund research, but it is important to be aware that the bid will be judged on the ability to demonstrate impact, and half of the money will only be released on the production of evidence that shows the impact made.

How does LSIS define capital expenditure?

We define capital expenditure as expenditure used by a company to acquire or upgrade physical assets such as equipment, property, or industrial buildings. Staffing costs are not classified as capital expenditure. A maximum of 20% of the funds bid for can be allocated to capital expenditure.

Are providers expected to make a contribution to the overall cost of the bid or is this optional?

Although there is no condition of matched funding, LSIS expects projects to show that the provider(s) are undertaking (and will complete) the activity this financial year. LSIS recognises that some projects could be self contained and make exclusive use of the LSIS funding awarded, while in other cases bidders are able to provide some resources and the LSIS funding would either add value or enable the project to achieve the critical financial mass to enable it to happen.

How much detail is LSIS looking for in an application? (Is there a prescribed length, i.e. number of pages?)

There is no prescribed length. Information should be concise and clearly phrased, with enough detail for judges to make an informed decision about the ideas being presented. Applicants should read the published guidance.

Will LSIS fund certain numbers of projects on a regional or otherwise basis?

No. An application's success will be determined by its success in meeting the published criteria.

If you have a question that is not answered by the FAQs above, please email it to nathan.hawkins@isis.org.uk and we will come back to you with an answer as soon as possible.

These FAQs will be regularly reviewed and added to, to reflect any queries that we receive.