

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS)

Your local county voluntary council



7. Finding and getting money

7.4.6 Europe

The purpose of this information sheet is to:

- provide information about the European Structural Funds programmes that will be available in Wales during 2007-2013;
- provide guidance on the process of applying for funding; and
- to sign-post to further sources of information, advice and support.

Overview of Structural Funds programmes in Wales 2007-2013

Structural Funds come from the European Union directly to the 27 EU Member States to promote economic growth, employment and skills development. Regions with a gross domestic product (GDP) of less than 75% of the EU average qualify for the highest level of development aid, known as Convergence funding.

The following programmes will operate in certain eligible areas within Wales for the period 2007-2013:

Convergence

West Wales and the Valleys is eligible for the highest level of support from the EU (£1.4 billion), known as Convergence funding, which is the successor to the Objective One programme. Activity in the following 15 unitary authority areas is eligible for funding: Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, Torfaen.

The Convergence programmes comprise funding from two separate European Structural Funds: the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** and the **European Social Fund (ESF)**. Around £1 billion of ERDF funds will be channelled through the Welsh Government to help progress the region's transformation into a sustainable and competitive economy by investing in the knowledge economy and helping new and existing businesses to grow. It will also focus on regenerating Wales' most deprived communities, tackling climate change and improving transport. Some £690 million from the ESF will be used to tackle economic inactivity, increase skills and employment.

Together, the funds will total more than £1.4 billion of Convergence spending, which combined with match funding, will drive a total investment of £3.5 billion in the West Wales and the Valleys region.

The **Convergence ERDF priorities** for funding are:

Priority no.	Priority name
1	Building the knowledge based economy Theme 1: Building the knowledge economy Theme 2: ICT Infrastructure and Information society for all
2	Improving Business Competitiveness Theme 1: Enterprise Theme 2: Business finance
3	Developing strategic Infrastructure for a modern economy Theme 1: Sustainable transport Theme 2: Sustainable regeneration
4	Creating an attractive business environment Theme 1: Energy Theme 2: Climate change adaptation Theme 3: Environment for growth
5	Building Sustainable Communities Theme 1: Sustainable regeneration Theme 2: Community economic development
6	Technical assistance

The **Convergence ESF priorities** for funding are:

Priority no.	Priority name
1	Supplying young people with the skills needed for learning and future employment Theme 1: Tackling under-achievement Theme 2: Raising skills and aspirations
2	Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity Theme 1: Helping people into sustainable employment Theme 2: Helping people to remain in work
3	Improving skill levels and adaptability of the workforce Theme 1: Raising the skills level of the workforce Theme 2: Skills for the knowledge economy, higher level skills and systems for workforce development Theme 3: Promoting gender equality in employment
4	Improving public services - Making the Connections Theme 1: Transforming public services through more effective collaboration Theme 2: Building the capacity of public service sectors to deliver higher quality services
5	Technical assistance

Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE)

East Wales is classified as a Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) area and has been awarded over £110 million in European grant for the next programming period. The programme is the successor to the Objective 2 and Objective 3 programmes 2000–2006, and geographically will cover seven local authority areas in the East Wales region: Cardiff, Newport, Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Powys, Wrexham, Vale of Glamorgan.

The RCE programmes comprise funding from two separate European Structural Funds: the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** and the **European Social Fund (ESF)**. Around £60 million of ERDF funds will be channelled through the Welsh Government to help continue the region's economic, social and environmental transformation, by helping new and existing businesses to grow and move up the value chain, and increase the 'value added' per job. It will also focus on regenerating Wales' most deprived communities and tackling climate change. Some £50 million from the ESF will be used to tackle economic inactivity, increase skills and employment. Together with match funding from the private, public and voluntary sectors, the total investment of the Programmes will be around £280 million.

The **RCE ERDF priorities** for funding are:

Priority no.	Priority name
1	Knowledge and innovation for growth
2	Business competitiveness and growth
3	Tackling climate change
4	Regeneration for growth
6	Technical assistance

The **RCE ESF priorities** for funding are:

Priority no.	Priority name
1	Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity Theme 1: Helping people into sustainable employment Theme 2: Helping people to remain in work
2	Improving skill levels and adaptability of the workforce
3	Technical assistance

Territorial Co-operation

The current INTERREG Community Initiative has been mainstreamed to full Objective status for post-2006 Structural Funds. The new Territorial Co-operation (TC) Objective Programmes consist of three strands: **Cross-border, Trans-national and Inter-regional cooperation.**

Wales will have an involvement in the following Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2007-2013:

- **Ireland-Wales Cross-border Co-operation programme** linking the west coast of Wales with the south-east of Ireland (a successor to the current 2000-2006 Ireland/Wales INTERREG IIIA Programme). The total ERDF budget is €52.7m (approx. £42.1m *) with a maximum intervention rate of 75% of total project costs. For further information, see: www.irelandwales.ie
- The trans-national co-operation **North-West Europe Programme** covering seven EU Member States, the UK (all of Wales is eligible), Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg and areas of France, Germany and the Netherlands (will succeed the current INTERREG IIIB North-West Europe Programme).
- The trans-national co-operation **Atlantic Area Programme** covering regions on the Atlantic coast in five EU Member States, parts of the UK (all of Wales is eligible), Ireland, Portugal, and parts of France and Spain (will succeed the current INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Space Programme).
- An EU wide **inter-regional co-operation** Programme concerned with interregional co-operation and networks and covering the EU27 plus Switzerland and Norway (will succeed the current INTERREG IIIC Programme).

For further information on the Structural Funds programmes, please visit the website of the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO): www.wefo.wales.gov.uk

How to apply for funding?

Organisations with project proposals that can deliver on the aims and objectives of the programmes can submit project bids, as a potential lead sponsor, to WEFO at any time, as they operate an open call for project proposals.

There are essentially three stages to developing and submitting your project idea to WEFO:

1. Project Ideas form (PIF)

There is a facility on the WEFO website for potential project sponsors to post their project ideas under the relevant strategic framework. Whilst this is not a part of the formal application process, the purpose is to encourage potential applicants to discuss proposals with other organisations, stakeholders, partners, match-funders etc who might have an interest in the idea. Prospective applicants will therefore need to look at the Project Idea section of the website to view other project ideas, as well as posting your own idea. This will help you to share and discuss your project proposals with other organisations, stakeholders, partners and match-funders who may have an interest in them.

It is also important to ensure that the idea fits with one of the Strategic Frameworks produced to guide delivery of the Programmes and are available to download from the WEFO website. You can discuss the question of Framework fit with the named contacts listed for each Framework.

2. Expression of interest (EOI)

The first formal stage of the application process is to request to submit an expression of interest (EOI). Once your request is received by WEFO, a project development officer will contact you to discuss proposals and guide you through the first stage of the application process, which is the formal submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI). This will involve registering with the WEFO Online Service, the interactive system that allows applicants to submit, view and manage their grants securely online.

Following the submission of your EOI, WEFO will then undertake an initial assessment against the selection and prioritisation criteria. This will result in one of three decisions by WEFO:

- to take the proposal forward to the next stage of full assessment;
- to hold it on 'reserve status' pending further information or wider programme management considerations; or
- to reject it.

A favourable assessment will lead to the second stage - the opportunity to submit a more detailed proposal for full assessment by WEFO. Please note that no offer of grant will be made at this stage of the process.

3. Business planning

If you reach this stage in the process, you will be asked to produce a more detailed Business and Delivery Plan. An assigned WEFO Project Development Officer (PDO) will

work with you to clarify the project details in the delivery plan and to identify any risks or conditions that will need to be covered in it. Progression to this stage does not mean that WEFO has taken a decision on whether to support your project. That judgement can only be reached once this stage has been concluded.

Further information and guidance is available on the '*Applying for European funding*' section of the WEFO website regarding:

- Securing EU funding – process overview
- Draft eligibility rules – Structural Funds in Wales
- New guidance on overheads for 2007-2013 programmes
- Project selection and prioritization criteria
- Guidance on Project sponsorship, partnership, procurement and grants
- State Aid
- Information and publicity
- Cross-cutting themes
- Project monitoring, management and control systems
- Project and programme monitoring and evaluation guidance

Please see; www.wefo.wales.gov.uk or call the WEFO helpline on 0845 010 3355 or e-mail: enquiries-wefo@wales.gsi.gov.uk

What support is available to applicants?

Support is available from a range of sources to organisations interested in applying for funding:

Welsh European Funding Office

Applicants should consult the WEFO website for comprehensive information about the Structural Funds programmes: www.wefo.wales.gov.uk

For general queries, please contact the WEFO helpline on 0845 010 3355 or email: enquiries-wefo@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

If your question relates to a specific project, the relevant WEFO Project Development Officer should be contacted, whose details can be found on the WEFO website under the relevant strategic framework.

Welsh Government

Strategic Framework Co-ordinators should be contacted with any questions relating to the potential 'fit' of a project idea with the relevant framework. Contact details can be found on www.wefo.wales.gov.uk

Specialist European Teams

SETs provide free support, information and advice to anyone in Wales seeking to benefit from the European Structural Funds. SETs can help:

- Public, private or third sector organisations and individuals wishing to access European funding.
- Organisations or businesses that are developing or managing European projects funded through the Convergence or Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes.
- Projects wishing to engage with potential delivery partners or organisations at a local or regional level.

The organisations involved in the SET network are:

- Local authority European teams
- Welsh Government
- WCVA's third sector European team (3-SET)

3-SET supports third sector organizations across Wales seeking to benefit from European funding with information, advice, resources and training. Please contact 3SET@wcva.org.uk or WCVA's Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329.

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Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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