

CITIZENS' SUMMARY 2017:

The European Social Fund in Scotland

What is ESF?

European Structural and Investment Funds are the European Union's funds to promote strong local economies across Europe's regions and represent one-third of the Union's total budget, a total €325 billion across Europe. The ESF supports investments in areas including training, employability skills and financial literacy, and aims to support individuals to get into or progress in work and to combat poverty and social inclusion.

What does ESF fund in Scotland?

The current 2014-2020 Programmes will be operational until 2023 and the programme is expected to be worth more than £400 million which will be provided to a number of strategic interventions which are led by Scottish Government, local authorities and agencies including Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council.

These strategic interventions support activity across five investment priorities agreed with the European Commission – employability, combating poverty, supporting social enterprises, skills and the youth employment initiative. Within the strategic interventions, the lead partners work with a mix of partners and contractors, including third sector groups, to deliver the activity to fit the needs of the area and the project.

The ESF programme is a combination of national and local projects, with a specific allocation of around £70 million ring fenced to target support in the Highlands and Islands, recognising the unique challenges facing these areas, and £50 million targeted through the youth employment initiative which is focussed on the west of Scotland, where youth unemployment was more than 25% at the start of the programme.

So far, around £180 million of grant has been awarded to the approved strategic interventions across the programme. In 2017, a review was carried out by Scottish Government with lead partners and other stakeholders on the delivery of the programme to date. As a result, changes were agreed to the funding package, including increasing the rate of funding provided in the Highlands and Islands.

During 2018, the programme is working with lead partners on new activity, and extensions to existing, successful projects.

Further information:

Website: <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/european-structural-funds/>

Blog: <https://blogs.gov.scot/european-structural-and-investment-funds/>

Funded activity: <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/esif-operations-funding/>

Twitter: @ScotgovESIF, #ESIF #structuralfundsscotland #EUinmyregion

What has happened so far?

ESF has awarded £65 million towards employability support to help people with multiple barriers which are preventing them from gaining work or to increase the opportunities for those in work.

Of this funding, over £50 million goes to 31 of Scotland's local authorities to provide tailored and localised support to the challenges facing their area and £12 million to the National Third Sector Employability Fund, to support third sector organisations which work across Scotland. Combined, these projects are aiming to support over 25,000 unemployed people into work and 4,000 people currently in employment.

Support to promote social inclusion and combat poverty is delivered by local authorities, Scottish Government and the Big Lottery Fund. The projects delivered by the local authorities enhance the employability operations. The Big Lottery Fund is targeting five areas – Argyll and Bute, Dundee, Glasgow, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire – and is aiming to support 10,000 participants in these areas, to improve money management skills and ensure debt is less of a barrier to social inclusion.

Case Study – Friendly Access

A third sector, academic and private partnership project that focuses on hidden disabilities such as anxiety, mental health problems, dementia and autism. The research and developments in this Stage 1 **Social Innovation Fund** project will look at increasing the confidence and ability of people who struggle daily with their hidden disabilities to lead an independent life.

The project will use immersive visualisation techniques with an app on any smart phone or tablet to help people overcome barriers by repeatedly rehearsing critical situations in a stable environment. Aberdeen International Airport, is working with the project as an airport is a complex, yet perfect environment in which to base the study.

Case Study – Craig's story

Craig was introduced to the **East Ayrshire Youth Employment Initiative** project by one of the Council's Employability Work Coaches. He gained a placement with East Ayrshire Woodlands in September 2015.

Craig successfully completed the course and gained qualifications on using specialist equipment and pesticides. He gained work with Land Engineering and later gained more his tractor licence with the support of the Work Coach.

He is now a Charge Hand at East Ayrshire Woodlands and helping train other young people and passing on his experience in gaining work.

The Scottish Government runs three funds: the Social Economy Growth Fund supports the development and growth of social enterprises; the Social Innovation Fund supports new approaches to tackling poverty and social exclusion; and the Aspiring Communities Fund helps community led services and facilities in the most disadvantaged or fragile areas.

Developing Scotland's Workforce provides over £25 million to support more than 25,000 participants to gain qualifications through Scotland's colleges and Skills Development Scotland's apprenticeship family, including foundation and graduate apprentices.

The youth employment initiative is led by Scottish Funding Council and local authorities and aims to support 16,000 people under 30 in the West of Scotland with the aim of reducing youth unemployment.