

European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) seeks to address social inequalities within and across regions by improving the general performance of the labour market and, in particular in relation to marginalised groups. It is intended to help regions increase their competitiveness by increasing employment rates, preventing people from dropping out of the labour market, and increasing productivity through improved skill levels. The ESF is delivered in Aberdeenshire through the Lowlands and Uplands (LUPS) European Social Fund Programme 2007-2013.

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The LUPS ESF Programme

The overall vision of the LUPS ESF Programme is to contribute towards sustainable growth in the size and skills of the Scottish workforce in line with the Lisbon Jobs and Growth Agenda, in a climate which offers equality of opportunities to individuals to achieve their full potential. In order to achieve this, the Programme has identified the following seven challenges:

- 1) Reducing the acute levels of worklessness in certain areas and groups.
- 2) Improving employment rates in those groups facing multiple barriers.
- 3) Increasing the ability of the low-waged and low-skilled to remain in, and progress through the labour market to achieve financial security.
- 4) Tackling gender representation in key occupations and sectors of under-represented groups.
- 5) Increasing the skills of entrepreneurs and new managers.
- 6) Providing social enterprise managers and workers with greater skills to sustain their organisations.
- 7) Increasing lifelong learning participation rates among the most disadvantaged groups.

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Programme Priorities

There are three distinct Priorities within the LUPS ESF Programme:

- 1) Progressing into Employment
- 2) Progressing through Employment
- 3) Improving Access to Lifelong Learning

Aberdeenshire is an eligible area for interventions through Priorities 2 and 3. Projects in Aberdeenshire are ineligible to apply for funding under Priority 1, which is targeted on selected urban areas with deprivation issues.

Priority 2 - Progressing through Employment aims to improve the skills of the workforce to enhance employability, productivity, adaptability, inclusion and entrepreneurial expertise. The following activities are eligible:

- Initiatives to encourage the development of vocational skills among low-skilled and low-waged individuals
- Activities enabling disadvantaged young people and adults to enter apprenticeships, particularly those not traditionally taking up this form of training
- Training/education in basic literacy, numeracy, basic ICT skills and English for speakers of other languages including migrant workers
- Activities to support the progression in employment of people with low-level skills from foundation level up to SVQ 3
- Training for workers leading to SVQ level 2 and 3 qualifications – ESF funding will support activities additional to those funded domestically under the SVQ level 2 entitlement
- Training, mentoring and supporting men and women who want to enter occupations or sectors where their gender is under-represented, in order to tackle gender segregation and the pay gap

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- Training to provide entrepreneurial, business planning, financial, marketing and e-skills for those in self-employment and new managers in new and existing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- Initiatives to provide training for those wishing to start up or manage a business, particularly from groups under-represented at managerial levels such as women or individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Business skills for workers in social enterprises to improve the sustainability of their organisations

Priority 2 targets the following groups:

- Employees who lack basic core skills, including those having low levels of literacy and numeracy, and those for whom English is not their first language
- Employees without qualifications at SCQF level 5 and 6 (SVQ level 2 or level 3)
- Specific groups, particularly women returners
- Potential and new entrepreneurs and new managers of (both new and existing) Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- Key staff in social enterprises

Priority 3 - Improving Access to Lifelong Learning aims to widen access to post-school lifelong learning, particularly for key client groups. The following activities are eligible:

- Projects which develop and mainstream successfully tested innovative approaches to learning
- Development of new training materials or course content to accommodate different cultural and skills backgrounds
- Creation and distribution of new online learning materials

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- Projects that develop distance learning and make innovative use of ICT in training
- Skills training for personnel requiring specialist skills
- Initiatives that support local learning centres and access points
- Innovative workplace initiatives, particularly those linking learning and training for groups of companies or employees which would not otherwise participate in training activities

Priority 3 targets the following groups:

- Personnel in public and private training/education bodies providing access to lifelong learning and support services to key client groups
- Voluntary sector/social economy organisations
- Agencies working with employers, particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, including learndirect Scotland/Scottish University for Industry
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority, schools, Higher Education institutions, Further Education institutions and the Scottish Funding Council
- Community learning and development centres and local and community organisations
- Professional bodies
- Employers, their respective bodies, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, trade unions and workers organisations

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Further information on the European Social Fund is available from the following external websites:

The [EU ESF website](#)

The [Scottish Government Structural Funds](#) website

The [ESEP website](#) (programme administrator)



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