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European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills



European Social Fund in England

Improving people's lives
2013-2014 (Revised)

Community grants

ESF community grants are grants of up to £15,000 which enable small voluntary and community organisations to reach out to some of the most disadvantaged and excluded people. They are managed by a number of grant co-ordinating bodies contracted by the Skills Funding Agency in most areas of England.

The grants have a local focus and seek to move people closer to the labour market. They support a wide range of activities including initial help with basic skills, taster work experience, training, advice and counselling, and confidence building.

Because of the nature of the target groups, project outcomes usually involve progression towards a job or further training, rather than the immediate achievement of a job or qualification.

Case study: Reactiv8

A project in Bedfordshire that combines educational learning inside and outside the classroom.

In the East of England, ESF community grants funding is managed by TCHC Ltd. 3123 unemployed and economically inactive participants have been supported on 110 projects throughout the East of England.



One of the grant recipients Reactive8 in Bedfordshire, delivered the Back on Track project that combined educational learning outside as well as inspiring learning in the classroom.

The project used British Army Training techniques with proven educational material to help support those aged 19+, most “hard to reach” and at risk of social exclusion, to get back into employment, education or training. This unique and radical approach helped to identify and remove any barriers the client group face; and used non-traditional interventions to define and refine patterns of behaviour to equip them with the necessary skills, mind-set and attitude to achieve sustainable employment and create a lasting effect.

Innovation

Starting in 2009 and concluding in 2013, the ESF Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand of 32 innovative projects developed and tested new ways of extending employment opportunity and raising workforce skills.

Backed by £23 million of ESF funding, the strand focused on new approaches, tools, methods and service provision within six themes for innovation: active inclusion, demographic change, engaging with employers, skills for climate change, ICT and the Digital Divide and social enterprise.

Each theme was supported by a network which brought together ESF projects and policy makers, and each project included an element of cooperation with at least one other EU Member State. Across all 32 projects there were 64 transnational partners from 19 countries.