

RE: Freedom of Information request – Funding to Third Sector Organisations

Introduction

Thank you for your request dated 12th January 2011 made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request is:

This is a freedom of information request under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) that seeks disclosure on the impact that these funding decisions will have on Third Sector Organisations (defined as charity, voluntary, social enterprise and community organisations or voluntary and community groups) in your region. Current project and / or grant funding: I would be grateful if you could disclose:

- 1. A full list of Third Sector Organisations that received either grant or project funding during financial year April 2010 – March 2011.*
- 2. The value of that funding, by organisation/project.*
- 3. By organisation, whether the grant or project funding will cease or be reduced during FY April 2010 – March 2011 (in-year cuts). If the funding is to be reduced/ceased, the extent of that reduction.*
- 4. By organisation, whether the grant or project funding will cease or be reduced for FY April 2011 – March 2012. If the funding is to be reduced, the extent of that reduction.*
- 5. The date that any reduction or cessation is due to take effect/ was introduced.*
- 6. What these Third Sector Organisations do*.*
- 7. Which section of the community they support*.*
- 8. What the grant is for/what the project funding is/was for*.*
- 9. A contact e-mail for the organisations involved*.*

** = such as might be reasonably expected to be available in the public domain.*

Should or part of your grant/community projects programme be outsourced to a third party (for example, to a local voluntary society), please provide the appropriate contact details to pursue this enquiry.

Information requested

As you are aware the Government have announced that all Regional Development Agencies will close by 31st March 2012. Following this announcement and the outcome of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review; SEEDA reviewed all planned activities and financial commitments in place to ensure they continued to be appropriate and affordable. We have recently prepared a communication for our partners and stakeholders in the South East that sets out which programmes will continue through to SEEDA's closure; which will be handed over to other organisations; and which functions we are seeking to preserve through new business approaches – I enclose a copy of this for your information.

The vast majority of SEEDA funding to third sector organisations was provided under Target 14 of the South East Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – Sustainable Communities. SEEDA's capacity to focus on the Sustainable Communities target for the South East was however impacted by the economic downturn in 2008. SEEDA - along with other Regional Development Agencies - was required by the government during 2008 and 2009 both to make a financial contribution to national initiatives to help businesses through the recession, and to refocus our own work and operational budgets. As a result, SEEDA had to re-prioritise existing programmes and activities around the twin themes of:

- Helping businesses to survive the recession in the short term;
- Investing in developing the capacity and capability of the region to respond to the eventual upturn from a position of strength.

Due to this re-prioritisation many of the activities and expenditure planned under the Sustainable Communities RES target were scaled back or stopped during the 2009/10 financial year. Consultations were undertaken with stakeholders and, wherever possible, alternative delivery bodies were secured to take forward priority actions.

As stated in the Regional Economic Strategy Implementation Plan 2006-16 a key delivery partner for this RES target was the Regional Strategic Partnership for the Third Sector (RAISE), the support organisation for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in South East England. Further details of this organisation's work can be found at <http://www.raise-networks.org.uk/about/>. At annex 2 I enclose a copy of the 2010/11 Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place between SEEDA and RAISE. This SLA details the deliverables related to our grant funding, which was provided so that a phased reduction in service with minimal impact of beneficiaries was achieved. As requested full details of SEEDA's funding to RAISE in the 2010/11 financial year are provided in annex 1.

SEEDA's finance and project management systems do not record whether an organisation receiving funding is a not-for-profit voluntary group or a business, and therefore we are unable to provide full and comprehensive details of all funding provided to Third Sector groups without incurring costs in excess of the appropriate limit as set out in Schedule 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However we have undertaken a manual review of records and have formulated the spreadsheet supplied at annex 1. Please note that we have not been able to provide the information requested under questions 6, 7 and 9 of your request within the resources available to us, however I note that this information should be publicly available and you should be able to easily gather this information using the data we have disclosed to you within annex 1.

In response to a recent Freedom of Information Act request SEEDA has disclosed details of all awards made under the European funded European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). I attach a copy of our response for information; please contact us should you require further details of any of the awards included. Information for the European Social Fund (ESF) can be found at <http://www.seeda.co.uk/what-we-do/european-investment/esf>.

Third sector organisations may also have received SEEDA funding via the devolved Small Rural Towns (SRT) and Rural Access to Services (RASP) programmes. Applications under these programmes were appraised and monitored on our behalf by third parties and SEEDA only holds aggregated monitoring information for these programmes. Therefore you may wish to directly contact Accountable Bodies for these programmes to determine if they hold information relevant to your request. Further details of the programmes running in each county, and contact details for the

organisations delivering these programmes, can be found at the South East Rural Towns Partnership website:

<http://www.setowns.org.uk/?page=Counties>

In line with new Government transparency requirements SEEDA is publishing on our website details of payments made over a threshold of £25,000 since 1 April 2010. You may wish to review this information as part of your inquiries. If you provide us with the names of any organisations which are known to you to be Third Sector we can review our records and provide you with further details in regards to funding awarded. You can view payments made in the period 1st April 2010 to 31st December 2011 at the link below:

[http://www.seeda.co.uk/documentbank/SEEDA Transparency Data January Final.xls](http://www.seeda.co.uk/documentbank/SEEDA_Transparency_Data_January_Final.xls)

SEEDA has also funded the Business Link service in the South East of England, which in 2010/11 was delivered by Serco. Under this service SMEs, including Third Sector organisations, can access:

- Intensive face-to-face advice and support for growth-ready companies;
- Universal access to information and advice through the contact centre, e-mail updates, newsletters and Business Link's website;
- The 'Starting a Business' service which includes tailored workshops to support people to start new enterprises.

Whilst no direct funding is provided to organisations via the Business Link service, you may be interested to know that in 2010/11 the regional Business Link service provided support to 1,076 organisations classed as being either Social Enterprises, Charities or Community Interest Companies and intensively assisted 165 organisations classed as such.

On the 5th January 2011 the Government confirmed that the regional Business Link service would close at the end of November 2011 and would be replaced by a national service focussed on high growth businesses, through a national call-centre and website. The regional Business Link service run by Serco will therefore close by 25th November.