

To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board

On: 19 March 2024

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership - Commissioning Progress Report

1. Summary

- 1.1 Employability resources, previously managed nationally, now come to local authorities for distribution to best effect, augmenting statutory provision. Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) have been established in all areas across Scotland to commission local services based on the needs of the area.
 - 1.2 Following approval by Renfrewshire Councils' Leadership Board in September 2021, a new partnership grants process for employability service delivery managed by the Council and delivered through the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) was established.
 - 1.3 The grants process was extended during 2023 to incorporate funding streams from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the Multiply Programme and, most recently, to establish a Business Challenge Fund.
 - 1.4 This report provides an overview of funding to date through the LEP grants process and specifically reports on the recent Business Challenge Fund process and Round 3 of the Employability Grants Programme.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Board Members are asked to:
 - Note the progress made by Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership in delivering grant programmes under both UK and Scottish Government funding schemes over the last 2 years;

- Note the recommendations from the LEP to approve 6 applications for 2024-25 under the new Business Challenge Fund, and
- Agree that officers in Economic Development will monitor and report on these activities/spend and will claim funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as appropriate from the Renfrewshire allocation.
- Note the recommendations of the LEP to approve 24 applications under the third round of the Employability Grant Programme, and
- Agree that officers in Economic Development will monitor and report on these activities/spend and will claim funding from both Scottish Government Employability Grants and UK Shared Prosperity Fund as appropriate to cover costs.

3 Background

3.1 Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership (RLEP) has been established for over 10 years and Annexe A (to this report) provides details of current LEP members.

3.2 A new co-commissioning approach and process was established through the LEP as the Renfrewshire Employability Grants programme which would provide an open and transparent approach offering all local employability providers the opportunity to get involved in local delivery, including local third sector organisations. Renfrewshire Council retains the responsibility and accountability for reporting and claiming external finance with the LEP having responsibility to identify local needs and jointly commission new service delivery.

3.3 The LEP partnership commissioning approach further evolved in 2022/23 to support local access to the Renfrewshire funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and as such the LEP Commissioning Grants programme now has 3 themes:

- Employability;
- Multiply - a UK SPF programme supporting improved numeracy;
- Business Development Support (UK SPF)

3.4 The table below represents LEP Commissioning to date.

Employability	Delivery Timeframe	Funding Committed	Comments
Round 1	January 2022 – March 2023	£1,000,000	Completed
Round 2	April 2023 – March 2024	£840,000	Currently being delivered.

Employability	Delivery Timeframe	Funding Committed	Comments
Round 3	April 2024 – March 2025	Estimate £800,000	Currently being commissioned, details in this report.
Multiply: Round 1	Jan 2023 - March 2025	£365,000	Currently being delivered. (progress on the Multiply Programme will be reported under a future SPF report.)
Business Challenge Fund: Round 1	Feb 2024 – March 2025	£500,000	Currently being commissioned, details in this report.

4. The Renfrewshire LEP Grants Process

4.1 A similar grants process is followed across all 3 of the grant themes.

Grant Process:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant opens for applications – information and application published on Renfrewshire Council/Invest websites and shared via local networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information session for potential applicants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment process - LEP members and other stakeholders as appropriate. Scoring matrix used for all applications and recommendations made the LEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP approval of assessment recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application outcomes notified to all applicants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning meetings with all successful applicants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award letters issued
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular performance and financial monitoring meetings/delivery partner meetings/ other promotional activity to maximise engagement, referrals and outcomes. Performance reported to the LEP regularly and annually to the Community Planning Executive Board

4.2 To ensure best value the grants programmes must fill gaps in service/provision and complement rather than duplicate existing provision. A comprehensive assessment process is in place to ensure cost-effectiveness without compromising programme quality.

Any issues or potential areas for improvement in relation to cost and best value are discussed at the commissioning meetings held with each successful delivery partner. Where required, delivery partners will be asked to revise aspects of their budget, project delivery and output and outcome targets.

4.3 For each theme, a comprehensive needs assessment process is undertaken, gathering and analysing a broad range of data and evidence to inform each grants framework including evidence gathered from lived experience and stakeholder engagement.

The outcomes each programme is addressing, and priority groups and any eligibility conditions for programme participants are shaped by this needs assessment process as well as the guidelines and requirements of the associated funding programmes (Scottish Government No One Left Behind and UK Shared Prosperity Funding).

4.4 The monitoring process includes regular reviews of performance to ensure that any changes in delivery do not impact on our best value expectations of the projects, with improvement actions or reductions in funding being applied where appropriate.

4.5 The current outcomes and types of activity supported for each of the 3 grants themes are outlined below:

Grant Theme and value	Outcomes	Activity	Eligible Sectors
<p>Employability</p> <p>£1M for Jan 22-March 23</p> <p>£840k for financial year 23/24</p> <p>Estimate £900k for financial year 24/25 (awaiting confirmation of funding)</p>	<p>1.Reduce unemployment and economic inactivity levels.</p> <p>2.Reduce the gap in unemployment/employment rates for targeted geographies and groups.</p> <p>3.Ensure that our residents have the appropriate skills and are suitably prepared and informed to match those required by local businesses and others within reach.</p> <p>4.Contribute to reducing child poverty through increasing income from employment for (low income) parents.</p>	<p>1.Engagement/Pre-vocational support/barrier removal.</p> <p>2.Vocational training</p> <p>3.School leaver programmes.</p> <p>4.Self Employment Support.</p> <p>5.Specialist support for key groups (offenders; people with disabilities/long term conditions; refugees)</p> <p>6. Parental employment support</p> <p>7.Mental health support.</p>	Public; Third; FE/HE and Private
<p>Multiply</p> <p>£365k, (2022-2025)</p>	<p>Increase adult (age 19yrs +) numeracy in Renfrewshire by supporting adult learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work</p>	<p>1.Courses/activity designed to increase confidence with numbers including for those needing the first steps towards formal qualifications.</p> <p>2.Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.</p> <p>3.Courses/activity to improve money management skills.</p> <p>4. Intensive & flexible courses targeted at those without Level 5 maths</p>	Third Sector and FE/HE
<p>Business Development</p>	<p>Support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow</p>	<p>1.Business growth and productivity.</p> <p>2.Business sustainability and net-zero</p>	Public, private, FE/HE and third sectors

Grant Theme and value	Outcomes	Activity	Eligible Sectors
£500k Jan 24- March 25		3. Innovation and collaboration 4. Internationalisation 5. Digital Upskilling	

5. The Renfrewshire Employability Grants Programme (Jan 22 – Present)

- 5.1 The first Employability Grant Programme completed in March 2023 with 11 providers providing 20 different services/programmes to 584 people. The final programme costs were less than originally approved (£1.04m against a budget of £1.7m). This reflected lower participant numbers than anticipated, in part down to lower unemployment levels and engagement challenges. Many providers felt that COVID had impacted on motivation levels and mental health and wellbeing.
- 5.2 The second employability grant programme (financial year 2023-24) is currently being delivered and is valued at £840k for the year. Funding was provided to deliver 25 separate programmes (around 640 training/support opportunities) through 16 providers and to 400+ participants (around 380 participants have participated to date). The 2023-24 programme included mental health support for the first time, due to a large number of employability clients presenting with mental health issues, impacting on their progress and had a significant focus on unemployed and low-income parents due to the increased levels of Scottish Government Parental Employment Support funding being allocated from Child Poverty budgets.
- 5.3 The LEP have just completed the commissioning of services through the grant process for the third year to cover the financial year 2024-25. The services commissioned form part of a much wider employability support offer across Renfrewshire and an annual plan is produced reflecting the budgets and programmes for the year. Further information on this programme will come to board later this year.
- 5.4 For the 24-25 Employability Grants programme 36 applications were received from 24 organisations, 24 applications have been recommended for LEP approval under various themes:

Theme 1: Refugee/asylum seekers with poor or no English language skills

Application	Participants	Cost	£ awarded	places
WCS ESOL for Employability	20	£11,000	£11,000	20
Saltire	32	£6400	£4800	24
Total		£55,472	£15,800	44

Theme 2: Unemployed (or low income) residents requiring vocational skills to progress in employment.

Application	Participants	Cost	£awarded	places
WCS Construction Skills	8	£16,768	£16,768	8
GTC: Warehouse and Storage Training Programme	12	£17,858	£17,858	12
Princes Trust – Get Into/Electrical Installation/Manufacturing	20	£39,749	£39,749	20
Hub International -	56	£75,943	£57,500	42
Total		£204,597	£131,875	82

Theme 3: Unemployed people or low-income residents wishing to pursue self-employment.

Application	Participants	Cost	£awarded	places
BDS Ltd	20	£44,400	£44,400	20
Total		£44,400		

Theme 4: Unemployed or economically inactive people with disabilities or long-term conditions.

Application	Participants	Cost	£awarded	Places
Values into Action Scotland (VIAS) Triple E	25	£99,999	£99,999	25+ tbc
Total		£230,213	£99,999	25+ tbc

Theme 5: Unemployed or low paid parents/kinship carers.

Application	Participants	Cost	£awarded	Places
WCS YES Unemployed Parental Support Programme	20	£11,251	£11,251	20
IWG Charity Music Experience Programme	12	£12,422	£15,000	12
Glasgow Clyde College	60	£12,100	£8,000	30?
REEM Thriving Families Project	50	£53,022	£20,000	30?
Total		£244,017	£54,251	92

Theme 6: Unemployed or economically inactive Renfrewshire residents whose mental health is negatively impacting on their ability to engage with employability support; progress towards; and/or sustain employment or training.

Application	Participants	Cost	£award	Places
Youth Interventions Inspired	60	£16,698	c.£16,000	40
RAMH Mental Health Support	164	£65,020	c.£60,000	160
Total		£81,718	£76,000	200

Theme 7: Criminal Justice experienced population.

Application	Participants	Cost	£award	Places
The Lennox Partnership STRIVE – Second Chance	20	£47,262	£23,500	10
WCS YES Criminal Justice Programme	20	£18,720	£18,720	20
APEX Labyrinth	40	£87,920	£44,000	20
Total		£165,996	£86,220	50

Theme 8a: Care Experienced Young People.

Application	Participants	Cost	£award	Places
House of Seisay	20	£34,550	£17,000 max	10
Total		£96,150	£17,000	10

Theme 8b: Young people how have left school and are unemployed.

Application	Participants	Cost	£award	Places
Street League Connected	36	£67,000	£67,000	36
The Lennox Partnership STRIVE: Youth Employment	36	£57,430	£15,000	9
Kibbleworks – Future Ready	20	£15,870	15,869	20
Barnardos Step2Work	50	£86,468	£86,468	50
Barnardos Works Best	36	£42,260	£42,260	36
Impact Arts – Express Yourself Renfrewshire	20	£30,670	£30,670	20
Total		£449,294	£257,267	171

6. Renfrewshire Business Challenge Fund

- 6.1 The newest of the LEP Grants themes is Business Development which was introduced to broaden the scope of business support available in Renfrewshire, utilising Shared Prosperity funding.
- 6.2 An initial £0.5M has been allocated to support a **Renfrewshire Business Challenge Fund** for January 2024 – end March 2025 to allow the public, private, education and third sectors in the area to identify and develop proposals to support local businesses.
This will help to strengthen Renfrewshire’s economy in a fair and inclusive way. The creation of the fund was previously approved by the Economy and Regeneration Policy Board.
- 6.3 Eight proposals with a total value of £490k were submitted. All bids were scored and 6 bids were recommended for approval by the scoring panel. The recommendations were endorsed by the LEP at the meeting on Tuesday 6th February 2024.
- 6.4 The 6 bids provide a good range of new and additional services to the Renfrewshire area and providing some specific sectoral approaches and thematic approaches.

6.5 The 6 successful bids total £424,596 leaving £75,404 for the possibility of a second round or to augment successful programmes during the year.

Applicant	Project Title	Description	Funding
National Manufacturing Institute Scotland	PROductivity and Digital Innovation for Growing Your Business	3D printing and cobotics delivered through interactive training workshops and bespoke practical training.	£98,527
West College Scotland	Smart Sustainability	Smart sustainability and Net Zero courses delivered through the college to help expand growth businesses	£97,469
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce	Trade Missions Support	Support for business that are ready to take their first steps to trade missions- encourage the growth of international trade	£49,000
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce	Business Mentoring	Peer mentoring service for local SMEs to provide support with business strategy and innovation.	£24,500
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce	Internationalisation	Develop the capacity and capability of businesses to trade abroad through workshops webinars and consultations	£96,350
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce	AI Adoption and Innovation Programme	Dedicated one to one consultancy and business support programme- support the growth of A1 tools and platforms and digital upskilling for staff	£58,750

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Looking ahead, the LEP commissioning process will continue to ensure any gaps in services can be filled through the grants process and will adjust to fit the ever changing economic landscape.
- 7.2 The LEP reports separately through the Community Planning Partnership on joint work and an annual report to the Community Planning Executive Group provides an overview of all activities. The Community Planning Process is a recognised governance structure for partnership working and co-commissioning of services for both Scottish and UK Government.
- 7.3 Further progress reports will be brought back to the Economy and Regeneration Board on completion of full year grant programmes as well as separate Board updates on UK SPF and No-One Left Behind funding will be provided.

Implications of the Report

- Financial** – The commissioning process is funded through grant allocations from Scottish and UK Governments, managed by the Councils Economic Development Team. Funding is secured for the year ahead.
- HR & Organisational Development** – None.
- Community/Council Planning** –

- *Our Renfrewshire is thriving* – the report provides information on LEP commissioning of services. The LEP reports to the Community Planning Partnership and consists of the various strategic partners in the area working together to develop joint plans for the delivery of local services. The LEP is responsible for co-commissioning services with the use of external funds from both Scottish and UK Governments, the funds are managed and reported through the council to the funding bodies.

The co-commissioned services contribute significantly to local priorities:

- *Reshaping our place, our economy and our future* – supporting both the employability skills and progression of local people and the growth and support to local businesses.
- *Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all* – employability funding is provided through the Scottish Government's No-one Left Behind programme with a focus on those most disengaged / disadvantaged.
- *Working together to improve outcomes* – the Renfrewshire LEP is a really strong and well known partnership (widely considered best practice in Scotland) where joint planning, shared resources and a shared delivery plan are developed each year and services are commissioned jointly to fill any gaps in service delivery.

4. **Legal** – None. Previous legal advice was sought in the development of the grants programme.
5. **Property/Assets** - None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** -
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – minimal. The grants process is well established and there are a number of measures in place to ensure that there is minimal risk to the council.
11. **Privacy Impact** – the process involves considerable amounts of personal and sensitive information but this is embedded in existing practice and data controls are in place for sharing and processing information.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – Not Applicable.

13. **Climate Risk** – Not Applicable.

List of Background Papers

- Community Planning Executive Board. 22nd January 2024, “Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership - Commissioning Progress Report, November 2023.”
- Economy and Regeneration Board, 7 November 2023, “Shared Prosperity Funding: Business Challenge Fund”
- Economy and Regeneration Policy Board, 29 August 2023, “No-One Left Behind: Employability Award”
- Economy and Regeneration Board 14th June 2022; Employability Funding: No-One Left Behind

The foregoing background papers will be retained within the Economic Development Service for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Ruth Cooper, Economic Development Manager.

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Annexe A: Renfrewshire LEP Members

Member Organisation	Representative	Specific role/responsibilities
Developing the Young Workforce – West Region	Bob Davidson	To represent DYW regional group and our role in DYW / education and our new role in encouraging employers to support the YPG
DWP (Jobcentre Plus)	Marjory Smith	Supply customer insight, support promotion of provision, identify gaps in provision.
Engage Renfrewshire	Iain Cunningham	Connection to local voluntary sector network; ensuring 2 way information; Managing role of volunteering within the employability pipeline; Supporting community/service user engagement and participation
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde/Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	Lesley Nish	Connection to health and care policies and plans . Supporting and promoting integrated/partnership approaches linking health and wellbeing and employability.
Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce;	Bob Grant	Connection to local employers. Provision of local employer insight. Supporting and promoting LEP and opportunities.
Renfrewshire Council;	Ruth Cooper (Chair) With Invest Team reps	Chair of group Responsible for reporting LEP progress to the Community Planning Executive Group. Responsibility for Scottish Government NOLB/YPG funding and reporting including the funds allocated by LEP through co-commissioning. Responsible for ensuring the Councils Economic Development functions' contributions to LEPs strategic objectives.
	Yvonne Ward Darren Conway	Connection to education; ensuring two way of information sharing. Making it easier for young people to understand their learning and career choices at the earliest stage and provide long-term, person-centred support for young people who need this most.
	Jamie Gardyne	Developing and maintaining links with Community Justice, ensuring the various plans reflect the crossover issues and shared aims.
	Carolann Robertson	Ensuring link between Community Learning & Development and Employability including adult and family learning; youth services, Community Capacity building.
	Derek Murray	Ensuring an effective link between Housing Services and the wider housing, resettlement and homelessness agenda and Employability.
One Ren	Neil Fraser	Ensuring an effective link between One Ren policies, services and assets and Employability.
Skills Development Scotland;	Suzie Scott	Renfrewshire area delivery of the National Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) Work collaboratively with local strategic partners to ensure SDS's national service provision translates to local context.
West College Scotland.	Allan Dick	To represent West College Scotland and be the conduit between the LEP and WCS in its role in delivering education, skills and training to ensure students leave equipped to compete in the jobs market