

Guide to Sustainable Development (SD) for ESF Projects

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Contents

About this guide	Page
Who is this guide for?	3
How should the guide be used?	3
Introduction	
What is Sustainable Development?	4
What is Sustainability?	4
Why is it good to have a plan?	5
When is the best time to prepare a Sustainable Development Plan?	5
Summary	
What are the European Social Fund requirements for Sustainable Development?	
Cross cutting theme	6
Structure	
What an SD Plan should include	7
Action Plan	
Impact	8
Achievement	
Sustainability	
Risks	
Method	
Next Steps	
Identification of need	9
Project specific	
Sample of PESTLE SD plan	10
References	11
Web links	11
Framework	
The framework should be adapted to be project specific.	12
**Suggestion – change page setup for Framework to A3 size	

About this guide

The guide describes the importance of Sustainable Development (SD) and is meant as a guide for projects to use when structuring SD plans and for the continuity of the projects.

Who is the guide for?

The framework is for project managers and those involved in the development of sustainable development plans for ESF funded projects and to use as a base when planning for sustainability of a project.

How should the guide be used?

All ESF funded projects require a sustainable development plan in response to the European Social Fund regulations.

Introduction

The idea of a framework for a Sustainable Development Plan came from the realisation that there was a gap between the pilot/research projects, the delivery of successful projects and the continuity which needs to be addressed to comply with the initial request of the 'Invitation to Tender'.

SEEDA/ESF value the sustainability of a project because it means that the project has gained successes that will continue to enrich participants long after a project has ended and to create future opportunities for additional participants. The idea of funding projects is to give SMEs the tools to grow and for beneficiaries to gain development and skills that were unattainable before.

What is Sustainable Development?

Regional economic strategies, and the actions to implement them, are based on the five sustainable development principles set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy 2005 '*Securing the Future*' which are;

- ✚ Living within environmental limits,
- ✚ Ensuring a strong healthy and just society,
- ✚ Achieving a sustainable economy,
- ✚ Promoting good governance,
- ✚ Using sound scientific responsibility.

It also set out four priority areas for action:

- ✚ Sustainable consumption and production,
- ✚ Climate change and energy,
- ✚ Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement, and
- ✚ Creating sustainable communities.

SEEDA defines sustainable prosperity as 'ensuring that competitiveness is consistent with the principles of sustainable development'.

What is Sustainability?

SEEDA / ESF place a great emphasis on sustaining a project where there is clear evidence that what they are doing can be sustained through careful planning.

Identifying sustainability;

- ✚ What will make a project or service sustainable?
- ✚ What part does sustainable development and ICT play?
- ✚ What can we learn from case studies?
- ✚ Prepare and present a framework of analysis for easy access.

Why it's good to have a plan?

Projects are designed to complement the RES and to ensure that SEEDA and the European Social Fund meet their priorities and targets for the South East region. ESF projects are designed to meet economic and social demands; and sustainable development leads to sustainability by taking the 'Best Practices' and 'Lessons learnt' they can ensure continuity in line with social, economic and environmental requirements.

The UK's commitments to SD including environmental sustainability are driven by a range of agreements, policy and targets at international, European and national levels.

The UK is signatory of a wide range of environmental conventions and agreements, the so-called Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including those on:

- ✚ Climate change – Kyoto,
- ✚ Strategic environmental impact assessment,
- ✚ Access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters.

The UK is also committed to the UN Millennium Development goals including ensuring environmental sustainability with a target of reducing the loss of environmental resources.

When is the best time to prepare a Sustainable Development Plan?

Within the first year of a project, a SD framework should be in place which will also ease the path for sustainability and continuity.

Summary

The aim of a sustainable development plan is to ensure the well-being and a better quality of life for all the participants and beneficiaries of SEEDA/ESF projects both now and for the future.

SD is not just about the environment, it is all about our interdependency to promote economic growth with new developments. It is the process by which we move towards sustainability, which should lie at the heart of all project activity.

What are the European Social Fund requirements for Sustainable Development?

Sustainable development (SD) is a cross cutting theme – and it's a regulatory requirement under EU Regulations which cuts across the entire EU Structural Funds (See ESF Provider Guidance).

The overall aim of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve a continuous long-term improvement of quality of life through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently, able to tap the ecological and social innovation.

A SD plan should demonstrate how it will provide opportunities that allow everyone to fulfil their potential include environmental protection and enhancement through the delivery of projects and provide skills that businesses both demand and require – now and in the future.

Structure

The Sustainable Development plan should include;

- ✚ An Action Plan, (see next section for example of what an Action Plan should include)
- ✚ Planning for the long-term,
- ✚ Capacity building – raising awareness and understanding of the SD plan among colleges and learning providers,
- ✚ Collecting examples of good practices and highlight good practice to spread and develop sustainability,
- ✚ Include ICT element throughout and ensure structures are in place to deliver according to the SD Plan,
- ✚ Ensure full integration of social, economic and environmental dimensions of development,
- ✚ Provide a reference point for sustainable development and how to contribute SD to the country as a whole,
- ✚ Include guidance for organisations regarding the development of SD plans and details should be widely publicised and communicated,
- ✚ Incorporated into the strategy of companies,
- ✚ A SD plan should have continuity and consider impacts beyond the life of the project,
- ✚ Provide supporting information to address broad commitments to mainstreaming SD,
- ✚ The SD has to build on other SD plans to ensure the best will be available for continuous sustainable development,
- ✚ Include partners to identify and overcome barriers in a way that is complementary and mutually supportive,
- ✚ Proposed objectives, indicators and targets which contain all the themes of sustainable development,
- ✚ Guidance for the effective management of risk,
- ✚ Use the Framework to support training, facilitating, decision making and delivery, and include brief outlines of the serious barriers to SD,
- ✚ Identify the prime driver for sustainable Development leading to sustainability, and finally,
- ✚ Look at current SD plans in operation through websites, case studies or communication networks.

Action Plan – examples of possible questions

Impact

What impact do you want the project to make?
What impact will the stakeholders bring to the project?
How will the project influence the well-being and better quality of life for all participants?
What impact will the project make on the economic growth of the UK?
How will 'Best Practices' influence the project?
What impact will the sustainability of the project make?

Achievements

What will be the anticipated achievements of the SD plan be expected to make?
How will the initial outcome of the project be changed to adapt it to link with other projects?
What will networking with interested stakeholders achieve for the sustainability of the 'Best Practices' lead to?
How will the project build on the original research?

Sustainability

Will a similar project be viable?
What is the rationale for the project and how could this be changed?
What factors will influence the continuity of the project?
Which parts of the project will be retained to influence economic growth within a sustainable environment?

Risks

Will financial constrictions stop continuity?
What could the possible negative outcomes of the project be?
How will time constraints impact on the final result?
How will any changes in the goals of the RES affect/influence the continuity of a sustainable development plan?
What resources will be available after the project ends?

Method

How will the achievements and impact be measured?

Next Steps

Identification of need

Use the evaluation of the project effectively; the evaluation base lines allows you to collect robust data on what works, 'Best Practices' what doesn't work and why;

- ✚ What is working well, what is not and why? This helps to identify the parts of the project that need to continue and might be sustainable.
- ✚ Continuous identification of need for target groups – diversity ensures the sustainability because it will *'enable more people to benefit from sustainable prosperity across the region and reduce polarisation between communities.'* (RES 2006-16)
- ✚ ICT should be embedded in the framework throughout which includes; strategies to assist or support the use of ICT in deprived areas, travel support, access to technology and electronic rather than paper communications.
- ✚ Research strategies on evidence of need confirm the need for the bits that are working well such as timing, so check at various points of the project.
- ✚ Development of appropriate relationships; strategic players (SEEDA, DWP, JCP, LSC, etc.), policy makers, – the right people.
- ✚ Making the Business case for what should be continued.

Project specific

Whether a SME or a large organisation, there is a need for developing a SD strategy for company directors, managers and staff and it's an ongoing commitment that will add to these organisations successes. Successful projects with an established SD plan will also benefit from a sustainable plan which is usually incorporated in sustainable development and will provide a tool to market without the restrictions of funded projects. Projects should;

- ✚ Create networks with similar projects in other RDAs,
- ✚ Use RRC networks and links to Hubs, ERDF, etc.,
- ✚ Create networks to previous ESF funded projects – e.g. EEF South, Ngage, etc. for sustainability possibilities, identifying products and service such as;
 - Year 1 – 100% grant / charitable funding,
 - Year 2 – 90% grant / charitable funding,
- ✚ Include business activities – sponsorships,
- ✚ Reverse funding – Levy on set-ups to plough back into start-ups, and
- ✚ The corporate social responsibility of big firms.

Sample of PESTLE SD plan includes;

- ✚ *Political – Global, national, regional, local and community trends, changes, events, etc; what is the current political climate, what is their plan for sustainability at the time?*
- ✚ *Economical – world, national and local trends, changes, events, etc.; what are the current market trends – is the economy driven in a certain direction?*
- ✚ *Social – developments in society – culture, behaviour, expectations, composition, etc.; what it involves getting people economically active – deprived wards?*
- ✚ *Technological – developments: computer hardware, software, applications, other equipment, materials, products and processes, etc.; getting people geared up with the latest technology including how to access and training needs?*
- ✚ *Legal – world / EU / National legislation changes, prospects etc; procurement of public funding, eligibility, etc.*
- ✚ *Environment – Global / EU / national / local issues, pressures, movements, etc.; is there a way for the project to contribute to preserving the environment and add better activities to sustain?*

References

Business support – specific: Sector skills councils, generic: – Business Link, the BSSP model

UKTI – market trends

DWP

Regional Economic Strategy, published: October 2006

Regional Development Agencies

Learning & Skills Councils

Local Councils

CSR – This is a government office website on CSR. They have an ambitious vision for UK businesses to consider the economic, social and environmental impacts of their activities, wherever they operate in the world. This website connects you to information about what they are doing to help make that vision a reality, use the link for more information.

Web Links

http://www.esf.gov.uk/info_for_cfo_and_projects/sustainable_development_in_the_new_esf_programme.asp

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/pdf/strategy/Chap%201.pdf>

http://www.renewal.eu.com/resources/Renewal_Pestle_Analysis.pdf

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/sus-dev/>

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/whatwedo/sustainable-development.htm>

www.seeda.co.uk www.forumforthefuture.org.uk

www.wlga.gov.uk.

www.pas.gov.uk

www.regionalassemblies.co.uk

<http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/EducationAndLearning.aspx>

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/advice/regional.htm>

SEEDA / ESF Sustainable Framework – Providers

Questions – People	What to look for	Score	Comments	Evidence supplied
People				
Is there a sustainability champion identified in your organisation?	Job description and personal objectives for nominated champion.			
What sustainability training has your key staff received?	List of people trained and at what levels			
What sustainability training has all your staff received?	List of people trained and at what levels			
Is sustainability included in your key staff's personal development and appraisal process?	Copies of personal objectives in personal development plan			
Do you publicise your achievements in sustainability?	Examples of publications, case studies and reports.			
Policy				
Does your organisation have agreed sustainability impacts and extent of scope?	Use the policy to identify key objectives			
Does your organisation have a sustainability policy?	Copy of policy, should be updated every 2 years.			
Does your organisation have a sustainability strategy?	Copy of strategy. Needs to include the objectives identified in the Policy Evaluation identifying activities to deliver them			
How is your sustainability strategy linked with other organisational strategies and management system such as corporate strategy and EMS?	Copies of strategies and management systems			
Is your sustainability strategy (or action plan) scrutinised?	Evidence of scrutiny and action taken to follow up recommendations.			
Process				
Have you done expenditure analysis?	Recent evidence of spend analysis			
Has your organisation established sustainability objectives?	This should cover the objectives in Policy Evaluation as a minimum.			
To what extent do you consider sustainability criteria in contracts?	Evidence that similar requirements are placed on sub-contractors			
Are sustainability risks in your business and supply chain managed effectively through the procurement contracts?	Evidence of risk management			
Do you have targets to improve sustainability with your suppliers and sub-contractors?	Targets should include objectives detailed in Policy Evaluation as a minimum			
Suppliers & Communication				
How does your organisation communicate with its staff, suppliers and sub-contractors and participants on sustainability?	Evidence of type of communication with staff, suppliers and customers			
How does your organisation engage with its staff, suppliers and customers on sustainability?	Evidence of engagement programme, this means evidence of shared objectives, resources and achievement.			
Results				
Do you measure your achievements/performance in sustainability?	Evidence of performance measurement, including the objectives in Policy Evaluation as a minimum.			
What evidence do you have of regular performance measurement and continuous improvement?	Evidence of measures and metrics used			
Do you compare your organisation's performance in this area with others?	Evidence of performance comparison.			