Findings from the ESF Convergence Evaluation

22nd September 2015
Presentation format

- Summary of evaluation aims and methodology
- Key findings – programme level
- Key findings – by priority
- Impacts
- Recommendations
Evaluation aims

• Main aim: to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the ESF Convergence programme

  o Review progress against objectives and targets in the context of changes in the external landscape (e.g. policy, economy)

  o Identify most and least effective aspects, considering lessons learned from this to inform future programmes

  o Determine the social and economic impacts of the programme and assessment of the counterfactual
Methodology

• Desk-based evaluation of a wide range of secondary data sources combined with in-depth interviews:
  
  • Strategic review of programme context identifying baseline position and how this has changed
  
  • Operational review of programme delivery and progress against targets
  
  • In-depth telephone interviews with 50 individuals and organisations
Key findings – Programme
Programme performance

- Substantial overachievement against the majority of targets even though not all ESF monies have been spent
- Participants supported (P4+5) **249% against target**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 4</th>
<th>Priority 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed people supported</td>
<td>Gained basic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>348%</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically inactive supported</td>
<td>Gained Level 2 qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212%</td>
<td>200%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19 NEETs supported</td>
<td>Gained Level 3 qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341%</td>
<td>435%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In work upon leaving</td>
<td>Gained Level 4 qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201%</td>
<td>173%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19 NEETs into EET</td>
<td>Gained Level 5 qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>625%</td>
<td>527%</td>
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Programme design

- Informed by effective collaboration, extensive partnership working and use of Labour Market Intelligence

- Complemented mainstream funding, avoiding duplication

- Right kinds of activities commissioned in line with local needs

- In some cases greater flexibility within design could have added more value
Strategic linkages

• Scope to harness synergies between ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

• Clear intent to form strategic linkages between ESF and ERDF

• However structural issues presented barriers:
  o Timescales were not always in alignment
  o Tenders did not explicitly require the two funds to be ‘joined up’
  o EU State Aid rules

• Examples of effective linkages include Fifteen and Newquay Airport
• Cross-cutting themes: gender inequality & equal opportunities and sustainable development

• Examples of effectiveness and good practice:
  o Exceeded target - people with disabilities (P4)
  o Exceeded target - ethnic minorities (P4)
  o Exceeded target - females (P5)
  o Dedicated projects with a particular focus on cross-cutting themes e.g. Cornwall Works for Learning Disabilities

• Not always addressed as explicitly within skills contracts
Changes and impact

• First half of the programme:
  - Local Management Committee (LMC) - robust approach to programme governance
  - Responsive and proactive approach of CFO local management

• Second half of the programme:
  - Closure of organisations with a role in strategic oversight, SWRDA and GOSW
  - Nationally-led, top-down approach to programme governance and delivery
  - New payment model (DWP) affected smaller providers
  - Coupled with delays to contracting, this reduced time available for delivery
Key findings – Priority 4
### Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2007-2013 Targets</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 to 19 NEETs or at risk in education, employment or training on leaving</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>13,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in work on leaving</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>11,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants aged 14 to 19 not in education, employment or training i.e. NEETS (or at risk)</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>16,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants who are inactive</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>17,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants who are unemployed</td>
<td>10,200</td>
<td>35,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,500</strong></td>
<td><strong>71,843</strong></td>
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</table>
What was most effective?

• Partnership working, building upon existing strong relationships in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

• Flexible use of funds enabling tailored support to meet specific needs and bring about sustainable change

• Engagement with the target group among social enterprises and third sector organisations

• Referrals via Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and Cornwall Works Hub
Barriers for Priority 4

• Number of referrals via Local Authority Children’s School and Families pathway diminished

• Perception of “paperwork and bureaucracy” among participants which could be a factor in disengagement from the programme

• Dropouts given participants were often facing multiple barriers

• Transport infrastructure could prevent access to courses/jobs

• Nationally-led changes to funding decisions, notably training for bus drivers could not be funded despite severe shortage
Key findings – Priority 5
## Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Targets 2007-2013</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in Masters/PhDs</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate placements</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants gaining Level 5</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants gaining Level 4</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>1,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants gaining Level 3</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>6,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants gaining Level 2</td>
<td>7,300</td>
<td>14,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants gaining basic skills</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>10,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants</td>
<td>50,200</td>
<td>114,031</td>
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What was most effective?

- Partnership working underpinned by a wide range of different providers offering breadth of options for participants
- Innovative approaches to engagement supported by provision of high quality Information, Advice & Guidance
- Development of higher level skills and increased engagement with Higher Education
- Stronger relationships between universities, and the HE community and businesses
- Support for start up companies
Barriers for Priority 5

- Offer for businesses not as flexible to meeting their specific needs as it could have been
  - Full qualifications when in practice only needed certain credits to benefit the organisation
  - Delivery of ESF “at a push not a pull”

- Disengagement among some businesses perceiving access to funds was onerous and hard to understand
Key findings – Priority 6
What was most effective?

- Technical Assistance (P6) funds used to good effect to support programme delivery

- Holistic approach to spending the money, encompassing a range of complementary projects

- Communications kept partners and stakeholders well informed

- Good news stories widely disseminated

- Research outputs used to inform investment decisions for new programme
Opportunities for change

• Opportunity to share valuable research outputs through wider dissemination

• Harder to develop case studies in relation to participants who were ex-offenders and as such less willing to share their stories

• Mid-term review divided ESF and ERDF communications and external marketing, previously under one banner via the Convergence Partnership Office

• General consensus that this function was more effective when the two funds were joined up
Key findings – Impacts
Impacts for individuals

- Progressions into employment
- Achievement of qualifications
- Distance travelled among individual participants e.g.:
  - Greater self-confidence
  - Reduced anxiety
  - Stronger career aspirations
  - Better self-esteem
- Ex-offenders on the programme less likely to re-offend compared with those that had not participated
Impacts for businesses

• Progressions into employment helping to build capacity in businesses including many SMEs

• Capacity building among third sector organisations

• Stronger relationships between HE and industry

• Establishment of new start up “cutting edge” companies, helping to improve GVA

• Increase of 25% in the number of new business start ups in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly between 2011 and 2013
Impacts on the region

- Higher level skills developed in Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
- Increase of 14% of people in employment between 2007 and 2014
- Increase of 11% of females in employment between 2007 and 2014
- More people employed expected to contribute to higher Gross Value Added (GVA)
- Decrease in number of people with no qualifications from 10% to 6% between 2007 and 2014
- Decrease in number of NEETs from 5.1% to 4.2% in Cornwall between 2012 and 2014
Recommendations
Programme delivery

• Review of strategic ownership and management of the future programme

• Design of tailored provision building upon success and in alignment with key LEP priorities

• Alignment of ESF and ERDF to best effect

• Maximisation of Technical Assistance funds

• Addressing any gaps in the participant journey
Evaluating impact

- Mid-cycle or rolling evaluation for future programmes
- Participant survey in 2016 to understand extent to which impacts sustained
- Measure success notably in relation to higher skills and wage levels
- Identify which targets and measures contribute to the greatest actual impact for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
Q & A