



# SURVEY SHOWS GROWING UNEASE

**CEFET** has a duty to represent to the ESF structures how the sector experiences access to and use of the funds. Most of the interpretation and delivery is achieved through Co-Financing Organisations: The LSC, DWP/Job Centre+ and (some) Local Authorities.

Of these the LSC has been first to conclude a tendering round, and put a list in the public domain of VCS (and other) groups that got through the first (PQQ) stage.

We asked these VCS groups their experience of the whole tendering system. A mixed picture emerges, but shows worryingly low levels of overall engagement, disquiet about partnership building, generally negative experience of the system, and increasing lack of confidence in the decisions.

On their own the commissioning phases have led to a decrease in confidence in the relevance of the LSC interpretation of ESF. Compounded with the debacle over how the sector's input into the Framework was (mis)handled last year, confidence in the system is at a very low ebb. Perception is that the ESF systems are no longer aimed at helping the hardest-to-reach. Opinion seems divided over whether this is due to error and misunderstanding or a real lack of concern about excluded people. Key findings are:

- The PQQ system itself had overall satisfaction from users usually in the 60% range (bear in mind this is a survey of organisations that got through). Except the Bravo system which only 42% thought fit for purpose.
- Only half of the organisations that got through PQQ felt able to respond to invitations to tender.
- Only 15% of VCS tenders were successful

- 60% of those participating in the tendering process thought it unfair.
- Those not tendering in their own right, but "partners" under other agencies' bids have serious misgivings about their position.
- Over half felt that how selections were made was unclear – or worse.
- 80% felt that feedback was unclear or inadequate.

Proposed solutions to this lack of confidence include:

- Publication of a "community empowerment audit" for the current set of actions once contracts are fully let.
- Strategic input from the sector, on an equal partnership basis, in designing tender specifications... especially in Priority One.
- Use of formal transparent scored assessment systems, put into the public domain at the opening of the tendering round and not varied. The scored ranking of bids being binding in the offering of contracts, and results being in the public domain.
- Longer turn-round times in the system especially for (resourced) support for genuine partnership development.
- Published, verified statistics on the relative success rates of the sector (and sub-sectors across the equalities categories) in securing contracts.

The full report, which included background information on the debates surrounding the Framework can be found at:

[www.cefet.org.uk/documents/vcslscsurvey.pdf](http://www.cefet.org.uk/documents/vcslscsurvey.pdf)

## New "Focus Group" Strategy for Grass Roots Groups.

There is a paradox that affects work with "Excluded" Communities:

If they are genuinely excluded they are not in discussion with statutory or established bodies, so how can you consult with them, learn their views or understand their experience???

The usual solution is to "substitute" other categories (BME, Disabled...) for Excluded and talk to (included) representatives of those, wider, communities.

CEFET has always rejected this "substitution" and has for 10 years operated at street-level in the communities themselves, acting as "midwife" in the formation of 100 new Grass Roots projects designed and controlled by the excluded people themselves every year (two-thirds in their first public activity).

We use these "newly-included" groups as a way of finding out what is going on among excluded people, with the resultant success of Catalyst and Tiger (see over) showing the method works.

CEFET now plans to extend this method by setting up a network, under the banner of EAPN – East Midlands, of 100 such Grass Roots Groups (structured to cover all issues and localities) to allow their input into issues that affect them.

Primarily this will feed into the European Social Fund, which targets exclusion, but will also provide the opportunity for this important part of the sector to have a voice in all Voluntary & Community policy, through *One East Midlands*.

If you are a Catalyst or TIGER group interested in participating please e-mail [clare@cefet.org.uk](mailto:clare@cefet.org.uk).

Further discussion of this approach can be found at [www.l-power.org.uk/docs/L-POWER%20final%20report.pdf](http://www.l-power.org.uk/docs/L-POWER%20final%20report.pdf)

# The Party is over for ...



## THE TIGER PROGRAMME

**TIGER** was actually two programmes which gave funds out as if they were grants, with **CEFET** (as an "Intermediary Body") getting funds in for Outputs. **TIGER** finished in April.

As reported last year: **TIGER 1** was a resounding success, over-performing its targets by 22%, and making a big difference to the community in general and the lives of many people.

**TIGER 2** is a more classic, Catalyst-style programme in the East Midlands "Community Economic Development" Wards. **TIGER 2** also over-performed, by 20.32%.

These over-performances mean that CEFET achieved £120,000 worth of net outputs for which we will never be paid. No-matter though, both **TIGER** programmes have involved the sort of community groups that would be unable to tender for or contract directly for Co-Financing ESF funds. This is a salutary lesson, given the problems identified by our survey of those that ARE.



### The Catalyst Programme

The Catalyst Programme, which started in November 2001 – following over 2 years lobbying and planning by CEFET – has finally finished. Activity concluded in April this year, and the project is now financially closed.

Catalyst was deployed in 29 communities that lack Social Capital – where there has been little going on and participation and morale are low to start with, and had an immediate aim to involve people who otherwise wouldn't participate in collective working.

Catalyst has been amazingly successful – supporting **643** small (£6k) projects, involving the direct participation (in running the project) of **6,555** excluded people., and the resulting projects have touched the lives of over **182,000** community members – building local social capital! Internal evaluation suggests that nearly two-thirds of the participants would not have been involved in anything else – showing that over 4,200 people have been moved from exclusion to inclusion by the programme.

All this would justify the £4m investment – however progression and job and learning outputs have been high, at 15% and 21% respectively. This is a conservative measure not counting informal learning, community activity or part-time work!

Needless to say Catalyst has been favourably evaluated in 4 reports (one internal, one East Midlands and 2 National), featured at 2 National (one VCS one Government) and 2 International VCS Conferences. It was also featured in the last National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

It is surprising, then, that Catalyst is not to be continued under the new Community Grants programme. CEFET has received no proper explanation why not, and the Community Grants programme has only just been given the go ahead following a 5 month delay. We await details, but we know it'll have to be very effective to equal the impact – in VCS terms or in ESF terms – of **Catalyst**.

## NEW TRANSNATIONAL AND INNOVATION FUND

Bidding is soon to open on the Transnational and Innovation element of ESF. There will be up to 3 projects half-funded by ESF in the region for around £ 6-700k over 3 years. To draw down the money you therefore have to:

- Already have an equal amount of non-ESF money
- Have at least one partner in another member state
- Have a project with strong innovative elements
- Fit under one of the following 6 themes (the East Midlands has decided not to narrow the list):
  - A. Active Inclusion
  - B. Engaging with Employers
  - C. ICT and the Digital Divide
  - D. Demographic Change (Older Workers and Migration)
  - E. Skills for Climate Change and Sustainable Development
  - F. Social Enterprise

Any project must also fit under "*Skilling the Workforce*" **OR** "*Access to Employment*" but not both (E is "*Skilling...*" only).

Given the VCS concern over the seeming disappearance of Community Empowerment, a distinctive and *innovative* regional approach to Inclusion work, from the current programme – there is keen interest in **Active Inclusion** in the Access to Employment... priority. The **Annual One East Midlands** Conference resolved to promote the selection of a project under this theme and actively encourage its development. CEFET is also working to this end.

If you have a contribution to make to this development get in touch with CEFET urgently. If you are interested in other aspects of the fund, keep an eye on the GOEM website.



**One East Midlands (OEM)** is the new regional lead body for all policy input from the VCS. It is through OEM that CEFET, for example, draws credentials to speak for the sector in all strategic matters relating to ESF.

OEM is starting to set up Policy Forums, including one on **Social Inclusion**.

Our experience of Social Inclusion work – especially using Community Empowerment methods, exemplified in the **TIGER**, **CATALYST** and **L-POWER** projects – means we hope to have substantial input into shaping and leading the policies and strategies emerging from that Forum.

In the immediate term our Chief Executive, Laurie Moran, the OEM vice-Chair, will Chair the initial Social Inclusion Forum.



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