

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date: March 7th, 2017
Cabinet Member: Councillor Mandy Davies-Williams
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Item Title: STEM Gogledd

1 DECISION SOUGHT

- Confirm the decision for Gwynedd Council to lead the project on behalf of the 4 counties.
- On the condition of WEFO approval, the cabinet member in consultation with the Head of Finance and Head of Economy to accept a grant offer of upto £1,461,000.
- Confirm that Gwynedd Council will contribute up to £150,000 of Match Funding for the project.

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

- Committing Gwynedd Council to act as the lead body on behalf of the 4 local authorities is a decision for the Cabinet. This commitment will confirm that Gwynedd Council will apply for funds, accept an offer of grant and enter into a legal contract with WEFO and the other local authorities to adhere with the European Social Fund (ESF) requirements.

3 INTRODUCTION

- Gwynedd Council are leading on the STEM Gogledd project. Gwynedd Council have applied for funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) along with the 3 Local Authorities in North West Wales to deliver the STEM Gogledd Project (See the STEM Gogledd Business Plan in Appendix 1).
- STEM Gogledd is a project that will invest in young people aged 11-19 years old to create an enthusiastic workforce to respond to the skill requirements of the local economy with a focus on STEM subjects.
- The project aims to:
 - Increase the take up of STEM Subjects amongst young people 11-19.
 - Increase the attainment of STEM Subjects amongst young people 11-19.

4 REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

a. Need for the project

- The North Wales Economic Ambition Boards’s Regional Skills and Employment Plan identifies the risks, opportunities and recommendations for creating a labour force that can meet the region’s economic and employer needs to ensure economic growth in the region.
- Specifically for the STEM Gogledd project the Skills Plan has identified that the retention of young people in the region is a challenge, and that matching and skilling young people to the opportunities available in the region would be a way of responding to this.
- The Skills Plan also identifies that a number of employers and prospective employers in the region cannot currently recruit to vacant positions because of the lack of appropriate skills locally. The Skills Plan identifies there is a need to increase the number of individuals studying STEM subjects so as to meet the needs of employers, especially within key sectors such as Energy, Manufacturing and Construction.
- During 2015, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board commissioned a STEM Audit of education provision and it highlighted that there were over 1,500 STEM interventions/activities available across the region. The audit identified that the number of activities, the lack of coordination, the ‘one-off’ and ad-hoc nature of the interventions, and the lack of awareness by some providers between their activities and the regional employment opportunities related to STEM made it difficult for schools to take advantage of such interventions and link them into the school’s curriculum and timetables; and made it difficult for Young people to use these interventions to assist them with taking decision on future subject choices.
- As a result of the above STEM Gogledd was developed. STEM Gogledd will employ a Regional Team to administrate the project; 2 STEM Coordinators to work with local employers, STEM providers and schools; 6 STEM Mentors to work within Young people within schools to develop unique STEM learning plans.

b. STEM Gogledd Outcomes

- The Regional Business Plan includes the need to achieve the following performance targets across the region:

Outcome	Target
Participants 11-19 years old	550
Participants 11-19 years old completing training in Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology - Female	197
Participants 11-19 years old completing training in Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology – Male	161
Participants 11-19 years old continuing to study Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology post 16 – Female	106
Participants 11-19 years old continuing to study Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology post 16 – Male	86

c. STEM Gogledd Budget

- Gwynedd Council will be responsible for the STEM Gogledd Budget across the Region.
- Gwynedd Council will be responsible for preparing and submitting the regional quarterly claims to WEFO.
- Gwynedd Council will be responsible for receiving all Match Funding contributions. The match funding will come from the partners (the 4 local authority) and contributions from the private sector. Local Authority contributions could decrease during the term of the project upon securing further private sector contributions.
- The Economy and Community Department has submitted a bid to the Council's Match Funding Fund to secure up to £150,000 as the council's contribution to this project. There are adequate funds available within the Matchfunding Fund at present to commit the £150,000 and has been identified as a priority by the Cabinet Member and the Service..
- The Budget is as follows:

Cost Heading	Cost
Staff – Management	£343,983
Staff – Delivery	£981,866
Simplified Costs (15%)	£198,877
Administration	£9,250
Human Resources (Recruitment and Redundancy)	£43,000
IT	£110,000
Marketing	£140,000
Travelling	£60,000
Events	£100,000
Professional Fees (Audit and Evaluation)	£100,000
TOTAL	£2,086,976
ESF Contribution	£1,460,883
Match Funding	£626,093

d. STEM Gogledd Management

- The project will be managed regionally by Gwynedd Council. The Regional Management Team will be located at the Economy and Community Department, and will include a Project Manager, Monitoring Officer and Finance Officer.
- The Manager will report on the project's progress regularly to WEFO along with the Project Board.

e. Risks and other considerations

- A Risk Assessment has been completed for the project. (Appendix 2).
- The main risk is to manage a regional project, as all responsibility for the project delivery and performance lies with Gwynedd Council which will be dependant upon co-operation by the 3 other local authorities to ensure delivery within school across the region. Gwynedd Council has experience of leading on regional projects and on Partnership working with the other

local authorities. The STEM Gogledd Project Board has been working on developing the project for over an year and it pulls together partners from the Local Authorities, Further Education Colleges, Universities, GwE, Local Employers, STEM activity/project providers and school representatives.

- The other risk associated with the project is the commitment to appoint officers. Redundancy costs for the duration of the project will be repayed through the grant, however any redundancy costs beyond the lifetime of the project will need to be paid by the authority.
- All other risks are relevant to receiving an external grant, including monitoring requirements, auditing, finance management, performance management.

6 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

- Awaiting WEFO's award, and the grant offer during April 2017.
- Recruit and establish the staffing structure during May and June 2017.
- Mobilisation period will run from April to September 2017 with the project operational in schools from September 1st 2017, until March 2020.

7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

The Views of the Statutory Officers

The Chief Executive

"This project is important in its purpose to develop skills in priority areas, which are key to the development of the economy. As the report states, the funds for the match-funding is available and its use for this purpose is a priority for the Cabinet member and the Service."

The Chief Finance Officer

"Conditional to the success of the application for £1.461m of European grant towards a project of £2.09m, I can confirm that there is provision already in place to allow for up to £150,000 contribution from Gwynedd Council. The 5 November 2013 Cabinet has allocated a budget from the Strategic Plan resource for achieving the aim. A £750,000 has already been allocated from the Transformational Fund for the purpose of creating a General Match Funding Fund. Of this, £75,000 has already been committed, and other schemes that would require a contribution of approximately £475,000 have been identified, including £150,000 for this project.

If the Cabinet approves that Gwynedd Council should act as the lead body on behalf of the sub-regional partnership for the European grant application, then officials from the Department of Finance will work prudently with the project manager to receive and manage the funding, and keep all financial records necessary, to protect the interests of the Council. "

The Monitoring Officer

"Establishing and leading on a project such as this it is important that formal arrangements are put in place, which include the provision of match resources, and compliance matters, so as to protect the lead authority."

