Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2014 - 2020

ESF Promoter Guidance on Participant and Project Data Validation for ESF Projects Funded under Call 3 of Priority Axis 1 & 2 - April 2018

Project Delivery Branch

Guidance Note 3

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Content

Section	Description	Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Participant Training plans	3
3	Locked records	4
4	Performance Monitoring of Participant Results	5
5	Common Errors	5

1   INTRODUCTION

The European Commission (EC) regulations require member states to collect and store data on each participant that benefits directly from ESF support. This has a number of implications in respect of data collection, data storage and the reporting of indicators. This document has been produced by the Northern Ireland ESF Project Delivery Branch (ESF PDB) to provide practical guidance to ESF operations (projects) on data collection and validation of participant eligibility and performance. The content of this document complies with EC guidance issued in May 2016.

2.   PARTICIPANT TRAINING PLANS (ESF Memo 24/18)

Immediate & Long Term Result Indicators are the means by which the EC capture the effects of ESF support on participants as a result of being on the project. They capture a change in the participant's situation (e.g. employment situation).

The means for identifying a participant's needs, and recording their progress from ESF support, is the Participant Training Plan (PTP). Projects must ensure that the training plan accurately reflects agreed objectives and activities of the ESF support, including incorporating the relevant Labour Market Status and Educational Attainment.

To assist projects in demonstrating the achievements of ESF support, a simple pro-forma has been developed that must be included and retained with all training plans – it is recommended that projects retain this pro-forma as the top page of the training plan. The Labour Market Status and Educational Attainment captured must accurately reflect the participant's status on entering the project.

All participant training plans must accurately reflect the values recorded on the ESIF database and must be uploaded. This pro-forma will form part of your organisation's on-the-spot checks and is a critical component to the integrity of the results data produced from the ESIF database.

2.1 Verification of Details on the PTP

The PTP must be signed by the participant to confirm the accuracy of the details provided and to confirm participation on the project. The PTP will be used by PDB and the MA to verify the accuracy of the data reported in the AIR.

Where it is not possible to obtain a wet signature when for example the participant is completing on line learning the details of the PTP must be confirmed electronically by the participant. Methods of conformation can be by e mail, text message or by social media. The electronic methods of confirmation should allow for a clear identification that it is the participant who is confirming the details, pseudonym will not be accepted.

The wording on the confirmation should read "I am content that the details recorded on the PTP documentation which I have reviewed or discussed with my mentor is correct".

3   LOCKED RECORDS

A record will only become locked to a Project if the participant progresses to another ESF funded project. On inputting the ULN, if the participant is currently participating on another project a message identifying the other project will appear and you will be unable to amend this participant. Amendments to locked records can be requested by completing an ESIF R1 form and sending it to esfperformancemonitoring@economy-ni.gov.uk for action.

If, when entering a new participant, that participant is flagged as participating on another project you must exit the record, without saving, as soon as possible. Failure to do this activates auto save and creates a record. Creating this duplicate record will override the validation and lock both projects out of the participant record.

The IRI and LTRI sections of the database sit outside the main form and can be amended at any time regardless of a participant current enrolment status.

Records will also become locked if it is verified by the Performance Monitoring Team.

4   PERFORMANCE MONITORING OF PARTICIPANT RESULTS

ESF PDB will carry out quarterly monitoring of projects actual performance against the performance targets that are set out in the operations ESF Call 3 application form, agreed in the Letter of Offer and performance forecast. Operations will be required to provide explanations for variances against agreed performance levels. Unsatisfactory performance, that is not addressed, may result in a financial penalty, however this will be a last resort. Payment of claims may also be delayed until performance issues have been addressed.

5   COMMON ERRORS IN UN-VERIFIABLE RECORDS

The PTP must be fully completed, (every section on the form addressed), and signed by both the Project Promoter and the Participant. Details on the PTP must replicate what is input to ESIF.

The Educational Attainment section on the PTP asks for the highest Qualification achieved. Just stating "Level 4" not adequate, needs to state "KS4 "or "ISCED Level 4", whichever is appropriate. If GCSEs have been obtained, The PTP must state highest grade achieved.

Labour Market Status at entry, must be accurately recorded on both the PTP and on ESIF. It must clearly show either the length of Unemployment (ie <6 Months, 6-12 Months or >12 Months) if Unemployed or Economically Inactive. Both cannot be selected.

Copying and pasting a Participants wet signature onto the PTP/IRI is not acceptable.

IRI must be fully completed and details match what is recorded on ESIF. If the IRI declaration is being completed by the Project Promoter, remember to complete both sections of the declaration (the result plus the method of contact with the Participant).

All relevant evidence documentation for a participant must be uploaded to the record. These include the PTP/Supporting Evidence, any Eligibility Evidence, IRI and LTRI evidence or declaration, Disability Self Certification and Prisoner Annex. PDB should not have to ask for any of this documentation.