



Report

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Agenda Item: 15	Date of Meeting: 26 th July 2007
This report is: For information and action	Meeting Venue: Warwickshire CC Shirehall, Warwick
Report Status: To seek approval to submit a bid to draw down £140,000 Capacity Building Funding	

Report Title:

Capacity Building Fund (CBF) Bid

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WMRMB Programme Board

Summary:

Subsequent to the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership's (RIEP) decision to ring-fence £140,000 CBF money for fire services in the region, the WMRMB Programme Board tasked a group drawn from the Performance Board to recommend bids to the Chief Fire Officers Forum for scrutiny prior to ratification by the WMRMB. This report recommends that a single bid to support Equality and Diversity in the region is approved and formally submitted to the RIEP.

Recommendation(s):

The WMRMB is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report
- Approve the recommended bid for CBF which will be developed with and submitted to the RIEP.

The outcome of the bidding process will be the subject of a report to the WMRMB at a later date.

For further information, please contact:

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1. Background Details:

Subsequent to the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership's (RIEP) decision to ring-fence £140,000 CBF money for fire services in the region, the WMRMB Programme Board tasked a group drawn from the Performance Board to recommend a package of bids to the Chief Fire Officers Forum for scrutiny prior to ratification by the WMRMB in July.

The group met on 23rd April in order to brainstorm the package of bids for recommendation to the CFO's Forum on 26th April.

Tony Ashfield from the Centre of Excellence (CoE) attended in order to provide some guidance as to what kind of bids would meet the selection criteria and be likely to succeed and Steve Worrall, the WMRMB Programme Manager, gave a regional overview.

It was clarified that successful bids should:-

- Be evidenced against something such as improvement priorities, performance scorecards and the National Framework
- Make a significant impact and require real "gap funding"
- Have elements of shared benefits and of building and retaining capacity
- Not be "spread too thinly".

A package of two bids was subsequently recommended to and approved by the CFO's Forum as follows:-

1. Equality and Diversity c £110,000. Led by the HR Project Board
2. Performance Improvement – monitoring and audit/review c £30,000.
Led by the Performance Project Board

Consequently, preparatory discussions commenced with project leads and some doubt was expressed as to the efficacy of actioning the second bid, "performance improvement", c £30,000.

After considering the common themes for improvement following the 2006/07 Performance Framework, coupled with the fact that all Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) have established their improvement priorities for 2007/08 prior to 31st March 2007, there seemed little scope for developing a peer review process which would add value to what FRSs are currently doing for 2007/08. In addition, operational assurance assessments will not be repeated in the 2007/08 Performance Framework and the other elements of the framework (Use of Resources/Direction of Travel) remain unchanged. After a series of discussions it is felt that the likely focus of FRSs will now turn to the arrangements surrounding Comprehensive Area Assessments. Therefore, targeting resources on a potentially outdated methodology may be inappropriate and actually create additional work for minimal benefit.

In light of this, Chief Fire Officers have since been consulted and have approved that a single bid for Equality and Diversity, c £140,000 is recommended to the WMRMB for

onward submission to the RIEP.

This bid based on a process of peer challenge prior to audit on the equality standard for local government. The overarching objective of this bid is for all FRSs across the region attaining a level 4 local government equality standard.

The benefits and desired outcomes of the bid are:-

- All FRSs in region to achieve level 4 Equality Standard
- Shared commitment to “make it happen”
- Strengthened partnerships
- Shared learning
- Improved service delivery
- Positive impact on leadership and culture
- Mainstreamed into performance
- Shared strategy implemented and embedded
- Build upon an already successful peer review approach

Although a further increase in under represented groups in our workforce is unlikely to occur in all FRSs in the region in the short term as a result of this work, it will help create the conditions for such improvements in the longer term.

Subject to approval, the HR Project Board will commence bid development work in collaboration with the RIEP and the Government Office Fire Service Lead.

The Performance Board will also be consulted regarding the potential to upskill the accredited auditors already in place in order to conduct the audit activity part of the project.

The outcome of the bidding process will be the subject of a report to the WMRMB at a later date.

2. Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

£140,000 is available for draw down subject to bid approval, the outcome of which will be the subject of a separate report.

3. Background Papers:

- Minutes of WMRMB Programme Board, 29th March 2007.
- RIEP Paper – “CBF Programme – Board Review of Interim Strategic Evaluation”, 31st January 2007.
- CLG Fire Service Circular 4/2007, “Update on Capacity Building Programme and Regional Centres of Excellence”.

4. Attachments:
