

## CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

### **Question 1 – Are there other areas you think the Partnership Agreement should address?**

No, SFC does not think that there are other areas that the Partnership Agreement should address.

### **Question 2 – Do you think these thematic objectives will best address Scotland's short-term and long-term challenges?**

The thematic objectives are well aligned with the Scottish Government's objectives and also SFC's objectives. There is a clear fit with the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy and the likely areas of focus for Scotland's approach to Horizon 2020.

### **Question 3 – Do you think there are any other thematic objectives which should be addressed?**

No, SFC does not think that there are any other thematic objectives which should be addressed.

### **Question 4 – Do you think the Scottish Themed Funds will address Scotland's key challenges?**

Yes, SFC thinks that the Scottish Themed Funds will address Scotland's key challenges.

**Question 5 – How do you think the governance and delivery arrangements will impact on your sector?**

SFC feel that the colleges and universities sectors it works with will benefit from the approach to governance and delivery arrangements.

The arrangements being developed will reinforce the modern approach of public agencies working together. The college and universities sectors will benefit from development of projects that are tailored to employers needs in key/growth sectors. A more coordinated approach is welcomed.

SFC is included as a lead partner in the delivery partnership for Competitiveness, Innovation and Jobs, which we welcome. SFC also see a role for colleges in delivery of the objectives of the Social Inclusion / Local Development fund.

**Question 6 – How do you think the governance and delivery arrangements will impact on your organisation?**

SFC has built up experience managing delivery of European Structural Funds projects by the colleges (ESF) and universities (ERDF) sectors. Our past projects have provided a positive experience, and have delivered significant outputs at both local and national level.

As SFC may oversee delivery of a range of Structural Funds in the 2014-2020 programme, and based on our past experience, there are certain areas of audit and compliance where further clarification would be appreciated.

It is important that lead partners managing delivery of projects by a number of delivery agents are not overburdened due to audit and compliance processes. Where an organisation, such as SFC, is contracting/managing delivery agents, it is important that the audit roles and responsibilities are clearly defined at the outset.

From our experience, a clearer and more consistent approach to verification and audit of unit cost models would be welcomed and would help organisations plan and ensure the best possible processes are built into projects from the outset.

It would also be beneficial to our organisation if clear lines of accountability are developed for funds within projects developed by Themed Funds delivery partnerships.

**Question 7 – Are there any unidentified governance or delivery arrangements that could aid simplification of the future programmes and ensure that the Structural Funds complement each other?**

The proposed governance and delivery arrangements fit well with SFC's own structure and move to a system of Outcome Agreements with colleges and universities, complimenting the outcome focus of the combined Structural Funds.

We are currently working to simplify our own unit cost funding model for colleges further, which fits with the objectives for governance and delivery of the Structural Funds.

**Question 8 – What other delivery options do you think would be feasible for delivering youth employment initiatives?**

If the youth employment initiatives involve training, then SFC recommend that there is a role for the college sector in delivering this.

**Question 9 – What other measures could be taken to reduce the audit and control pressures?**

SFC recommend that audit control processes should build on existing audit and control processes within lead and delivery partner organisations.

It is important that guidance on Operational Programmes is provided in good time to allow operational planning.

It should be ensured that consistency of guidance is applied over the lifetime of projects.

**Question 10 – Do you have any further comments on the proposals?**

It will be easier for SFC to match fund projects if it is involved in the strategic delivery partnerships that develop them.

It is important that SFC is informed about any other projects it might be asked to match fund that are developed by delivery partnerships that it is not involved on. SFC needs to plan funding commitments in advance. It is important therefore that the Scottish Government is aware of the overlaps between themed funds and provides clarity around match funding as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities.