



Quality Improvement Team

quality.improvementteam@economy-ni.gov.uk

ESF Call3

Quality Monitoring Review and Evaluation Return

March 2023

Submission Details

Organisation
The Cedar Foundation

Project Title
Inclusion Works (300067)

Please submit a Return for each Project you deliver

Please tick	Project Area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community and Family Support
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disability
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed
<input type="checkbox"/>	NEETs

Prepared by	Job Role
Kieran Molloy	Head of Employability Services
Breeda Doherty	Regional Quality Assurance Manager

Submission date
23.03.23

The requested Return covers details for ESF Call 3 Projects from **1 April 2022** to **March 2023**

Please submit the completed Template to the Quality Improvement Team at quality.improvementteam@economy-ni.gov.uk on or before **23 March 2023**

Thank you for your cooperation. – [QIT Privacy Notice](#)

Section 1

Update <i>(As of 16 March 2023)</i>	
Number of Participants Registered	650
Number of Participants Retained	605

Section 2

Main Learning Gained.

e.g. successful models of delivery; successful models of engagement etc.

Cedar's delivery of Call 3 has built on our extensive experience of over more than 25 years in delivering ESF-funded employability and inclusion support for disabled people. This section provides a summary of the key strengths and success factors across the implementation and delivery of our Call 3 Inclusion Works service. This has been informed by ongoing self-evaluation, an ETI inspection, engagement with stakeholders, analysis of performance data and impact as well as feedback from participants.

- Facilitating meaningful and productive partnerships with service users to co-produce goal focused plans that achieve successful, sustainable outcomes which meet the aspirations of our participants.
- A highly skilled, caring, committed and enthusiastic staff team including staff with specialist knowledge and skills to meet the wide and increasing range of complexity and diversity of need of the participants.
- Responsive, skilled, and informed strategic and operational leadership which collaborates with a range of key stakeholders to influence policy, develop partnerships and improve services.
- Robust quality processes based on co-production to generate improvement activity following service user, staff and partner feedback.
- Providing a range of interventions tailored to support each participant with an individual progression pathway to meet their specific needs, interests, and aspirations. This includes accredited training provision complemented with an appropriate range of non-accredited programmes and activities, along with mentoring support.
- Maintaining a strong organisational strong emphasis placed on promoting an inclusive ethos and the welfare of both participants and staff. This recognises the need to support the emotional health and well-being of staff, so that they in turn are best placed to meet the needs of the participants.
- Commitment to providing flexible, participant centred programmes, and listening to and acting on feedback from both participants and staff, both in the development of the programmes and in the professional development and experiences of the staff.
- Effective partnership working with a wide range of key stakeholders, including H&SC Trusts Jobs and Benefits offices and a network of specialised support agencies, employers, and the community and voluntary sectors.
- Maintaining a focus on care, welfare and safeguarding including positive risk management measures.

Section 3

Innovation Demonstrated in Key Areas.

Cedar's delivery of Inclusion Works during Call 3 has demonstrated innovation in the following key areas:

- Promoting active inclusion using co-production principles, engaging the participant throughout assessment, planning, intervention, exit and follow-up.
- Responding to a range of disability-related barriers through on-going specialist action planning and mentoring support.
- Providing a menu of interventions to address participants' personal barriers and agree solutions to meet their employability and inclusion goals. This ensures that specific needs are met across a diverse group of participants.
- Flexibility of service provision ensuring participants' service experience is based on assessed need with levels of activity reflecting individual action plan goals and personal circumstances.
- Responding to needs of participants most vulnerable to exclusion due to lack of skills, connectivity or hardware through effective assessment, planning and intervention, facilitating access to the range of remote/blended/alternating learning.
- Collaboration with community partners (e.g. employers, colleges, training providers, community organisations) to respond to changes in the labour market and delivery of education and training to facilitate appropriate participant support for successful outcomes.
- Maintaining a focus on the resilience, health and well-being of participants and staff throughout and following the Covid-19 pandemic including support to manage returning to face to face provision and remote/blended learning.
- Utilising an Innovation team approach to plan and develop the provision to support the mental wellbeing of staff. This has led to the implementation of mental health awareness training for all staff, the development of a Mental Health online portal with a wide range of appropriate resources which are monitored and regularly updated.
- Development of highly bespoke neuro-diversity training through extensive research, to review and revise existing resources on understanding brain injury and adult autism. This aims to reflect current best practice and terminology in these fields. A programme "Managing My Autism" has been created in-house, and recently introduced and delivered to help participants understand and manage better their autism, to develop their general social awareness and interactions and to understand behaviours in the workplace.
- Development of provision to meet the needs of participants who are deaf or hard of hearing. Which provided a "one-stop shop" of skills development, social inclusion and where appropriate employment accessibility support.

Section 4

Resources and Support Materials Developed in Key Areas.

- *Personal Effectiveness After Brain Injury* resource, comprising of 6 units designed to support adults with an acquired brain injury to understand brain injury and how it can impact on attention & concentration, memory, planning & organising, stress and fatigue. This training provides the opportunity to practice compensatory strategies in a safe environment with support from specialist staff. This training can be accredited through OCR.
- *Managing My Autism* resource, comprising of 4 units designed to support adults with Autism understand their diagnosis and how Autism can affect stress & anxiety, social interactions & communication and confidence. The current resource has recently been evaluated by service users and improvement activities completed based on feedback. This training can be accredited through OCR.
- A new suite of BTEC Workskills resources have been created by Cedar's Training Officer team following an extensive review by Pearson of the Workskills qualifications and a move to a Work Based Learning approach.
- Utilisation of BSL Interpreters to ensure an emerging cohort of Deaf & Hard of Hearing participants are supported to fully access all aspects of the Inclusion Works service in line with their action plan goals.
- Development of an innovation team to take forward activities of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and associated action plan. The team is committed to creating a conducive working environment in which Mental Health & Wellbeing is embedded in our culture and is seen as a shared responsibility. To date, the team has focused on:
 1. the creation of an online Mental Health Portal for staff, populated with resources on topics that are identified by staff as relevant to them.
 2. providing the right support at the right time by staff having access to trained, Cedar appointed Mental Health Champions, counselling support via Westfield Health and Occupational Health support when required
 3. presenting webinars and information sessions via My Mind Matters initiative
- Development of the *Sharing Best Practice* initiative which utilises the existing skills of the staff team to support their peers acquire/enhance their skills in specific areas like digital skills, making the best use of online platforms, co-designing Action Plans.

- Aligning the soft outcome measure used throughout Cedar by training all Inclusion Works Case Officers in the *Outcomes Star* soft skills tool. This tool enables us to measure progress in areas related to work and community engagement and provides continuity throughout the organisation as participants access a range of Cedar services and for reporting on the impact of the organisation in soft skills progression.

Section 5

Outcomes and Impacts Achieved in Relation to Objectives.

Cedar's Inclusion Works project has demonstrated high levels of performance in delivering against the objectives of the European Social Fund i.e. combatting poverty; enhancing social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity; and increasing the skills base of future workforce participants.

Inclusion Works met or exceeded all of the key performance targets agreed with ESF Managing Authority and its match funders, as follows:

Project Objective	Target	Achieved
Engage people with complex disabilities to improve their employability skills and social inclusion through development of a personal action plan.	430 personal action plans	650 personal action plans
Support participants to achieve their planned personal employability and inclusion goals.	366 85% of participants	605 93% of participants
Enable participants leaving the programme to enter paid employment.	43 entering employment	41 entering employment
Enable participants leaving the programme to enter education and training	150 entering education and training	464 in education and training including transfer to ongoing support from Cedar
Support participants to achieve qualifications.	150 qualifications	226 qualifications

In addition to these objectives Inclusion Works monitored soft outcomes and distance travelled by participants towards their self-defined employability and

inclusion goals using the Rickter Scale® tool. Using a pre-defined scale, participants self-assessed their initial position against a range of employability and inclusion factors and then repeated this assessment throughout their programme to inform on-going personalised action planning and identify gains made. This system allowed Cedar to track the distance travelled along a clear progression pathway for individuals as well as for the whole participant population. Progression towards goals using the Rickter Scale® for Inclusion Works in Call 3 was 82% against a target of 60%.

Section 6

Planning for Sustainability and Progression, Including Key Partnerships with Other Providers.

Cedar has well established practices to build the capacity of leavers to independently sustain progression pathways on leaving Inclusion Works. For participants who have left our service during 2022- 23 we will continue with 6-month follow-up contact to provide responsive short-term intervention to promptly support issues arising or signposting to other sources of longer-term support as required.

The ending of ESF funding on 31st March and uncertainty around future funding continues to be of significant concern, particularly in relation to continuity of support for our service users. Cedar has actively engaged in extensive work, both in its own right and with partner organisations, to seek clarity on and secure ongoing funding in order to effectively plan for future developments. This has included:

- Cedar, along with 7 partner organisations, has submitted a large-scale funding bid to the UK Sustainable Prosperity Fund, the result of which will be announced in April.
- Cedar has committed to continue to fund all Inclusion Works services for an additional three months, until June 2023. This will give us time to assess the outcome of our bid to the UKSPF (ESF successor funding).
- Ongoing discussions are taking place with all 5 HSCTs to discuss their needs, priorities and future funding positions for the services they currently fund.
- Extensive engagement has taken place with senior Dept of Health officials to secure additional funding to mitigate the impact of the loss of ESF funding.
- Work is ongoing on redesigning service models to respond to the needs of our service users and new funding streams such as UKSPF, Peace Plus and local Councils.

Appendix:

ESF Call 3 - Project Closure Report

PROJECT DETAILS	
Organisation	The Cedar Foundation
Project Title	Inclusion Works
Priority Axis	Disability
Project Location	Malcolm Sinclair House 31 Ulsterville Avenue Belfast BT9 7AS
Start Date	01/4/2022
End Date	31/3/2023

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Final Report is to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the project in realising the proposed objectives as outlined in the Project Application/Letter of Offer (LoO);
- Compare planned costs and outputs/outcomes with actual costs and outputs/outcomes to allow an assessment of the project's overall value for money to be made;
- Identify particular aspects of the project which have affected outputs/outcomes either positively or negatively.

1.2 Background

Please provide a brief description of the objectives of the Project

The Cedar Foundation is a leading voluntary organisation delivering services throughout Northern Ireland. Our Vision is an inclusive society for all. Our Mission is to support individuals and families living with disability, autism and brain injury to live the lives they choose. Our Employability and Inclusion programme is Inclusion Works, supporting disabled people to Work, Learn, Connect.





Rationale

Disabled people face multiple barriers to employment resulting in high levels of economic inactivity and social exclusion. Only 37% of working age disabled people are in work versus 77% without disabilities with disabled people at heightened risk of exclusion, poorer social, economic and health outcomes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Cedar has 80 years' experience of supporting disabled people and has demonstrated that these barriers can be overcome with specialist, coproduced and person-centred interventions.

Overall Aim

To deliver specialist, tailored support services across Northern Ireland addressing the specific needs of disabled people to improve their employability and inclusion and secure sustainable progression pathways.

Strategic Objectives

-  Enrol and support disabled people by coproducing an Individual Action Plan for Employability and Inclusion goals
-  Combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by supporting disabled people to attain paid work
-  Increase disabled people's skills base by supporting access to mainstream training/education
-  Support active inclusion for disabled people by engaging them at an earlier stage in their employability pathway

Target Group

People with work-limiting long-term illness or disability are a priority target group in the Economic Inactivity Strategy. Inclusion Works will support disabled people furthest from the labour market by focusing on those with complex physical/sensory disabilities and significant health conditions related to cognitive/behavioural issues and neurodiversity. This includes congenital disability (e.g. cerebral palsy, hearing impairment); acquired disability (e.g. spinal injury); long-term health conditions (e.g. arthritis); acquired brain injury (stroke, traumatic brain injury) and Autism.

2.1 Initial v Revised Letter of Offer (LoO)

Please provide an explanation for revisions of >10% between the targets set out in the initial LoO and targets set out the final revised LoO (if any).

Indicator	Initial LoO Target Call 3	Final Revised LoO targets Call 3	% variance	Reason for Variance (If > 10%)
Eligible expenditure target (100%)	£2,425,969.98	N/A	N/A	N/A

Participants Enrollment target	430	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participants – Into Employment target	43	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participants remaining in Employment after 6 months	5%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participants – Into Education/Training target	150	N/A	N/A	N/A

2.2 LoO targets v Actual Expenditure / Performance

Please provide an explanation for variances of > - 10% between the targets set out in the final LoO and the actual outturn.

Indicator	Targets set out in final Call 3 loO	Actual Outturn – Call 3	% Variance final LoO/Final Outturn	Reason for Variance (> 10%)
Net Eligible Project Expenditure	£2,425,969.98	£2,367,330.87	N/A	N/A
Participants Enrolled	430	650	Target Exceeded	N/A
Participants – Into Employment	43	41	-5%	N/A

Participants remaining in Employment after 6 months	5%	9%	Target Exceeded	N/A
Participants – Into Education/Training	150	463	Target Exceeded	N/A

3.1 Main lessons learned / recommendations

Please provide a high level summary of how your project has performed in delivering the objectives of the European Social Fund. This information will be used by the DfE to improve delivery of future projects.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Cedar's project has demonstrated high levels of performance in delivering against the objectives of the European Social Fund i.e., combatting poverty; enhancing social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity; and increasing the skills base of future workforce participants.

Inclusion Works met or exceeded all the key performance targets agreed with ESF Managing Authority and its match funders, as follows:

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In addition to these objectives Inclusion Works monitored soft outcomes and distance travelled by participants towards their self-defined employability and inclusion goals using the Rickter Scale® tool. Using a pre-defined scale, participants self-assessed their initial position against a range of employability and inclusion factors and then repeated this assessment throughout their programme to inform on-going personalised action planning and identify gains made. This system allowed Cedar to track the distance travelled along a clear progression pathway for individuals as well as for the whole participant population. Progression towards goals using the Rickter Scale® for Inclusion Works in Call 3 was 82% against a target of 60%.

In January 2023, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a quality improvement planning inspection of Inclusion Works to evaluate the capacity of Cedar to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision. The inspection visit took place over 3 days and the report has been published on the ETI website. The report provides excellent feedback on the quality of service and outcomes delivered as well as the expertise and level of support provided by the staff team to our service users. It also confirms that Cedar demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for the Inclusion Works ESF project and that arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect current legislation and practice. These represent the highest possible levels of outcome ratings by ETI.

Cedar's delivery of Call 3 has built on our extensive experience of over more than 25 years in delivering ESF-funded employability and inclusion support for disabled people. The key strengths and success factors across the implementation and delivery of our Call 3 Inclusion Works service are summarized below This has been informed by ongoing self-evaluation, an ETI inspection, engagement with stakeholders, analysis of performance data and impact as well as feedback from participants.

- Facilitating meaningful and productive partnerships with service users to co-produce goal focused plans that achieve successful, sustainable outcomes which meet the aspirations of our participants.
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- Maintaining a strong organisational emphasis on promoting an inclusive ethos and the welfare of both participants and staff. This recognises the need to support the emotional health and well-being of staff, so that they in turn are best placed to meet the needs of the participants.

- Commitment to providing flexible, participant centred programmes, and listening to and acting on feedback from both participants and staff, both in the development of the programmes and in the professional development and experiences of the staff.
- Effective partnership working with a wide range of key stakeholders, including H&SC Trusts, Jobs and Benefits offices, a network of specialised support agencies, employers, and the community and voluntary sectors.
- Maintaining a focus on care, welfare and safeguarding including positive risk management measures.

3.2 Case Studies/Good News Stories

Please provide in this section any positive benefits, good news stories or outcomes which your project has achieved from its involvement with the ESF program in Call 3. These should include individual participant achievement or benefits to the community as a whole. There is no requirement to hold personal data or any other information relating to case studies after your project ends on 31 March 2023 however if you wish to have any of the case studies documented on this closure report made available for potential future ESF publication you should ensure that the necessary consent of all staff and participants featured in the case study is obtained and returned with a completed case study template attached to memo 07/19

Cedar implemented a detailed Communication Plan for Inclusion Works covering the Call 3. The key objectives of this were to:

- Raise the profile of Cedar Inclusion Works with commissioners, funders and planners;
- Raise awareness of the unique nature of the Inclusion Works service with referral agents and the general public.

Cedar used a range of mechanisms to promote the project and its positive benefits and outcomes, including good news stories and case studies on our website, social media platforms and the local press. These have included:

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/News/michael-regains-driving-license-with-support-from-inclusion-works>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/News/inclusion-works-social-skills-programme-for-adults-with-autism>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/news/inclusion-works-southern-service-user-daniel-inspires-creation-of-walking-football-group-activity>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/news/platinum-recruitment-advise-inclusion-works-on-access-to-employment>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/news/conor-secures-career-success-with-cedars-inclusion-works-programme>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/news/inclusion-works-southern-recognition-event>

<https://www.cedar-foundation.org/news/robin-swann-visits-cedars-ballymena-resource-training-centre>

3.3 Call 3 Document Retention Requirements

I confirm that in line with the conditions set out in our letter of offer, that the project will retain all documentation relating to the Call 2 & 3 project until December 2030.

Confirmation provided by* Elaine Amos

Date 22/05/2023

*Must be signed by a senior responsible officer within the project (electronic signature acceptable)