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5 July 1999

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# CIRCULAR

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**Widening Participation  
Partnerships with  
Higher Education**

Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT

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To

Principals of colleges  
Heads of external institutions  
Heads of higher education  
institutions receiving funds  
from the Council  
Chief education officers

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Circular type

Request for applications for  
funding

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Summary

Invites applications for funding for  
widening participation  
partnerships with higher  
education institutions. Responses  
are requested by 1 October 1999.

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Reference number: 99/29

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Enquiries:  
Regional directors  
Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>

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**99/29**

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# Widening Participation Partnerships with Higher Education

## Introduction

1 This circular invites applications for funding for widening participation projects to support progression from further to higher education. These funds are available to colleges, external institutions and higher education (HE) institutions. Applications are requested by 1 October 1999.

## Background

2 *Learning Works*, the report of the widening participation committee, recommended that the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) should fund a number of partnerships to develop joint working to widen participation. In response to this recommendation, the Council has made a total of £4 million available over the past two years to fund 54 partnerships. The partnerships have concentrated on the development of a local participation plan. The partnerships funded by the Council in the first round are due to complete their work by summer 1999.

3 The FEFC and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) quinquennial reviews recommended that the two councils should look for opportunities to strengthen links between the two sectors. In response to this, the councils have each agreed to allocate £2 million in 1999-2000 for partnership work between further education (FE) institutions and HE institutions to promote widening participation opportunities through progression.

4 This joint fund will focus specifically on supporting proposals which will build pathways from further to higher education for disadvantaged groups, through links between FE institutions, as members of the new lifelong learning partnerships, and HE institutions.

5 Under this joint initiative, FEFC-funded institutions are eligible to apply for funds through the Council. Higher education institutions are eligible to apply for funds through the HEFCE and are being contacted separately. HEFCE Circular 99/33 set out information on this fund.

## Widening Participation in Higher Education

6 The HEFCE initiated a special widening participation funding programme in 1998-99 and has allocated a further £5 million a year for the next three years, 1999-2000 to 2001-02, to continue the programme. This will focus on enhancing partnerships between HE institutions and other organisations, and embedding good practice.

7 Additional funds are also available to HE institutions through a formula-based grant allocation, and all HE institutions have been asked to report on their widening participation strategies, including how they will use these funds.

## Lifelong Learning Partnerships

8 Since the second round of widening participation strategic partnerships started work in September 1998, the lifelong learning partnerships have now been identified throughout England. These partnerships build on the earlier joint work of the Council, the Training and Enterprise National Council (TNC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and other partners to develop a national partnership protocol. Lifelong learning partnerships will bring together all existing local partnership arrangements covering lifelong learning. They will be responsible for co-ordinating local arrangements for learning and the development of local learning targets linked to the new national learning targets.

9 All of the likely partnership areas have now been identified and the majority of learning partnerships are now in place. Partnerships have recognised the importance of harnessing the strengths of all those with interests in lifelong learning, including higher education. In many cases, lifelong learning partnerships have involved HE institutions in their structures but there has been a limited focus on developing progression routes into HE. The new joint funding programme is designed to address this and to:

- encourage HE institutions to develop links and to work with lifelong learning partnerships in enhancing progression routes from further to higher education
- support activities designed to widen local access to and participation in higher education through the development of those links.

**Table 1. Distribution of funds**

<i>FEFC region</i>	<i>FEFC funds 1999-2000</i>	<i>Total FEFC/HEFCE programme 1999-2000</i>
	<i>£000s</i>	<i>£000s</i>
Eastern Region	122	244
East Midlands	159.5	319
Greater London	257.5	515
Northern Region	228.5	457
North West	385	770
South East	149.5	299
South West	126	252
West Midlands	284.5	569
Yorkshire and Humberside	287.5	575
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>4,000</b>

10 Where lifelong learning partnerships have been confirmed by the government office, it is expected that the application would be made through this partnership. In areas where a lifelong learning partnership has not yet been confirmed, applications may be made through an emerging lifelong learning partnership. If an area does not have a lifelong learning partnership (confirmed or emerging), an application may be made by another established partnership. Partnerships are encouraged to involve specialist colleges outside the sector where appropriate.

### **Allocation of funds**

11 In discussion with the HEFCE, the funds have been allocated to the nine FEFC regions according to need; this is based on an estimate of the number of young people within in each region who do not enter higher education. However, the initiative is aimed at all age-groups.

12 The proposed distribution of funds is shown in table 1.

### **Activities to be funded**

13 The funds will be allocated to activities which are designed to build pathways and progression opportunities from further to higher education. The Council does not wish to prescribe the nature of the activity to be supported, either in the development of

partnerships or in the dissemination and embedding of good practice and it is up to institutions to identify the most appropriate activities to achieve this objective. These could include a number of the activities listed in paragraph 14 below. Proposals must, however, identify how such activities will be targeted on building progression through work with HE institutions.

14 The following are examples of activities eligible for support:

- the development of summer schools designed to introduce potential students from disadvantaged groups to HE or to assist progression, for example, by links with schools with low HE progression routes or by targeting unemployed people or refugees
- the maintenance and enhancement of expertise in outreach activity, for example in remote rural areas, or in liaison with agencies working with people with disabilities, or those recovering from mental illness
- activity to increase the participation of Afro-Caribbean men and Bangladeshi and Pakistani women
- strategies for encouraging students who would not normally consider HE to study in non-traditional subject areas

- staff development activities, including staff exchanges between the partners, to promote the dissemination of good practice
- building local credit frameworks, including credit rating of FE courses against HE credit frameworks where overlap exists
- mapping FE and HE curricula in specific areas to strengthen pathways, and to reduce overlap and repetition
- activity to increase access to technology designed to facilitate progression
- focused market research
- accreditation of work-based learning
- website development to provide information about local opportunities for progression
- pre-entry and on-course guidance to ensure students make informed choices and to enhance retention rates
- programmes designed to support students once recruited to HE, such as mentoring schemes and programmes to develop key skills.

15 The types of activity that will be supported in disseminating and embedding good practice will vary widely according to the experience of the institution. Some institutions may seek to introduce and embed good practice developed elsewhere; others may wish to extend their own experience into new areas.

## **Application and Selection Process**

### **National criteria**

16 Each funding application will need to satisfy the following national criteria. These are threshold criteria, necessary for the success of a proposal but not sufficient to guarantee it.

#### ***Meet clear need***

17 Proposals should demonstrate that a need exists in the region or locally and should show how the proposal will help to meet it. They should specify the outcomes that they will measure to assess the effectiveness of the project in meeting the identified need.

#### ***Have a direct impact***

18 The Council is seeking to fund primarily those activities that will have a direct impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Proposals to disseminate and embed good practice may target a wider range of under-represented groups but should equally have a direct impact.

#### ***Promote longer-term commitment to widening participation***

19 Proposals should show how the funding sought will promote longer-term commitment to widening participation after the funding ceases.

#### ***Develop synergy with other funding sources and partnerships***

20 Proposals should identify other relevant funding sources and partnerships in the area, and state how their proposal links to and builds upon these networks.

#### ***Transferability of results***

21 Proposals will be judged on the extent to which they seek to develop and disseminate good practice.

#### ***Support for students***

22 Institutions should identify the mechanisms that they will use to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds once recruited, so that such students successfully complete their programmes. Proposals should indicate their connection with teaching and learning strategies designed to meet the needs of those from disadvantaged groups.

#### ***Value for money***

23 Proposals will need to show the value added by their activities.

#### ***Quality assurance, monitoring and self-evaluation***

24 In their proposals, partnerships should describe how they would assure the quality of the provision they develop, monitor their own performance, and evaluate their own progress. In all cases, quantified and measurable outcomes with realistic timescales should be identified, as these will be used as an indication of the success of the activity.

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## Regional priorities

25 In addition to the national threshold criteria, each proposal to develop partnerships will need to address regional priorities. These priorities may differ from region to region, taking into account, in particular, relevant priorities identified in the skills and learning strategies being developed by regional development agencies.

26 Proposals to disseminate and embed good practice may address their regional priorities but may wish to go outside these and focus on the national priorities. Such proposals must make clear which priorities are being addressed and through what mechanisms.

## Making an Application for Funding

27 Every application must identify a lead institution to ensure clear lines of accountability for the use of funds. Since the projects will focus on progression from FE to HE, the Council would expect all projects to involve at least one HE institution.

28 Applications will be considered from:

- a. one or more FE institutions, as representatives of a lifelong learning partnership (confirmed or emerging), or, where no lifelong learning partnership has been confirmed or is emerging, another defined partnership area, with one or more HE institutions, applying through the FEFC with one FE institution acting as the lead organisation;
- b. one or more HE institutions, preferably in partnership with one or more lifelong learning partnership, or other partnership, applying through the HEFCE, with one HE institution acting as the lead organisation.

29 Projects led by FE institutions will apply for funds through the FEFC; projects led by HE institutions will apply through the HEFCE. Project applications should only be made to one of the two councils.

30 Applications should be made using the form at annex A and should include no more extra sheets than are specified on the form. Institutions should send **six copies** of applications to the appropriate regional director to arrive no later than **Friday 1 October 1999**.

## Assessment of Applications

31 A single panel in each region will consider all applications and will be responsible for allocating funds. The panel will include representatives from the FEFC regional office and the HEFCE's higher education regional advisory network (RAN), which is composed of key players involved in regional strategies for widening participation. The membership of RANs is being reviewed to ensure that there is appropriate representation.

32 These panels will seek to ensure that the funding is allocated broadly equally between proposals with HE institutions as lead bodies and those led by FE institutions. Their prime concern, however, will be the quality of applications, and they will not be constrained by the desire to achieve this balance. Where necessary, the panels will discuss the proposals with applicants and seek clarification or modification before the final allocation of funds.

33 The panels will submit their recommendations to national panels, which will advise the FEFC and the HEFCE on the allocation of funds for 1999-2000.

34 The proposals will be assessed during October 1999 and further information may be sought from applicants during that month. The FEFC and the HEFCE will decide the allocation of funds in early November 1999. An announcement of the outcome of the successful applications will be made as soon as possible after this so that successful applicants can receive their first payment in January 2000. Institutions will have until 31 December 2000 to use the funds.

35 The Council will require regular information on progress in relation to the targets and milestones achieved by the projects led by FE institutions. The Council's inspectorate and the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) will be involved in the dissemination of good practice. Partnerships are asked to agree to provide information to the Council and FEDA and to make available any information on good practice for general dissemination.



# Widening Participation Partnerships with Higher Education

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

(Reference Circular 99/29)

**Please return six copies of each application to the regional director at your local regional office. Applications must be received by 1 October 1999.**

Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT

Telephone 01203 863000  
Fax 01203 863100

Contact *(please print)*

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Telephone no.

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Email address

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Lead institution

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Title of proposal

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## Section A

1 Partnership details

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Name of partnership

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2 Amount of funding applied for: £

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## Section B

3 Main aims and outcomes of proposal  
*(please limit your description to a maximum of one side of A4 paper)*

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4 Provisional action plan and timetable, excluding expenditure profile  
*(please limit these to a maximum of six sides of A4 paper)*

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5 Expenditure profile

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## Section C

6 Signature of head of institution

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Name *(please print)*

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Position

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Date — / — / —

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# Regional Offices

## **East Midlands Region**

Regional director: Christine Frost

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## **Eastern Region**

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## **Greater London Region**

Acting regional director: Jenny Burnette

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## **West Midlands Region**

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## **Yorkshire and Humberside Region**

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