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**Minutes of the
PEACE III Review Panel Meeting**

Friday 10 September 2010, 10:15am
SEUPB Offices, Belfast

In Attendance:	Pat Colgan	SEUPB (Chair)
	Denis Galway	Panel Member
	Matt Donnelly	Panel Member
	Audrey McKeown	Independent
	John Cherry	SEUPB (Secretariat)
	Christine Markey	SEUPB (Secretariat)

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Agenda

The Agenda was agreed.

3. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

None

4. Review

**The Review of Educational Trust (ET) – Choices and Voices Project (Ref:
006270)**

Representatives from Educational Trust (ET) and the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) were invited to enter the room.

In Attendance:	Olwen Lyner	(Educational Trust)
	Heather Reid	(Educational Trust)
	Robert Campbell	(EPIC)
	Jim McVeigh	(coiste na larchimi)
	Brenda Hegarty	(JTS)
	Michael Denny	(KPMG)

After introductions, the Chair outlined the procedures to be followed and confirmed that the project promoters were appealing on the grounds that the decision taken was unreasonable. The Chair then invited the Project promoters to outline the reasons for their request for a review.

The representatives for ET thanked the panel for the opportunity for a review and proceeded to present their case. The main points included:

- The extreme issue was the quality of the Economic Appraisal (EA) with the initial assessment significantly reversed by the EA.
- NIACRO and the Educational Trust are two separate legal entities.
- The ET fully co-operated with the EA and had sent material on two occasions to the appraisers, at no point was the ET asked about the project.
- There were inaccuracies in the EA in terms of processes and validity. The ET were not given the opportunity to correct the inaccuracies.
- There are 3 main issues Need, Consultation and Duplication
- Need: It was thought that there were 18,000 political ex-prisoners in the region, however, after a study by Queens University, Belfast (QUB) it was discovered that there are actually 40,000 which is a significant part of the population. There is approximately 20 reports out there on political ex-prisoners and their families.
- Consultation: An extensive list of contacts was sent to the Economic Appraisers; however, only 2 of those were contacted. One of the issues the EA noted was that there was no empirical and qualitative evidence in relation

to siblings, however, if the appraisers had contacted the members of the trust then this information would have been provided.

- Duplication: It was noted that DEL already provide these services. One of the members of ET has worked with DEL for over 20 years and is fully aware of the courses that are funded. The ET has very tight procedures that stipulate that evidence must be provided by the applicant that they have tried to gain other funding. The support that the ET provide is not just for fees, it is for travel and subsistence, books etc. Also applicants from the border counties are not eligible for funding with DEL.

The Chair thanked the project promoters for their presentation and invited the JTS to respond.

Representatives from the JTS made the following points:

- There was €40m available to projects under Theme 1.1 Regional and to date €26m has been committed. €10m of that has gone to ex-prisoner groups.
- The JTS met with the ET when the second call opened and encouraged them to apply, the application was then received alongside 22 others.
- An internal assessment was completed which indicatively scored the project above 65. Any projects that scored above 58 automatically went to EA.
- The EA was completed in accordance with the Standard Green Book.
- The main issues highlighted by the EA were of need, additionality and value for money.
- The JTS received the EA and utilised the information in the final assessment report which was brought to Steering Committee.
- The EA is influential, a project cannot be recommended by the Steering Committee in the absence of a positive EA.
- At the meeting it was noted that the Steering Committee would like to see one central bursary group instead of one for each ex-prisoner group.
- There was a lack of evidence to support and conclude definitively on need and value for money.
- The project scored well on programme and priority but fell down under efficiency and effectiveness.

- The Theme is re-opening in October and the JTS would welcome another application.
- The project promoters see the early stages of the EA to ensure that the understanding of the project is correct.
- There is a time constraint on all EAs and the JTS have to take on board their independent advice.
- The EA did conclude that there was a high level of need; however this was not specific for parents, children or siblings. The appraiser tried to get this information but it was not forthcoming.
- The appraiser did receive a list of contacts and the appraisers did attempt to contact them all within the tight timeframe.
- In terms of additionality, it was not clearly evidenced why 500 participants were chosen.
- In terms of duplication, the appraiser consulted with DEL to assess the potential for duplication and it was highlighted that in the absence of clarity that there was potential for duplication.
- There was a high level of need but in the absence of clarity the appraisers were not able to conclude.

The Chair thanked the JTS for their comments.

A Review Panel member asked if KPMG were aware of the 20 reports mentioned by the project promoters.

The KPMG representative stated that they had sent out an information request to gather evidence of research reports. KPMG did receive documents as outlined in the EA; however, there was a lack of documents specifically looking at families.

A Review Panel member asked if the information was out there in relation to families.

The project promoters confirmed that it was and highlighted two reports in particular.

The JTS stated that it was the project promoter's responsibility to evidence the need.

The Chair asked if KPMG were familiar with the two reports and the KPMG representative confirmed that he was not.

The KPMG Representative stated that on receiving the information there were gaps and so KPMG sent a second request for information and received the same papers.

The project promoters confirmed that there were two requests sent to the ET; however there was an expectation that the appraisers would also contact other members of the trust who would have had additional information to pass on. The project promoter also noted that the consultations were completed in one day which meant that it was inevitable that people would not be available.

The Chair asked if the project promoters had made the reports available. The project promoters confirmed that they were not asked for them.

The KPMG representative stated that he received a contact list with four names on it. KPMG spoke to two of those people and attempted to contact the other two. KPMG also asked the project promoter to identify additional consultees and beneficiaries of previous projects.

The project promoters stated that the list of contacts that they have has five names on it. The project promoter then stated that the evidence for the 500 participants is in the application. The project promoters also referred to the previous programme and noted that there were over 300 beneficiaries and they only came from two ex-prisoner groups. The project promoters also stated that the money in the projects already funded was going to the ex-prisoners and not their families.

A Review Panel member asked the project promoters to comment on the suggestions that they did not carry out widespread consultation before applying and that there was no attempt to integrate the ex-prisoners into society.

The project promoters stated that the ET engage with all ex-prisoner groups and they also engage with CFNI. The ET held a beneficiary event after the last project and the individuals noted that that there would be a continued need for this work. The whole purpose of the project is to fully engage people in citizenship by getting them into education and therefore employment.

The JTS stated that the comment on integration was made by the Steering Committee and was in relation to interactions between the ex-prisoner groups and wider society. The project was not bringing the wider society into the project.

The project promoters challenged the comment stating that a previous evaluation had stated that this was something that was valued. The Board is made up of statutory bodies, the community and voluntary sector and North/South bodies.

The Chair clarified that the decision was based on what was presented to the Steering Committee and that the specific need for families is not evidenced. He also clarified the project promoters contention that there is evidence and it was not taken advantage of.

A Review Panel member asked if the JTS completed any of their own research after the EA was received.

The JTS clarified that their assessment is purely based on the facts in the EA. The first assessment is based on the application and the final assessment on the EA and the application.

A Review Panel member asked if the first assessment was completed to see if the application would go further. The JTS confirmed that the first assessment was completed to determine if an EA was required.

The Chair stated that the first assessment noted that this was a good project and give it a high score but that there was a suggestion of reducing participants from 500 to 400.

The JTS stated that there was no evidence of why 500 were selected. The JTS are always looking at value for money and this was suggested for that reason.

The Chair stated that if the participants had been reduced to 400 the programme costs would be approximately £100,000 less with other costs reduced pro rata. Would that therefore not have brought it under the threshold of £500,000 and therefore no need for an EA?

The JTS stated that this was a significant project and it would always have gone to EA.

The project promoter highlighted that there was a significant surplus of demand over supply; the current projects are not meeting the demand.

The Chair stated that KPMG noted that this was not evidenced in the information supplied.

The KPMG representative stated that they had received documents in relation to the previous project and did not dispute the need displayed for families, however it would have been helpful if a monitoring framework had been provided that captured where the individual began and where they ended up. This would have assisted KPMG in seeing the additionality, without that they could not conclude that 500 was the optimum level.

The JTS stated that they are not disputing that the project is in keeping with the programme. The JTS would have required evidence of need for families of ex-prisoners over people in wider society to satisfy the Steering Committee. The JTS also noted that there is a difference between need and demand.

The project promoters stated that it was not clear that there was a requirement for academic research. The project promoter also stated that the ET do have a requirement to maintain files on beneficiaries and these could have been provided but were not asked for.

The project promoter then referred to the JTS comment that the Steering Committee would want to see one central body noting that this was already the case.

The JTS stated that they are aware of that and that all members have access to bursaries but at a time there were groups that were not accessing the bursaries.

The project promoters referred to another funded project stating that the participants need to come through their constituent groups and the ET can help those people that do not go through their constituent group.

A Review Panel member asked how the project promoters track and assess where the grant aid will go and how they clarify that the bursaries are used for the purpose they are intended.

The project promoter stated that the funding is paid to a third party such as a university. If the funds are being used for travel and subsistence the tutor is required sign a form to confirm that the participant was in attendance, if the funds are for books then receipts must be shown.

A Review Panel member referred to the EA noting that it was short compared to others they had seen, the conclusions were succinct but there was a lack of evidence.

The KPMG representative stated that this was due to time constraints and a lack of information received. A normal EA has 11 chapters, however, in the absence of being able to conclude on need this EA was shortened to 3 chapters.

A Review Panel member then asked how the project promoters would engage with young people and how they would track what that young person has done or is doing as a result. What was the specific content of the activities that the project promoters would put into place?

The project promoters stated that in the previous programme it was hard to engage with young people but the members of the ET encouraged their own constituents not just to ask for grant aid but to take on board the content of the workshops. There was a high level of attendance. The young people were motivated and wanted to be part of this. The project promoter noted that there is a full time youth worker and a constant effort to try to engage with young people.

A Review Panel Member asked how the project promoters network and make themselves aware of the economy and employment needs.

The project promoter stated that they identify the economic needs through the different organisations on the board. The ET would not fund anyone if it would be beyond the scheme of employability. The project promoter stated that part of the project is about giving young people self esteem and a feeling of worth.

A Review Panel Member asked how the project promoters ensure that there is no duplication between the people accessing this grant aid and also accessing mainstream funds.

The project promoters stated that they check with the local jobs centres, FAS etc to find out why applicants have been refused, if they have not been refused the ET asks applicants to try accessing mainstream funds first.

The Chair then clarified that the Steering Committee decided that the evidence of specific need was not evidenced and that the project promoters contest this in that what was provided could have been enhanced with further consultation.

The Chair then asked for any final comments from both the project promoters and the JTS.

The JTS stated that they were always of the mind that this was a good project. It was a good fit with the programme and priority objectives. The project promoters were responsible for evidencing the need for the project. KPMG completed the EA to Green Book standard. KPMG have been used by the JTS on numerous occasions and there was no reason to believe that this work was not of the same quality as it has been previously. The JTS are happy with the due process that has been followed and noted that the applicant could re-submit when the call re-opens in October ensuring to address all the issues outlined.

The project promoters stated that this was the second time the project was reviewed and was the third application. The project promoters noted that it would be helpful if there was a shorter method of moving forward.

The Chair asked the Project promoters and the JTS if they were happy with the way the Review Panel had been conducted, and if they felt they had been given the opportunity to convey all the main points of their argument. Both the Project promoters and the JTS confirmed that they were happy with the process.

The Project promoters and the JTS exited the room.

The Review Panel discussed the application and information presented and noted:

- The application fell down on value for money
- There was an onus on the promoters to provide information that would evidence the need.
- The Economic Appraisal did not go into enough detail.
- The project needs to track the participants from beginning to end.
- It was not clear that there would not be duplication.
- It would take a lot more work to increase the score above 65.
- There was merit in the proposal.
- There were weaknesses in the EA that need to be addressed by the JTS.

The Review Panel concluded that the decision taken was not unreasonable and also clarified that there were no failings in procedures. The Panel agreed that the Steering Committee's decision to reject the application should be upheld.

The panel recognised both the strategic importance and valuable impact of the activities contained within the application. The panel also recognised that while there were weaknesses in the Economic Appraisal these did not materially affect the decision taken by the Steering Committee.

The panel encouraged the project promoters to liaise with colleagues in the JTS to develop any future proposals when the call for applications re-opens in October 2010.

5. Conclusion

The Chair thanked the Review Panel members for attending and informed them that he would write, on behalf of the Review Panel, to inform both project applicants and the JTS of the Review Panel's decisions. He also stated that the minutes from the meeting would be e-mailed to Review Panel members in due course for their approval.