



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in Rural
Area Partnership in Derry (RAPID)
Limited

SoFarm Project

Report of an Inspection in
January 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Rural Area Partnership in Derry (RAPID) is a not for profit private limited company providing local rural development support, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the SoFarm European Social Fund (ESF) Project. The main aims of the project are to use social farming, to enable people with disabilities, health issues or learning needs to play a fuller role in society by undertaking training and completing an accredited level 1 land based qualification.

The RAPID manager reports to a management board comprising of representatives from the community, statutory authorities, the private sector and special interest groups. The manager is supported by a project officer and administration staff. The project is delivered through a partnership with two local social farms, Butterlope and Gortilea. The participants obtain work-experience and training one day each week, over a 40 week period, on one of the social farms. They are trained by the farmers, who are supported by an assessor and occupational therapist. At the time of the inspection 12 participants¹ were registered on the SoFarm project.

2. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all participants, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for participants;
- effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- quality of provision for learning and development; and
- quality of the leadership and management.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Good

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

The SoFarm project achieved 92% of its recruitment target in 2015/16 and is on target for 2016/17 with 12 participants recruited to date. The participants all engage well in their learning and training activities, they are developing relevant professional and technical skills, and achieve a level 1 qualification in land-based activities. They complete the practical tasks, for example administering drenches, to a good standard. Achievement rates are above target with all of the participants, who completed last year, achieving accredited qualifications.

¹ All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

The participants are progressing at a pace and level in line with their ability and potential. The participants' written work in their assessment portfolios is well-organised and presented to a good or better standard with appropriate levels of support provided by the assessor. The retention rate for 2015/16 is outstanding at 91%, and the retention rate for 2016/17, to date, is also high at 92%. Progression is well above target, with over half of the participants progressing to further training.

Almost all of the participants, through participating in the programme, have improved their self-esteem, social interaction skills and have made positive choices to improve the quality of their life. The participants benefit from a wide range of experiences on the social farms that helps them to overcome personal and social barriers and develop well their transferrable skills and capabilities. Through completing the learning and training activities the participants all benefit from a strong sense of achievement, physical activity and good opportunities to develop their motor and social skills.

5. Quality of provision

The curriculum provides a very good range of learning opportunities which match well the participants' aspirations and potential, and it provides them with good progression opportunities to further education, training or employment. The participants benefit from being in a realistic farming environment where they work in small groups of three or less to carry out a variety of relevant tasks, including animal husbandry and welfare and maintenance tasks, that change appropriately throughout the farming year.

An effective assessment tool is used to identify and track the participants' developmental progress across a range of indicators including motivation, process skills and motor skills. The outcomes are used well to inform the participants' personal training plans, with targets regularly reviewed.

The quality of the practical demonstrations and training is very good. The sessions are planned well with opportunities being identified where the participants' numeracy skill could be developed. The social farms provide a realistic training environment and the learning is well supported by the farmer and the assessor. The participants gain experience in a wide range of relevant activities over the farming year. They have good opportunities to engage with the local community including attending local markets and helping with local farming events with interesting and relevant trips.

The quality of the care, welfare and support is very good and the staff work hard to improve the participants' health and well-being and to increase their personal capabilities. A positive aspect of the project is the celebration of the participants' success through the presentation of their certificates at an annual awards night.

6. Leadership and management

The staff, at all levels, demonstrate a clear vision, a strong commitment and passion to help the participants build their self-confidence and to develop a range of employability skills through a social farming model. The project is innovative, unique within Northern Ireland, informed by research carried out by two local universities, and meets well the need of the local community; filling a gap in provision that existed previously.

The SoFarm project is managed well by RAPID staff with effective partnership arrangements in place with the two social farms. Communication is good and the staff meet regularly to review the participants progress. Very good links have been developed with a good range of referral and support agencies that are used effectively to support the ongoing development of the project and to meet the recruitment targets. A more effective tracking system is required so that the participants' progress can be monitored more easily by managers. RAPID have developed a number of progression routes for the participants including to an in-house level 2 programme, to volunteering with the Conservation Volunteers and to an equine enterprise. Further progression opportunities with local businesses are however underdeveloped. There is a need to secure a wider range of suitable progression opportunities that build on the participants increasing confidence and can accommodate sensitively their restricted abilities.

The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process is valued and well understood by the project promoter. All of the staff are involved and the views of the participants are sought to inform the evaluation. The quality improvement plan is reviewed systematically on a monthly basis with the progress on actions being evaluated.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the project promoter needs to:

- ensure there is a designated person on the management committee who has received appropriate safeguarding training

7. Overall effectiveness

RAPID demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. There is an area for improvement that the project promoter has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to widen the range of work-experience opportunities available to meet more effectively the diverse range of abilities of participants, particularly the more able, to ensure that all participants progress appropriately.

The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
SoFarm ESF project 2015/2016	11	92%
SoFarm ESF project 2016/2017	12	100%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

Two ETI inspectors observed four participants in a range of settings including directed training, practical based activities and a focus group. Discussions were held with RAPID's management team, the farmers, assessor and the occupational therapist. The tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work, personal training plans and planning documents were examined. The self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, Quality of Provision and on Leadership and Management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the project promoter:

The project promoter has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.
The project promoter demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the project promoter sustains improvement.
The project promoter needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the project promoter's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The project promoter needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the project promoter's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indictors and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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