



DTI

Union Modernisation Fund

Consultation on the draft rules and procedures

The Amicus response

February 2005

Amicus response to the Government Consultation Document on The Union Modernisation Fund

1. Amicus is the UK's largest private sector trade union and the fastest growing union in the public sector. With over 1.2 million members Amicus has members in a range of industries including, financial services, manufacturing, print and media, the voluntary and non-profit sectors, local government and NHS health professionals.
2. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Government's proposals for The Union Modernisation Fund. Our comments will centre on the following issues which the government has identified in Annex 2 as inviting responses on:
 - the proposed definition of modernisation projects and the priority themes for the first round bid and excluded activities
 - the proposed general criteria a) to d) for all bids and who should be eligible to apply to the Fund.
 - the proposed eligible costs for Fund support and the duration of projects
 - the proposal that the Fund should provide up to 50% of eligible project costs, normally a contribution of £200,000 or less. We shall also comment on the suggestion that where strong evidence is provided the Fund should provide higher amounts without a ceiling.
 - the draft terms of reference for the Supervisory Board and the proposed size and composition, and the overarching criteria for Board membership
 - the proposals for the distribution and disbursement of funds
 - the proposed arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of projects and cooperation with Government officials and researchers in the monitoring and evaluation of the Fund as a whole.
3. Amicus has led the way in developing progressive strategies and policies designed to create relationships in the workplace which benefit its membership and engage with change in a modern environment. We therefore welcome the government initiative to create a fund which will provide support to trade unions in taking forward such modernisation strategies and build constructive relationships with employers to the benefit of all.
4. **Definition and priorities (3.1 – 3.6)**

Amicus welcomes and understands the breadth of activities which the fund is intended to cover. We are currently working to a strategy which recognises the contribution that modern working techniques and technology can make to the efficient organisation of resources. This in turn enhances the assistance and direction that we can offer our

membership in the workplace in managing the ever-changing working climate and relationships with employers.

Part of the efficiencies which need to be addressed is through the development of the benefits of economies of scale and the sharing of resources with other trade unions. We believe that the fund should be able to be used in the manner described in the consultation document (para 3.2) to assist in the integration of trade union resources following decisions taken to merge or share resources. It is important that the fund is not used to promote future undecided mergers of trade unions which we believe could create destabilisation and distraction from the core aims of the fund.

Whilst noting and accepting the proposed priorities and themes set out in para 3.6, for the first bidding round, Amicus would express some concern about the wording of item (v) in the light of our comments above about future mergers of trade unions. We would suggest that this item reflect the intention to contribute to the integration process once mergers have been determined.

5. Funding Criteria and Eligibility (3.13 – 3.21)

In addressing the four main criteria set out in para 3.13, Amicus would make the following comments:

Additionality

We recognise this criteria but would suggest that projects which have already started may benefit from additionality through expansion of the original objectives and as such should not be excluded from the bidding process altogether.

Sustainability

Amicus accepts this criterion.

Value for Money

Amicus agrees that value for money is an essential ingredient of bids from the Modernisation Fund. We strongly urge that the quality of the projects assessed for monies be given the highest priority as to do other than this is likely to undermine the second criteria of sustainability.

Dissemination

Amicus welcomes the sharing of information and benefits derived from any funded project as a criterion. This is particularly important in terms of a union's own membership and employees and, as appropriate, with employers with whom the union is engaged.

Amicus accepts that all bids should have the authority of the General Secretary as an indication of the total commitment of the union(s) to the project and to provide the necessary accountability to the

membership and to interested outside parties. We agree that projects should not by virtue of this be restricted to head office or national initiatives. Amicus believes that for trade unions to be able to function most effectively in a modern society they need to recognise the international dimensions of the world of work. In accepting that eligibility should be confined to activities taking place in Great Britain, we would hope that projects which embrace the need to develop a better understanding of global developments in employment practices would be welcome within bids from this fund.

6. Duration and size of projects (3.25 – 3.26)

Amicus would hope that the duration of projects would be viewed in a practical manner. As the consultation paper states, the nature of the type of project envisaged by the fund could lead to the need to extend the period of such projects beyond the norm of 2 years.

The limits on the size of bids should not be arbitrarily applied. Larger unions may wish to take up projects which by virtue of the scope and size of the union may require significant funding to be effective and achieve the criteria laid down in these proposals. Whilst some balance must be achieved in allocation of funds, this should not be at the price of unions who are able to self-fund smaller projects being prevented from gaining assistance for larger projects.

7. Assessment of Bids (6.1 – 6.8)

Amicus supports the proposals for the method of assessment set out in the consultation document. Amicus is also content with the draft terms of reference and composition and size of the Supervisory Board.

8. Selection of Bids and Distribution of Funds (7.1 – 7.8)

It is important that the selection of bids is based on fair and equitable criteria. Amicus accepts that, other things being equal, bids should be allocated to unions that otherwise would not benefit from the fund in the particular round. In all other decisions, where availability of funds are limited, the selection of bids should be on the basis of quality and the criteria set out in paras 3.13 to 3.18 of the consultation document.

9. Monitoring and evaluation (9.1 – 9.4)

Chapter 9 of the consultation document sets out proposals on how projects should be monitored and evaluated. Amicus accepts the need and value of proper evaluation of all projects and welcomes the opportunity of sharing outcomes with government officials and researchers as part of the overall assessment of the fund.

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