

13 August 2010

Our ref: R00227

RE: Freedom of Information request – Corporate Memberships

Thank you for your request dated 22 June 2010 made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Your request is:

I would like details of all corporate memberships currently held by your organisation. Please provide a breakdown including: who the membership is with, how much it costs per year, how long it has been held and the number of times, in the past three years, that the membership has been used, including the names of staff members who benefited.

You subsequently provided confirmation to SEEDA, via One North East, that the following interpretation of your request is correct:

I have interpreted your request to mean that you are seeking information for the last three financial years in terms of corporate memberships that the organisation (i.e. not individuals) holds. Effectively this is all current contractual arrangements between the RDA and providers of membership-based services through which employees may access free or discounted services or benefits.

This would include things such as where the RDA is a member of any private health check scheme but would exclude individual professional memberships (such as accountants, solicitors etc) and accreditation schemes such as investors in people.

Information requested

SEEDA has recently reviewed all areas of administrative expenditure in order to implement measures that will achieve the 10% efficiency savings target required by Central Government and also to ensure that all expenditure continued to be appropriate given announcements relating to the future of Regional Development Agencies. This has included a review of corporate memberships held by the organisation.

SEEDA has a current contractual arrangement with several organisations that provide membership based services and details of these are provided below. In line with the definition above we have not included the details of any subscriptions to journals, research networks or media monitoring services. As requested we have provided the costs of current memberships over the last three financial years. However we are unable to provide the names of staff that have benefited from these corporate memberships, as this is considered to be personal information which is exempt from disclosure under Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.



Corporate Memberships Related to SEEDA Activities

The following corporate memberships ensure that the Agency can engage with key stakeholders and assist the organisation in, for example, the development of policy relevant to the areas of work we undertake.

European Council for the Village and Small Town

The European Council for the Village and Small Town aims to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality of rural communities throughout Europe and to promote the renewal of the built and natural environments of such communities.

Year	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Cost	£105	£105	£105

Best Practice User Group

This corporate membership allows all SEEDA staff to access free or discounted services relating to best practice in programme and project management; including training, exam fees, work shops and a resource library.

Year	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Cost	£734	N/A	N/A

Association of Regional Observatories

SEEDA, via SEE-iN (the South East Intelligence Network) acts as a regional observatory for the South East and enables public sector bodies to access a wide range of data and intelligence in economic, social and environmental issues. SEE-iN seek to support better decision-making in the region by providing better evidence to underpin policy-making.

Year	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09
Cost	£7,000	£7,000	£7,000

Corporate Memberships Benefiting SEEDA Employees

SEEDA does not pay for any sport or leisure related corporate memberships which benefit staff. Permanent employees benefit from discounted rates for using Guildford Spectrum, a local gym and leisure centre facility. This has no cost to SEEDA with all costs borne by the employee. To access this benefit staff members apply direct to Guildford Spectrum and therefore SEEDA hold no information on take up or usage of this benefit.

Simplyhealth (formerly know as HealthSure)

All current permanent employees of SEEDA are able to access free Level 2 membership of Simplyhealth's Cash Plan medical benefits scheme, via SEEDA's corporate membership. If employees wish to upgrade the level of cover to a higher premium, all additional costs are borne by the employee.

The full cost to SEEDA of providing this benefit in 2009/10 was £30,297, which equates to £135 per employee per annum. SEEDA believes that this corporate health insurance provides a number of benefits for the Agency. It increases employee loyalty and has contributed to reducing sickness and absence levels. In a competitive marketplace, it also helps to attract strong candidates who can add value to the work carried out by SEEDA and contribute to supporting economic development throughout the South East.

The number of staff accessing this benefit fluctuates throughout the year as it is an opt-in benefit and subject to staff turnover. Therefore the figures given below are the total number of staff to access this benefit at any point during the year in question. SEEDA do not hold details of the number of times individuals have accessed benefits available through the scheme. We are unable to provide the names of staff who have taken up this benefit, as this is considered to be personal information which is exempt from disclosure under Section 40 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The payment figures below show the amount paid to Simplyhealth in relation to each financial year and may not be the actual amount paid to Simplyhealth in the period 1 April to 31 March. This is due to the fact that we are invoiced in arrears and there is often a significant delay in SEEDA receiving invoices from Simplyhealth. All payments to Simplyhealth shown in the table below are exclusive of VAT.

Simplyhealth membership is a staff benefit for which SEEDA pays the additional tax and National Insurance on employees' behalf, by means of a PAYE Settlement Agreement. The amounts paid to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) in relation to this agreement are included below.

Financial Year	No. of Staff	Paid to Simplyhealth	Paid to HMRC
2010/11*	160	£5,436	£2,962
2009/10	224	£19,802	£10,495
2008/09	255	£20,843	£10,979

* 2010/11 figures are for period April to July inclusive.

Disclosure Log

This information will also be made available on SEEDA's Freedom of Information Disclosure Log on the SEEDA website:

http://www.seeda.org.uk/About_SEEDA/Freedom_of_Information_disclosure_log/

Personal details and other information that could identify requesters are redacted (removed) from the disclosure log version.

Conclusion

If you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request, or if you are unhappy with our response, you can appeal using our Complaints Procedure as follows:

A request for a review should be addressed to Oona Muirhead, Group Executive Director: Strategy & Resources, and sent by email to: oonamuirhead@seeda.co.uk or by post to SEEDA, Cross Lanes, Guildford, GU1 1YA. You will be notified of the outcome within 20 working days.

If you are still dissatisfied after pursuing our Complaints Procedure, then under Section 50 of the Act, you are entitled to appeal to the Information Commissioner (Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, telephone: 01625 545700, fax: 01625 524510

Please contact me if you have any other queries.