

8th July 2011

Our Ref: R281

Freedom of Information Request – Corporate Payment Cards

Introduction

Thank you for your revised request dated 10th June 2011 and made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Your request to SEEDA relates to the use of payment cards issued to staff. For ease of reference, individual responses to your questions are given below.

Q1) Please provide a list of every transaction made using payment cards where the transaction date occurred during the financial years:

- 2009-10
- 2010-11

Please include, for each transaction, the transaction date, vendor name, transaction amount and any category recorded by either the payment card issuer or your organisation.

I can confirm that SEEDA issues corporate credit cards to staff who must travel frequently as part of their role and we also have one 'Procurement' credit card which is held centrally by our Finance Department.

Our payment card issuer has provided the attached report which includes details of each transaction made within the financial years in question as requested - please find this information attached at Annex 1. In some cases SEEDA have provided explanatory notes to further describe the nature of the transaction or to show where transactions have been reversed.

Please note that expenditure associated with some transactions will have been refunded by the employee or other organisations, either in part or in whole, where costs related to shared projects or non-business expenditure. Due to the large number of transactions included (over 5,000) SEEDA is unable to provide details of all instances when this has taken place within the appropriate limit of 18 hours as described in the Freedom of Information Act. Please be assured that SEEDA is committed to openness and transparency in the spending of public funds – therefore should you have queries relating to any of the items included within the information disclosed please do not hesitate to contact us for further information on these individual items.

By way of background I should explain that, as a Regional Development Agency, SEEDA is committed to developing the economy of the South East of England. All RDAs are now in transition to closure following Government decisions that they

would be abolished by April 2012 with current functions either ceasing or transferring to Local Enterprise Partnerships or other delivery bodies.

During the period in question SEEDA was committed to delivering the outcomes detailed in the Regional Economic Strategy 2006 – 2016 and our 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan, which was refreshed in November 2009 to reflect the impact of the global recession. In line with agreed targets SEEDA therefore had a prime focus on encouraging international trade and inward investment; which required us to have adequate overseas representation and to work with a number of high value international businesses in sectors identified as being key to the Country's economic growth. A number of items on the list disclosed will relate to SEEDA's overseas representation and foreign direct investment activities: these have resulted in a significant number of high value international businesses investing in the South East and these inward investment projects have meant many new jobs have been created and that existing jobs were safeguarded.

SEEDA has also been actively involved in securing a legacy for the region from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games. SEEDA has hosted a number of delegations from participating countries in order to secure training camps within the region, which will boost local economies via increased tourist spend and associated job creation. SEEDA has secured over 25 training camps within the region and it is expected that this will provide at least £675,000 of income for the region's economy as well as promoting international engagement and cultural awareness.

During the period in question a number of SEEDA staff were employed to work on European Commission (EC) funded projects which have partners and activities based in a number of EC member states. Travel and subsistence costs included within the material attached will relate to these projects and may have therefore been paid from grants received from the EC, rather than the core funding RDAs receive from the UK Government. Again we are not able to identify all instances occurring within the data provided within the appropriate limit for responding to Freedom of Information Act requests.

Finally, SEEDA has worked very closely with partner organisations and on an all-Party basis and some of the transactions will relate to engagements with local authorities and with all parliamentary parties.

Q2) Please provide copies of any policies and procedures relating to the proper use and misuse of payment cards and monitoring of their use.

Please find attached as Annex 2 an extract from our Financial Procedures manual which relates to the use of SEEDA's Procurement credit card (19.2) and other credit cards issued to staff (19). You should also be aware that, in line with our Financial Delegation procedures, any credit card expense claim totalling £1,000 or over requires authorisation by a senior executive.

Q3) Please provide all details relating to all instances of misuse of payment cards during the financial years 2009-10 and 2010-11. For each instance, please include:

- *transaction date*
- *vendor name*
- *transaction amount*

- *item purchased*
- *reason the transaction was not a proper use of the payment card*
- *disciplinary action taken*
- *if your organisation required the amount to be repaid*
- *if the amount was repaid*

During the financial years in question SEEDA has not taken disciplinary action against any member of staff in relation to any misuse of credit cards. There have been a small number of occasions when cards have been accidentally used for non-businesses purposes and these transactions have either been reversed or the individual has reimbursed the costs to SEEDA. In all cases the employee in question has been reminded of SEEDA's policy regarding corporate credit card use. As indicated above, all transactions reversed or reimbursed are included in the attachment but may not be marked as such since we are not able to extract and gather such historic information within the appropriate time limit of 18 staff-hours.