**LA6 Community Grant**

**November 2021- March 2023**

**Specification, Application Form and Scoring Guidance**

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**Specification**

Gateshead Council learningSkills, in partnership with the 6 Local Authorities (LA6) from the North East LEP area, is seeking bids from Third Sector Organisations to deliver small projects that mobilise disadvantaged or excluded individuals to enable their progress towards further education and employment. Organisations can apply for grants of up to £20,000 to support a range of activities aimed at assisting inactive/ unemployed and those with multiple and complex barriers to move closer to the labour market.

This project is funded through the Education Skills Funding Agency and the European Social Fund financing organisation and procured, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

**Eligibility**

Through this round of funding, the LA6 Community Grant is targeted at assisting Third Sector Organisations who would not otherwise be able to access ESF funding for the purpose of mobilising disadvantaged or excluded inactive or unemployed people to facilitate their progress towards employment. The selection process will prioritise organisations who are not in receipt of direct funding from the Education Skills Funding Agency or the Department for Work and Pensions.

To be an eligible applicant for an LA6 Community Grant your organisation must satisfy the following criteria:

* Be a Third Sector Organisation
* Have up to date policies and procedures that are relevant and adhere to the current legislative requirements for Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety and Safeguarding and Prevent
* Have a delivery base within one of the following local authority areas:
  + Northumberland
  + North Tyneside
  + Newcastle
  + Gateshead
  + South Tyneside
  + Sunderland

If you have received Community Grant funding in previous procurement rounds, you are still able to apply for funding. However, please note that:

* You MUST engage different learners to any previous projects
* If you are planning to deliver a similar project to previous rounds, you must demonstrate how you have developed the project for this funding from lessons learned
* Your performance in terms of delivery and the administration of previous projects WILL be considered when allocating funding

**Important Information**

The closing date for applications for the first round of funding is Friday 10th December 2021 and applications must be received by 5.00pm. Applications received after this date will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Please ensure that all information on the application form is correct as, if your bid is successful, this will form the basis of the Grant Agreement. Should any information be submitted that is then deemed inaccurate, any contract will be terminated and all funds returned to learningSkills with immediate effect.

The MAXIMUM funding allocation for any project is £20,000. Any organisation is permitted to bid for up to three projects but these MUST all be in different Local Authority areas. A separate application form must be completed for each of these projects.

Please be aware that ALL project participants (learners) MUST:

* Be 16 years of age or older at the time of enrolment
* Complete all parts of an enrolment form
* Complete an initial assessment in both Maths and English and
* Provide evidence that they are eligible to participate in an ESF funded project which will include:
  + Confirmation that they are not and have not already participated in a Community Grants ESF funded project in the last 5 years
  + They are a UK resident, are eligible to work in the UK and can produce identification to confirm this
  + They can confirm their National Insurance Number and show evidence to prove this on the application form

All projects must run between January and December 2022. Should there be an opportunity for projects to continue past this date, learningSkills will allocate additional funding if available.

If you have any queries regarding the process of allocating grants or regarding the application process or forms/guidance, please first check the FAQs on our website <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/frequently-asked-questions.html> . If you have further queries then please contact us via the contact page <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/contact.html>. We will respond to your query within 2 working days.

Grants of up to £20,000 will be awarded to successful third sector organisations to engage with participants who are aged 16+ and are eligible to work in the UK with the purpose of mobilising disadvantaged or excluded inactive and unemployed people to facilitate their progress towards employment.

Organisations applying for grants will be required to:

* Undertake activities that promote social inclusion
* Build employment and enterprise skills through the voluntary and community sector
* Provide intensive support to help upskill participants and move towards and enter work
* Engage participants who are the hardest to reach through innovative approaches

**The types of activities that should be delivered include:**

* Initial help with improving English, Maths and work-related digital skills
* Innovative approaches to engaging economically inactive and unemployed participants
* Job brokerage, coaching and mentoring to support people into work
* Mentoring/peer mentoring and/or group work approaches to coaching
* Effective engagement with employers to identify and secure opportunities for participants
* Basic skills training, including additional support with basic skills, language, and numeracy support where applicable
* Support for refugees to engage with the labour market and overcome language or cultural barriers to participation
* Money management support including digital and internet literacy courses
* Volunteering and training opportunities
* First contact engagement activities; activities that benefit participants who are not normally in contact with official organisations, e.g., DWP or FE Colleges
* Projects to improve confidence, motivation, and social integration such as sport, gardening, music, art, and other creative activities
* Developing local networks and groups to  support people to get a job or access learning e.g., job clubs or learning champion type activity
* Softer skills development e.g., confidence building, assertiveness, anger management and motivation
* Innovative approaches to attract underrepresented participant groups into learning

Funding should support the hardest to reach communities and individuals who must reside in one of the 6 local authority areas listed above. The following groups should be prioritised:

* Inactive and unemployed learners
* People aged 50+
* People from BAME communities
* People with a learning difficulty/ disability
* Lone parents
* Females

Your project must **start and end between January 2022 and December 2022.** All learning activities must be completed by the 31st December 2022 and any activity that takes place after this date will not be considered unless an application for an extension has been received and approved.

Provision must be flexible and responsive to the changing economic landscape, particularly as a response to Covid-19. Activities should complement other provision but not duplicate it to ensure adding value to DWP, Big Lottery, ESFA, Local Authority, National Careers Service and the new Careers Enterprise Company funded services.

Provision should promote learning to give participants experience of success in learning and increase commitment and motivation to achieve. Robust and transparent quality and performance measures, linked to clear progression routes for learners will be in place through collaboration with the learningSkills LA6 Contract Management team. You can deliver both accredited and non-accredited learning. If you would like to deliver some elements of accredited learning, such as a certificate or individual units from a qualification to complement your project, please speak to the LA6 Team as we can offer ‘buy in’ services from the wider learningSkills Team.

All activity delivered through this funding is subject to inspection or audit by Ofsted, ESFA and ESF.

**Payments**

Payment will be distributed as follows:

* 60% at start after receipt of a signed Grant Agreement
* 40% on receipt of all satisfactory completion paperwork submissions that meet audit requirements

Please note that non-receipt of all or some of the required paperwork (including the required enrolment forms) will result in the final payment amount being reduced and, in some cases, a recall of some, or all of the start payment.

**Contract Monitoring and Management**

The provision will be managed on behalf of the ESFA by Gateshead Council learningSkills LA6 Community Grants Contract Management Team.

Quality Monitoring Visits may be carried out at any time to ensure delivery is robust and targets are being met. Organisations are expected to fully cooperate with these visits including allowing access to any learners, premises or information relating to the project.

There is a range of documentation that organisations MUST complete during the programme. We will provide you with templates and guidance for all required documentation. This includes:

**Learner Journey**

With each learner you must complete:

* Assessment and Enrolment form which is fully completed and meets eligibility requirements.
* Initial Functional Skills Assessments (Maths and English)
* Individual Learning Plan including SMART targets, learning diary, mid-course review and an exit review.
* Timesheet which records all taught sessions, any Information, Advice and Guidance given, and a record of pastoral support.
* Progression form to confirm the learners next steps; further education with your organisation, or another provider, or Employment. Evidence to support the progression is required, such as an email from the progression organisation confirming learner start.

You may also need to complete:

* Self-Declaration of Eligibility Form – if the participant is unable to provide evidence, they are eligible to receive this funding under ESF Funding rules, they can complete a self-declaration of eligibility. This is needed where a learner does not have access to their Birth Certificate, or a passport for example.
* Withdraw/Early Leaver/Transfer Form – if an enrolled learner leaves the project before completion.
* Certificate of achievement when accredited learning has been delivered
* Other documentation and/or digital learner signatures to confirm learner is in receipt of support and to declare relevant information, should learning be remote.

**Project journey**

For each project you deliver, you must complete:

* Each month of delivery, a Project Monitoring and Risk Analysis Report.

At the end of your project, you must complete:

* RARPA report – a robust review of how you have recognised and recorded learner progression and achievement (for non-accredited learning programmes)
* SAR report - Self-assessment report that evaluates the programme
* Record of Financial Expenditure - detailed financial return that covers all eligible spend and matches the grant amount. You must keep all invoices/receipts, and any other documentation that evidences your grant spend
* 3 detailed case studies with consent from learners to share
* Photo of the ESF funding poster at your venue

Successful bids will also be required to submit their Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Prevent and Equality and Diversity Policy prior to any grant agreement being issued. In addition, by signing the Grant Agreement, you are agreeing to adhere to all ESFA and ESF branding and publicity requirements.

**Application Process**

Please read the guidance to ensure that your project is eligible for funding and can meet all of the requirements before you apply.

For any additional guidance and to answer any questions, please firstly check the FAQs on our website <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/frequently-asked-questions.html> . If you have further queries then please contact us via the contact page <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/contact.html>. We will respond to your query within 2 working days.

Please ensure that the application form submitted is correct as the first application received will be the one submitted for marking.

After the deadline, all applications will be anonymised and marked. To be successful, organisations will need to score at least 70/100 available marks.

Funding will be allocated in the following way to the highest scoring organisations until all funds have been allocated or until all organisations scoring over 70% have been allocated funding. Priority will be given according to the following criteria:

* Organisations not in receipt of direct funding from the ESFA or DWP
* Provision aimed at targeting inactive participants
* The score achieved on the application
* The requirement to achieve an equitable distribution of funds across the 6 local authority areas

You must submit your application form to [la6CommunityGrants@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:la6CommunityGrants@gateshead.gov.uk). This MUST be in a Word document- please do not send application forms in any other format. There will be an automatic reply sent to you as confirmation of receipt. All applications must be sent via email. applications sent by any other method will not be accepted.

**State Aid**

You must also submit the State Aid Declaration form. Nil returns must also be submitted.

**Notification**

You will receive confirmation via email detailing the outcome of your application. The decisions of the LA6 Community Grant selection panel will be final. Unsuccessful applications will be given feedback on request, and organisations who are unsuccessful in Round 1 of funding allocations will be invited to reapply for round 2, and any subsequent funding available.

**Application Form Guidance**

**Question 1: Applicant Organisation Details (Not Scored)**

Please ensure that you complete this question in its entirety. Missing information will result in your application NOT being scored.

**Question 2: Suitability Assessment (Pass/ Fail)**

Please ensure that you complete this question in its entirety. Missing information will result in your application NOT being scored

**Question 3: Overview of the Programme (15 Marks)**

Please ensure you enter the proposed project start, end date, anticipated learner numbers, minimum number of hours each learner will complete and the project name. You should also ensure that you fully describe your proposed project including:

* Organisational overview – what is the core of your organisation, what do you offer your Community? What are your service user’s needs, and barriers to learning/work? How will your project help to overcome these barriers?
* Programme overview with details of how your delivery will be structured
* How you intend to engage with participants who are economically inactive and unemployed
* How you intend to specifically engage with participants from BAME communities
* How you intend to specifically engage with participants with learning difficulties/ disabilities
* How you will recruit your learners, or utilise recruitment opportunities to ensure you recruit the right learners and meet your anticipated learner numbers
* How you will ensure all learners have a positive progression, particularly into Employment?
* How will you demonstrate you have considered local Labour Market need?
* How will you introduce learners to Employment Opportunities, and local Employers (visits, guest speakers etc.)?
* Should restrictions be imposed due to COVID 19, how will you ensure delivery continues?

**Question 4: Finance (10 Marks)**

You are required to give a breakdown of your expenditure under three different headings; Staff Costs (these costs relate to own organisation’s staff and any other people you employ to deliver your project), Participant Costs (these costs are costs incurred by the project on behalf of the people you are supporting) and Other Costs (any other project running cost not included in the above, such as premises and utility costs).

Please list all anticipated costs associated with your project. The maximum funding allocated to any project is £20,000. Please refer to the guidance document on eligible and ineligible costs to ensure all costs are fundable. As an overview:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cost type** | **Includes (but not limited to)** |
| **Staff** | **Hourly rate and proposed hours spent of the project for:**  Management  Tutors/Trainers  Administration  Outreach  Any ‘bought in’ service staff  Pastoral care  IAG support  **Also include here:**  Staff travel costs  Staff training |
| **Participant** | **Examples are:** Travel pass, training allowance, childcare, food parcels, self-care parcels, equipment/clothing/materials to undertake the project (including devices), winter clothing, stationary, gift card upon progression from the project, subsidence, exam fees.  **Personalisation:** you should plan a set amount per participant to cover any other needs, for example the fee to obtain a copy of a birth certificate, or a one-off emergency support such as a gas/electric/mobile top up. |
| **Other** | **Examples are:** Room hire, stationary and office supplies, photocopying, postage, professional fees, and costs, awarding body fees and costs, Equipment (items up to £1K).  **Proportional to the project:** rent, telephone costs, utility costs, service charges. |

**Question 5: Track Record and Impact (10 Marks)**

**Answer EITHER 5.1 5.2**

**Question 5.1:**

Please complete this section **if you have experience of delivering a similar project(s) in the past.** You must complete the table and describe explain your experience in delivering these and similar projects, including the impact that you have made.

**Question 5.2:**

Please complete this section **if you DO NOT have experience of delivering a similar project(s) in the past**. You should include the anticipated impact your project will have on the participants and the wider community.

**Question 6: Project Management (20 Marks)**

You should provide details on how you will manage the project, including information on:

* How you will ensure the project remains on track and all financial and learner targets are met
* The retention strategies in place to support learners to complete the programme, achieve and progress
* How you will provide impartial information, advice and guidance throughout the project
* How you will ensure each learner progresses to voluntary work, further learning and/or employment, and how you will evidence this

**Question 7: Profile (15 Marks)**

Please complete the table indicating:

* Amount of funding requested
* Number of starts by month
* Number of completions by month
* Number of participants from a target group by month- please note that our priority is to engage learners who are inactive
* Number of progressions into further learning/ training by month
* Number of progressions into voluntary work by month
* Number of progressions into employment by month

**Question 8: Quality (10 Marks)**

Please tell us about how you will ensure the project you are proposing is high quality. You will need to include information on any processes you have in place that supports quality and how you will record the learner experience. Please be aware that any successful projects will be required to submit at least 3 case studies per project and, a review that demonstrates how you have recognised and recorded learner progress and achievement throughout.

**Question 9: Staffing (10 Marks)**

You should include the details of all staff (including volunteers) who will be working on the project and any relevant qualifications and/or experience they have. In addition, you will need to state the training or CPD opportunities available for staff.

**Question 10: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, Safeguarding and Prevent and Health and Safety (5 Marks)**

Please provide details on the person(s) responsible for:

* Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
* Safeguarding and Prevent
* Health and Safety – including Covid-19 Risk Assessment and Plan.

You must also state how you will ensure you comply with current legislation and promote it positively within your organisation to staff, volunteers, and participants. Please note that should your bid be successful, you will be required to submit your EDI, Health and Safety and Safeguarding Policy BEFORE a grant agreement is issued.

**Question 11: Financial Sustainability (5 marks)**

Please complete the following information:

* Your organisations income for the last three financial years
* Confirmation of whether you are currently in receipt of any ESFA/DWP/ ESF funding, and if so, details of what this was
* Details of funding you have received from any source in the 18/19, 19/20 and 20/21 financial years

You will also need to confirm whether you have evidence of your current cash and credit position and if not, whether the Directors of your organisation are willing to undergo a credit check.

**Declaration**

You MUST add a digital signature to the declaration box – applications without a digital signature cannot be accepted.

**Capacity Building**

**Question 12: Capacity Building (20 marks- NOT part of overall marks)**

Please ONLY complete this section if you are applying for funding for Capacity Building. Please be aware that this MUST form no more than 30% of the total funding you are requesting and this total funding must not exceed £20,000 per project.

For example, if you are requesting the full £20k grant, the maximum Capacity Building you can apply for is £6k, leaving £14k to be spend on the delivery of your project. You must also record any financial information of this in Question 4: Finance and mark each Capacity Building entry with the prefix CB.

Capacity Building is marked independently of the main application. You may be awarded for your delivery, and not your capacity building request.

For any additional guidance and to answer any questions, please firstly check the FAQs on our website <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/frequently-asked-questions.html> . If you have further queries then please contact us via the contact page <https://esfcommunitygrants.weebly.com/contact.html>. We will respond to your query within 2 working days.