**Skills Innovation Fund – Partnership application**

Last week, Mayor for York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, David Skaith, launched the Skills Innovation Fund to help support his vision that York and North Yorkshire being made up of healthy and thriving communities that are connected to opportunity through the development of provision that is bespoke to the region’s needs.

York and North Yorkshire has a unique set of challenges due to our rural, urban and coastal setting. However, with challenge comes great opportunity. Connecting people to opportunity is a key focus of the fund, supporting access to skills, ensuring that employment support is working for people in the region to get in to work and that skills provision is targeted in the areas where there is the highest need.

After reading the guidance, we believe that this fund would be a good fit for a broadened version of the existing Multiply programme, extending its offer through the delivery of the hidden curriculum to include literacy, digital and independent living skills as well as numeracy. As a result we are inviting new organisations to complete this EOI to join a new partnership.

The Skills Innovation Fund has been designed to address the following challenges.

* A decline in engagement in learning
* Skills mismatch
* Rurality, connectivity and access to services
* Modes of delivery not meeting business or learner needs

**Programme Objectives**

There are several objectives the Skills Innovation Fund is looking to achieve. We believe that this partnership model and the delivery of a ‘Hidden Curriculum’ programme will contribute to the following priorities:

* Development and delivery of flexible, bitesize and modular provision that meets employer needs and targets individual with barriers to accessing learning.
* Development and delivery of bridging provision to other skills programmes such as the Adult Skills Fund, Skills Bootcamp, Apprenticeships and other employability provision enabling the pathway to progression.
* Innovative approaches to engaging individuals in learning particularly disengaged and hard to reach learners.
* Build capacity and enable collaboration.

This opportunity will help enable participants who are disengaged from work and education, delivering a hidden curriculum through a combination of holistic 121 support and group activities. To be eligible to receive support through this fund participants must be:

* Disengaged from learning and employment
* In need of upskilling and reskilling

**Better Connect Delivery Model**

The delivery model for this programme will consist of holistic 121 support and group work activities. Delivery will be flexible and based on the need of the participant, but should have elements of numeracy, literacy, digital and/or independent living skills that run through the support. Provision delivered should support participants in their first steps to engaging with education, help to build confidence and develop skills that could be taken forward to help to progress in the labour market and/or education settings.

Examples of support and provision that could be offered include but are not limited to:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Holistic 121 support** | **Wellbeing (Group activities)** |
| Budgeting and Money Management | Numbers for Wellbeing |
| Household Planning and Running a Home | Literacy for Wellbeing |
| Support for the rising cost of living crisis | Digital Wellbeing |
| First steps for Maths, English and ICT and practical applications in everyday life |  |
| Digital Skills |  |
| Independent Living Skills |  |
| Skills for supporting your children with schoolwork |  |
| Numeracy Support |  |
| Digital Support |  |
| Digital champions |  |
| Literacy Support |  |

We welcome provision and delivery activity ideas from delivery partners. You will have the opportunity to include these within the Expression of Interest Form.

**Available Funding**

The total amount of funding that we can apply for is £1million for 2 years delivery (2025 – 2027). We intend to apply for the full amount as part of a partnership bid with North Yorkshire Council’s Multiply Team. If successful, NYC will deliver a series of Community Roadshows raising awareness of the Hidden Curriculum, as well as delivering more formalised activities through their Adult Learning team. We are hopeful that applying to the Skills Innovation Fund will enable us to keep this award-winning partnership together albeit it with a broadened scope for deliverables extending to a wider range of Hidden Curriculum skills activity and an increased number of partners named in the partnership.

We anticipate keeping unit costs per participants relatively low and intend that the holistic 121 provision is between 6 and 10 hours per person.

In a similar vein to our current Multiply programme, delivery through the Skills Innovation Fund, will run alongside other programmes such as RISE2Thrive, Connect to Work, and Trailblazer activities, complementing and adding value to the delivery of these.

**PLEASE NOTE**: At this point, you do not need to make a final decision about whether you would like to be included in this partnership. The purpose of this application process exercise is to identify a strong partnership of organisations who have the capacity and capability to deliver on this contract. Final contract outputs, values and specific delivery will be agreed through negotiations that will begin following submission of your application but will not be finalised until we know the outcome of our application to York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

**Reporting Requirements for Delivery Partners**

**Financial and participant paperwork**

The guidance provided by the Mayoral Investment Fund states that successful organisations/projects must be willing to provide monitoring information that includes reporting on expenditure, outputs and outcomes.

At this stage there is no further information available as to what this will look like or what the exact requirements will be. All we know is that there will be an expectation to provide monitoring. We will work with you to ensure that this is simple and straightforward as possible and proportionate to the amount of funding awarded and any associated risks.

**Application Timescales**

Better Connect is committed to ensuring that the application process is as simple and straight forward as possible in order to give all organisations the opportunity to submit a bid. Below is a timetable showing the dates and deadlines for both the application process and the overall programme.

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| --- | --- |
| **Key Dates** | **Activity** |
| February 2025 | Partnership development |
| 5th March 2025 | Application submitted to York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| March 2025 | Projects are appraised by York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and contract awards made |
| 1st April 2025 | Delivery begins (subject to awarding) |
| *\*Dates to be confirmed and are dependent on when information and the opportunity is launched.* | |

**Support and Guidance**

If you have any questions about your organisation’s eligibility for the programme or any questions about completing the application form, please contact Emma Lyons, Head of Business Development on 01423 795305 or e-mail Emma on [elyons@betterconnect.org.uk](mailto:elyons@betterconnect.org.uk)

Detailed guidance to complete the Application Form

The table below provides an overview of the application form and is included to help you plan the completion of your application form. More detailed guidance is provided below for each question.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Question | Word count | Value | Additional information |
| 1 | Organisation Details | - | I | Information only |
| 2 | Due Diligence | - | I | Information only |
| 3 | Organisational Capacity | 500 | scored | Detail of the resource you have to deliver the programme. |
| 4 | Track Record | 500 | scored | Total word count across all open questions. Detailing current relevant performance for Multiply delivery 2024/2025 |
| 5 | Your Location | - | I | Where you would like to deliver |
| 6 | Geographical Location | - | I | Information only |
| 7 | Services to be delivered | 3000\* | scored | Total word count for all possible deliverables (\*300 words max per service you wish to deliver) |
| 8 | Volumes | - | I | Profile request for delivery |
| 9 | Linkage to Skills Innovation Fund Outcomes | - | I | Detail of how your offer will link with and enhance other provision in the area. |
| 10 | Progression and linkage to complementary provision and programmes. | 300 | scored | Identify the number of outcomes you will achieve throughout the lifetime of the project. |
| 10 | Declaration | - | I | Signature and Date required |

**Application Form – Detailed Guidance**

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| --- |
| 1. **Organisation Details** |
| Complete all contact details and relevant information as requested. |
| 1. **Due Diligence** |
| This expression of interest has been designed in light of the Better Connect Approved Provider List (APL) and your previous application submitted for your inclusion in our current Multiply partnership.  Please ensure that you have checked that your details on the APL are correct and up to date when you submit this EOI.  If the bank details we currently hold for you are not the ones you wish for payment to be made into should our application be successful, please answer ‘No’ to this question and a member of the Finance and Audit Team will be in touch with you in due course to update these.  If you do not wish to be a delivery partner in our Skills Innovation Fund partnership for 2025-2027 delivery please answer ‘No’ to the question and head straight to section 10 Declarations. There is no need to complete the rest of this EOI if you do not wish to be included in future delivery. |
| 1. **Organisational Capacity** |
| Please complete all questions in this section.  Full Time Equivalent (FTE) answers should be the total FTE resource your organisation has and will be committing to the delivery of this Skills Innovation Fund provision. Please add together all members of staff FTE to generate your answer for these questions.  Please note, staff recruitment will be taken into consideration in the awarding stage of this process. Delays in recruitment can negatively affect an organisations ability to deliver their contracted profiles. |
| 1. **Track Record/Current Multiply performance** |
| Please provide information regarding your track record of delivering similar projects/programmes.  Rationales for under and over delivery and lessons learned will be used to add context to other information provided in this EOI.  Please ensure that you include information on all the bullet points listed in the question. |
| 1. **Your Location** |
| Please answer all the questions in this section. |
| 1. **Geographical Locations** |
| Please select the all of the districts that you would be able to deliver Skills Innovation Fund provision. If successful, we will do our best to accommodate all the areas you have requested, however please note that this may not be possible.  Please provide further information about the towns/cities/villages you intend to deliver provision in, this is to help us ensure that we have maximum reach and we don’t saturate particular areas. |
| 1. **Services to be delivered** |
| Please select all that you wish to deliver and provide a short overview in the box provided as to what delivery under each of the headings will entail.  Maximum word count for the rationale for each of the services you have selected is 300 words max. If we require more information about any of your intended delivery we will contact you directly.  Your answer should include exactly what you wish to deliver. |
| 1. **Volumes** |
| Please indicate the number of participants you wish to deliver ‘Hidden Curriculum’ provision to through this programme.  We will do our best to accommodate your wishes, however a decision will be made based on staff capacity and resource, current delivery and performance, and the information provided in this form.  Unit costs for delivery will be low, in a similar vein to current Multiply costings. Delivery of provision should complement other existing provision in your delivery area. |
| 1. **Linkage to Skills Innovation Fund Outcomes** |
| There are 3 key Skills Innovation Fund Outcomes that this partnership provision will contribute to. Please indicate the number of these outcomes that you think your organisation will achieve.  We have the opportunity to identify our own outcomes, please list any in the table indicated and include the volume you think you will be able to achieve. We have already added ‘Increased confidence’ as an additional outcome. |
| 1. **Progression and linkage to complementary provision and programmes** |
| Please detail how the provision you will be providing complements existing and future provision. Consideration should be given to linkage with FE colleges, employability programmes, Adult Skills and Learning Services and any relevant stakeholders/referral agencies.  Please make reference to any links that can be made in the emerging growth and core sectors. These include: Engineering, Biology, Agri-Tec, Health and Life Science, Rail, Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Creative and  Digital, Maritime. Construction, Health and Social Care, and the Visitor Economy. |
| 1. **Declaration** |
| Please read the declaration statements and sign and date in the box provided. **We are happy to accept signatures that are electronic copies of your original signature or typed.** |

Before submitting your application form, please check the following:

* All questions have been fully completed
* The declaration has been signed and dated

Please return your completed application, **by email** to, Emma Lyons, [elyons@betterconnect.org.uk](mailto:elyons@betterconnect.org.uk) confirmation of receipt will be sent to each applicant once the application has been logged.

**Deadline for applications: Close of Business Friday 28th February 2025**

To ensure transparency and fairness to all applicants, Better Connect will not answer any questions from individual applicants in relation to the scoring criteria. However, if you have any questions about your organisation’s eligibility for the fund or any practical questions about completing the application form, please contact Emma Lyons, Head of Business Development on 01423 795305 or e-mail Emma on [elyons@betterconnect.org.uk](mailto:elyons@betterconnect.org.uk)

***Please note: Better Connect cannot be held responsible for the accuracy or completeness of any submissions.***

***Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted.***

***Applications that are missing key information may not be accepted.***

***Please ensure your submission is sent prior to the deadline and is fully complete.***

***Content that exceeds word count limits will not be taken into consideration.***