

## **Skills for your Future – The Upskilling Grants Fund**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**This is a general programme FAQs. Applicants should also refer to specific fund criteria and guidance ahead of submitting their applications. If you have any additional questions please follow the *CONTACT US* page.**

#### **What is the Skills for your Future programme?**

Utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF), Telford and Wrekin Council has made an allocation of funding available to support the upskilling of employees working for businesses based in Telford and Wrekin

#### **1. How much can I apply for?**

You can apply for funding of between £1,000 and £3,000 per employee and up to a maximum of 5 employees

#### **2. What can I use the funding for?**

To support 90% of the cost of training and related accreditation and certificates to upskill existing employees

#### **3. When will I be able to complete an on-line application?**

April 2024

#### **4. Is there any match funding required?**

A 10% contribution is required. The UKSPF funding will pay a maximum of £3000. Where the training is in excess of the £3000, the employer will be responsible for the cost of this.

#### **5. When can training start?**

Training can start when the funding offer letter has been signed, returned and receipt has been acknowledged by Telford and Wrekin Council.

Once returned, the business will need pay in full for the cost of the training before the funding can be claimed.

A key requirement is that you cannot start your training until an offer letter has been received, signed and returned. We cannot fund any expenditure incurred for training that has already started,

For administrative purposes all payments must be paid in full and upfront. We will need to see copies of supplier's invoices and a copy of the statement from the dedicated bank account for the business, evidencing that payment has been made to the relevant suppliers. The bank statement must correspond with the supplier's invoice.

We cannot accept payments that have been made by cash, credit cards or any other alternative payment arrangements where payment is staggered and not paid in full.

If you are in doubt, please contact us before making any payment for confirmation.

## **6. How do I apply?**

All applications will follow through a 2 stage process and applicants are advised to read the guidance notes before making an application.

- Stage 1: Submission of an Expression of Interest form. If the training meets the scheme criteria you will be invited to apply. You may be invited for a discussion with the Invest Telford Team in some cases before approval to submit a full application.
- Stage 2: Applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Submissions will then be assessed.

Links to the EOI form can be accessed via the individual fund overview.

## **7. Do I have to submit an EOI?**

All applicants are required to submit an EOI to begin their application journey. Once your EOI has been received and reviewed, you will be notified of the outcome.

## **8. Can I make more than one application?**

Funding will be restricted to 1 grant per employee but the business can apply for multiple grants up to a maximum of 5 employees.

## **9. I have more than one business, can each business apply for the grant?**

In principle, yes, provided that the businesses are separate legal entities and delivering different activities. They will be judged on their own merit.

## **10. How do I know if I will be eligible to apply?**

As part of the application process, applicants will need to confirm the following before accessing the Full Application:

- The business base is located within Telford & Wrekin
- The training has not already started.
- The business has the ability to cash flow the project.
- You have dedicated bank account for your business. For the purposes of this funding, a dedicated bank account is one that holds only business-based transactions and is kept separate from any personal payments or receipts.
- Comply with UK Subsidy Control (formerly state aid).
- Business are advised to read the fund guidance notes, and scheme specification to assess full eligibility.

We cannot accept applications from businesses who operate in the following sectors:

- Fisheries and agriculture
- Processing and marketing of agricultural products

- Shipbuilding
- School/school age educational establishments
- Insurance companies
- Primary production, coal or steel or synthetic fibres
- Banking

**11. What are the terms and conditions of the funding?**

- The training must not have started or orders placed before the offer letter is signed, returned and receipt acknowledged.
- Applications must be fully and correctly completed with the supporting evidence provided
- The funding is recoverable from the applicant if it is proved that their application and/or claim contained false or fraudulent information
- The training outcomes must clearly address fund objectives
- The funding must not be used to fund any other training

**12. What information will I need to hand when I complete the application?**

Please read the fund specific guidance notes.

**13. What can the funding be spent on?**

See Upskilling fund overview

**14. What can't the funding be spent on?**

- The cost of staff time when attending the training
- The cost of travel and accommodation for either the employee or training provider
- The cost of hiring a venue
- The cost of training where this is included as part of the purchase of equipment and provided by the manufacturer.
- Cost of training provided in house
- Mandatory training which is required either to do the job or a statutory requirement such as Fork Lift, Food Safety, First Aid. This list is not exhaustive and each application will be assessed individually.
- Any sort of Health and Safety Training
- Management and Leadership and Project Management Training
- Training which is available through other funded provision
- The cost of equipment and /or software which is included in the training package
- Fund retrospective activity or purchases.
- General business expenses,
- The cost of registration with a professional body

This list is not exhaustive, if you have any questions about your intended training, please contact us.

**15. Do I have to use local suppliers?**

No. You can use any supplier you want to, so long as they are a registered business and the training that they provide is relevant to support your employee. However, you will need to

confirm the supplier is independent of you and your business and that there is no conflict of interest.

#### **16. When do I pay the supplier?**

All expenditure will need to be paid before you can claim your funding.

For administrative purposes all payments for purchases must be paid in full and upfront. We will need to see copies of supplier's invoices and a copy of the statement from the dedicated bank account for the business, evidencing that payment has been made to the relevant suppliers. The bank statement must correspond with the supplier's invoice.

We cannot accept payments that have been made by credit cards or any other alternative payment arrangements where payment is staggered and not paid in full.

#### **17. What if I am having problems with my supplier?**

You will be wholly responsible for ensuring the work you commission is carried out to specification and is of a satisfactory standard. The agreement will be between you and your supplier. We cannot be held responsible for any issues or the quality of the work.

#### **18. Can I claim the VAT?**

##### **VAT Registered Businesses**

You will not be able to claim the VAT element though the Telford Growth and Recovery Fund.

##### **Businesses that are Not VAT Registered**

You will be able to claim the VAT if your business is not VAT registered.

Please note you will not be eligible to claim the VAT back from HMRC in the future if it has been paid by the Upskilling fund

Checks will be made to ensure the VAT status of applicant businesses; incorrect information may lead to your application being declined.

#### **19. I am a sole trader, can I apply?**

Yes. As long as you are based in Telford and Wrekin, pay Council Tax or Business Rates to Telford and Wrekin Council, and have a unique tax reference you are eligible to apply.

#### **20. What does 'dedicated business account' mean?**

All businesses must have a dedicated business account.

##### **Businesses that have a separate business bank account:**

- The account will need to have the same name as the business applying for the grant
- The account holds only business-based transactions and is kept separate from any personal payments or receipts.

##### **Businesses that use their personal bank account for business transactions:**

- The account must be used for both personal and business use
- The bank account provided must be used to pay your relevant suppliers
- Grant payment will be paid into the bank account provided
- For all businesses using a personal bank account, assessment will be made on a case by case basis

**21. Can I change supplier once I've received my grant approval?**

If you wish to change suppliers once the grant has been approved you will need to get a new quote from the new supplier and submit that to the funding team. You will not be able to commence work with your proposed new supplier until the change has been confirmed by a project officer. Any deviation from the agreement letter without project officer approval will lead to your funding offer being withdrawn regardless of how far you have proceeded with the training

**22. Can I change what I want to spend my grant on after I have received my Offer Letter?**

Under certain conditions applicants will be able to make certain adjustment to their funding application providing it has been approved by a member of the funding team. Any change incurred without approval from the funding team will invalidate any claim.

Applicants seeking to make a fundamental change to their application may have their funding request withdrawn if the revised training no longer supports the same outcomes originally agreed to in the application.

If after approval you are seeking to make any change (minor or major), please discuss it with a member of the funding team. Failure to do so will result in your funding application being withdrawn.

**23. How long does it take to know the outcome of my funding application?**

**We aim to respond to EOI submissions within 10 working days of receipt and full applications within a further 10 working days. Failure to provide all of the information requested will delay the decision.**

**24. If I am successful, when will I receive the funding?**

**Payment can take up to a month after we have received all information.**

**25. If I am turned down for funding, can I appeal?**

Due to the level of funding available, and the high volume of applications anticipated, there will be no appeal process.

The onus is on the applicant to complete the application correctly, provide the necessary information and demonstrate that it meets the requirements of the scheme. If you have any questions you are encouraged to contact us through the support feature on the website.

An early application does not guarantee funding approval. If your application is eligible, complete and in order then the application will be progressed, however this does not guarantee that funding will be awarded. If your application is not complete it will not be assessed. If further funding becomes available you will be able to re-submit your application at this stage.

## **26. Do I have to pay the funding back?**

The funding is recoverable from the applicant if it is proved that their application and/or claim contained false or fraudulent information, or the applicant is unable to evidence their unique outputs.

## **27. The General Data Protection Regulation**

The data we collect is for the purposes of the Skills for your Future which is a business support programme to help upskill employees. The programme requires your data to be added to the Telford and Wrekin Council CRM Database called Evolutive.

### **We will use the information you supply:**

- Telford and Wrekin Council use in its role of Accountable Body for the scheme;
- To provide business support to you and make referrals to partners and other providers of relevant services as appropriate;
- To share National Government / the Marches Growth Hub / MHCLG (or their sub-contractors) and/or BEIS.

## **28. Is the Grant taxable?**

Yes. It should be treated as income. Any tax would be built into the accounting process.

## **29. Grant Aid / Subsidy Control**

You will be expected to inform us within your application form of any grants and other support you have received from the public sector over the last 3 financial years.

This scheme is covered by the current [UK Government Subsidy Control Act \(2022\)](#). The total amount of Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) received over a rolling period of three fiscal years should not exceed £315,000 per business.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to monitor the level of MFA received; you will be asked to declare that this has not been exceeded in the event of an offer being made. [\* The MFA financial threshold applies at company group level.]

Where applicants do not adequately demonstrate that the proposed project is compliant under the UK Subsidy Control Regime it may be considered ineligible, and your application could be rejected