

OPEN APPLICATION PROCESS 2022: PRIORITY SPECIFICATION

BACKGROUND

The West of England Combined Authority launched an open application process in late 2021 but was unable to secure proposals which sufficiently supported our identified priorities. We remain determined to grow provision in line with our priorities and are therefore re-launching the process to secure provision for delivery in the 2022/23 academic year.

Our core priorities for this process remain unaltered, though this document now provides additional guidance concerning some of the specific contexts which we particularly wish to support through the priorities. We will **not** consider applications to deliver any other form of adult education.

Our four priorities are:

- **PRIORITY ONE: EMPLOYABILITY FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES:**

Substantial programmes of Employability provision, located within our most disadvantaged communities, offering managed progression from existing Engagement provision into work.

- **PRIORITY TWO: ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO CAREER PROGRESSION WITH FUNCTIONAL SKILLS:**

Foundation Skills for Work provision equipping residents in insecure and / or low wage employment with the skills required to address barriers to career progression and secure better employment, combining 'High Value Courses' with literacy, numeracy and ESOL at Level 2. Skills training which supports the green economy is particularly welcomed.

- **PRIORITY THREE: SUPPORTING THE HARDEST-HIT BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:**

Substantial programmes of Engagement and Employability provision targeting specific types of residents (e.g. young people, over 50's, minority ethnic communities, residents with learning difficulties and / or disabilities) hardest-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **PRIORITY FOUR: NATIONAL SKILLS FUND LEVEL 3 OFFER:**

Intermediate Skills for Work provision offering qualifications forming part of the National Skills Fund Level 3 Offer which are of greatest relevance to local economic need.

The following specification provides further detail regarding the content and focus of the provision we are seeking. Some elements relate to all priorities, whereas others are specific to individual priorities.

PROCESS

This document confirms the priorities which we intend to support through the Open Application process and is shared at this stage to develop an understanding concerning the types of provision which we do and do not seek, and to stimulate the development of potential proposals.

We will share further guidance concerning how to apply when the opportunity is formally launched, including details of our gateway criteria and the application form.

Within the previous Open Application Process, we asked providers to submit a Curriculum and Delivery Plan as part of the application process. We will not require applicants to do this at the application stage on this occasion. The application form will capture the high-level deliverables which the applicant plans to deliver. Successful applicants will be required to incorporate these into a full curriculum and delivery plan before delivery commences. For new providers this will be a full Curriculum and Delivery plan, for existing providers it will be a ring-fenced addition to your 2022/23 Curriculum and Delivery Plan.

CONTEXT: CATEGORIES OF ADULT EDUCATION

Devolved adult education provision delivered in support of residents of the West of England Combined Authority differs in some significant ways to that funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. One of the most significant differences in relation to this open application process is the framework within which we plan and manage adult education provision.

Rather than overseeing a single, very broad programme delivering all learning forms from the smallest entry level re-engagement provision to substantial programmes at full level 3, we have divided adult education into five categories. This enables us to clearly define what we seek from the learning we fund and better direct our investment in line with our priorities.

The categories of adult education adopted by the Combined Authority are:

1. ENGAGEMENT

Engagement provision is intended to support disadvantaged residents and those with low levels of prior attainment to re-engage with education and training and progress into further learning, and (where appropriate) towards employment. Learners benefitting from this provision will be unemployed or economically inactive (and have been so for a significant period of time).

2. EMPLOYABILITY

Employability provision is intended to equip unemployed residents with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to secure employment. Learners

benefitting from this provision will be unemployed or economically inactive (and have been so for a significant period of time). Residents who are employed should not be enrolled on Employability provision, though equivalent provision may be supported through Foundation Skills for Work provision.

Direct progression into employment **must** be a realistic progression route for residents supported within this category. Where prior attainment, initial assessment and diagnostic testing suggests that this is not realistic, the learner should be enrolled on Engagement provision (from which progression into Employability provision is the planned route).

3. FOUNDATION SKILLS FOR WORK

Foundation Skills for Work provision seeks to support employed residents to improve their skills and progress within their careers through learning including provision up to and including full level 2. Within this category, we will primarily support the following:

- Employed residents who are not functionally literate or numerate (including those with ESOL needs)
- Employed residents with prior attainment below full level 2
- Employed residents in low wage employment
- Employed residents in insecure employment ¹

4. INTERMEDIATE SKILLS FOR WORK

Intermediate Skills for Work provision seeks to support employed residents to improve their skills and progress within their careers through learning at level 3. Within this category, we primarily seek to support the following:

- Employed residents with prior attainment below full level 3
- Employed residents in low wage employment
- Employed residents in insecure employment ¹

For planning and monitoring purposes, the Combined Authority places all learning delivered under the National Skills Fund Level 3 Offer within the Intermediate Skills for work category.

5. LEARNING FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Learning for Personal Development is a 'catch-all' category which includes all adult education provision which does not satisfy the definitions which

¹ Insecure employment includes those at risk of redundancy and employed through zero-hour contracts.

apply to the other categories detailed above. As such, the provision delivered within this category is generally our lowest priority.

The most significant high-priority provision within this category supports progression into higher education. This may take the form of formal 'Access to HE' courses or other forms of L3 provision where HE is the intended destination, and learning does not meet the other categories definitions.

CONTEXT: BENEFIT MEASURE TARGETS

Within each category, the Combined Authority monitors and manages provider performance through specific benefit measure targets. These are primarily linked to the participation, achievement and positive progression of residents undertaking those forms of learning valued by us. The benefit measure targets do not offer an exhaustive list of everything eligible for Combined Authority funding, however they indicate the provision where we wish to see most investment.

Each priority within this specification will be expected to contribute towards a core set of benefit measure targets. These are detailed in the full guidance documents for the open application process. Applications may also contribute towards other benefit measure targets within the category which relates to the specific priority.

CONTEXT: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The Combined Authority requires provision to be planned in a collaborative manner in order to establish an effective range of opportunities across the area whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and unconstructive competition.

We therefore expect applicants to engage with existing Combined Authority adult education providers and other relevant providers funded from sources other than AEB to develop their applications in a manner which compliments the existing offer through filling gaps in provision and offering progression opportunities throughout the lifelong learning journey.

CONTEXT: POSITIVE PROGRESSION

We view the primary purpose of the adult education we fund to be supporting residents to progress to positive destinations. This includes progression both into and within employment, into further education, as well the achievement of other transformational milestones and positive destinations (e.g. independent living).

We currently measure positive progression through the associated ILR fields. Going forward, we will also measure progression (and sustained progression) to valid destinations through learner surveys.

Applicants should structure their proposals around the intended progression destination and pathways to reach this.

CONTEXT: DISADVANTAGE UPLIFT

The priorities in this Open Application Process seek to support Priority Residents, many of whom are likely to be resident within areas attracting the disadvantage postcode uplift. This is especially likely within priority one, as we expect provision to be physically located within (or easily accessible by) such communities.

From the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year, the Combined Authority doubled the uplift factor applied to residents of disadvantaged postcodes. This means that learners who are resident in disadvantaged areas currently benefit from an uplift factor of between 1.168 and 1.672 (in comparison, ESFA uplift factors range from 1.084 to 1.336) in the 2021/22 academic year. We understand that ESFA may increase disadvantage uplift factors in 2022/23, if this is the case our factors will also increase to maintain the 'double uplift'.

Applicants should be aware of this significant uplift when formulating their proposals.

CONTEXT: LOW WAGE PROGRAMME

The West of England Combined Authority offers fully funded access to learning up to and including level 2 to employed residents on low wages. We adopt a different definition of low wage to ESFA and have aligned our threshold with the Living Wage Foundation Real Living Wage. This is currently set at £9.90 per hour which equates to £19,305 per annum assuming full-time employment at 37.5 hours per week. If the Living Wage Foundation Real Living Wage is increased in the future, our Low Wage Programme threshold will increase to maintain alignment.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Combined Authority is encouraging providers to effectively incorporate the below expectations into all provision. They will form a requirement within the provision secured through the open application process, and applicants should be able to set out how they will address each requirement within their application.

1. EVIDENCE OF NEED

All applications should be supported by robust and verifiable evidence of need. This specification will set out some high-level evidence of need derived from published data sets, but we expect applicants to have an expert understanding of the learning and skills needs of the communities and types of resident they propose to support, and to demonstrate this through their application. Applicants should not solely rely on evidence already published by the Combined Authority, and applications which are not properly evidenced are unlikely to be successful.

2. COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

The Combined Authority expects all provision to be planned in a collaborative manner to avoid unconstructive duplication and competition, whilst establishing an effective distribution of opportunities across the West of England. Applicants should set out how they have worked with other Combined Authority providers and key strategic partners to ensure this is the case.

3. PRIORITY RESIDENTS

We wish to focus our investment on the residents who would benefit most from learning. As such, we have defined the types of resident we deem to be of greatest priority within our AEB Strategy. These are:

- A. Residents who have been either unemployed or economically inactive for 6 months or more.
- B. Residents who are either unemployed or economically inactive, with prior attainment below full level 2.
- C. Residents who are employed in jobs which are either low pay or at risk of redundancy, with prior attainment below full level 2.

All provision offered in support of priorities one, two and three must be delivered exclusively in support of priority residents. Provision offered in support of priority four should also include a significant focus on priority learners but may also support other residents of the West of England.

4. ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNERS

One of the most common characteristics of priority residents is that they are amongst the least likely to recognise a learning need and thus actively seek support of their own volition. In contrast, the residents most likely to self-refer seldom fall within one of our priorities. Given this, applicants should not rely on self-referral or referral from partner organisations. Instead, we expect applicants to actively engage the priority residents who would benefit most from the provision offered.

We encourage providers to utilise Community Learning funding to cover the costs associated with this active engagement. The role may also be used to secure intelligence regarding the needs of the geography or type of resident being supported. In exchange, we expect providers to plan and manage their engagement activities in a coordinated and collaborative manner to avoid unhelpful duplication of effort and to share any intelligence and / or leads which may emerge.

Applicants should set out how they plan to actively engage learners within their application.

5. CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (CEIAG)

The Combined Authority believes that effective CEIAG is the foundation upon which transformational adult education is built. In absence of effective CEIAG, too many

learners undertake learning which offers limited transformational benefit and does not offer effective progression to a positive destination.

We have created a new learning aim which providers may use to offer enhanced CEIAG to priority learners. This is to offer extra support where needed, over and above the provider's standard offer.

We expect applicants to set out how they propose to offer high-quality CEIAG to all learners both prior to enrolment (to confirm the learner is enrolled on an appropriate course) and at the end of the programme (to facilitate positive progression). The information provided should set out what they propose to offer within their standard offer of CEIAG, and what they propose to offer as an enhancement (should they wish to utilise this).

6. INITIAL ASSESSMENT

In addition to offering high-quality CEIAG to all learners, we expect applicants to undertake a robust initial assessment of the learner to ascertain the realistic destination to which they hope to progress and the specific barriers currently preventing this from happening. Once the barriers are identified, the content of the substantial programme of learning and support offered to the learner should be designed to directly address these.

Where the learner is participating over an extended period, their progress should be reviewed to determine which barriers have been resolved and confirm whether further barriers have emerged. It is not uncommon for significant barriers to emerge once the learner has been on programme for some time and a trusting relationship has developed between the learner and the provider.

Applicants should set out how they propose to implement a robust initial assessment of all learners at the point of enrolment and update this as part of a regular progress review.

7. SUBSTANTIAL PROGRAMMES OF LEARNING AND SUPPORT

The following relates to all learners supported under priorities one, two and three. It may also be relevant to some learners within priority four where barriers to progression exist which are not fully addressed by the achievement of the level 3 qualification.

Given the focus on priority residents, we anticipate that the majority of residents supported through this open application process will face multiple and / or complex barriers to progression and will therefore require a substantial programme of learning and support to effectively address these. If the learner is capable of securing progression following a simple, short intervention, they are unlikely to be the type of resident the Combined Authority wishes to support through this process.

The substantial programmes of learning and support we seek will be driven by the needs of the individual learner. We do not seek a one size fits all offer, though we anticipate there will be common components. The planned programme content should include (but is not limited to):

- Enhanced CEIAG

- Enhanced Initial Assessment
- General Employability Training
- Specific Skills Training (aligned with evidenced local labour market need)
- Personal / Social Development
- Literacy / Numeracy / ESOL
- Digital Skills
- Work Experience
- Additional Learner Support
- Additional Learning Support

We do not expect all components to be delivered concurrently (although some may be). Equally, in order to effectively support some of our most disadvantaged residents it may be necessary to deliver learning over many months or even academic years. This is perfectly acceptable on the condition that the learner continues to make reasonable progress towards their destination.

For the purposes of reporting, in the 2022/23 academic year the Combined Authority will define a Substantial Programme of Learning and Support as a learner undertaking a single qualification or combination of multiple qualification equating to at least 150 guided learning hours (actual as opposed to planned) across an academic year.

For the purposes of this process, a single National Skills Fund Level 3 Offer (NSF L3) qualification delivered under priority four will be deemed to be sufficiently substantial. Any funding allocated under this priority may only be used to support the delivery of eligible NSF L3 qualifications.

An additional guidance document concerning Substantial Programmes of Learning and Support will be shared at launch.

8. MODE AND TIMING OF DELIVERY

The substantial programmes of learning and support we seek through this process should be delivered in locations most accessible by the priority residents actively targeted, and at a convenient time for most learners (potentially including evening and weekend delivery).

For priorities one and three, we are seeking provision primarily delivered in a classroom setting. Where appropriate, this may be supplemented by blended learning. This should not be the primary delivery mechanism, but instead used to stretch and challenge a learner, as skills around self-regulation and motivation align to today's hybrid working models and higher-level learning.

For priority two, our preference is also to secure provision primarily delivered in a classroom setting. However, we will consider programmes primarily delivered in a

blended manner where the provider is able to demonstrate this is the most effective means through which to support priority residents to acquire the skills needed to progress within their careers (likely to be limited to skills not requiring a significant practical component). We will not consider applications which propose provision predominantly delivered through software-driven distance learning including little or no interaction between tutor and learner.

Provision delivered under priority three may be wholly delivered through blended learning. We however strongly encourage classroom-based learning where the provision seeks to promote careers where practical skills are required. Again, we will not consider applications which propose provision predominantly delivered through software-driven distance learning including little or no interaction between tutor and learner.

9. ADDITIONAL LEARNER / LEARNING SUPPORT

Given the nature of the priority residents who we intend to support through the open application process, we anticipate a higher-than-average level of additional learner and learning support is likely to be required and should be built into any application which is forthcoming.

We are willing to consider proposals to utilise these budgets in a flexible manner to offer effective support to learners. For example, in the previous academic year, we permitted utilisation of funding to purchase IT equipment to be loaned out to support remote learning, and encouraged providers to invest in more capacity to offer mental health support to learners.

Any flexibility sought should be set out in the application and should be permissible within the spirit of the existing funding rules when a broad interpretation is applied.

10. POSITIVE PROGRESSION

The primary focus of all Combined Authority adult education provision is to support residents to progress to a positive and meaningful destination. We currently measure positive progression through the ILR destination progression outcomes, but plan to supplement this through learner surveys recognising and measuring other forms of meaningful progression (including sustained progression after learning conclusion).

Positive progression should therefore be the primary focus for all applications submitted. For priorities one and three, the focus should be progression into employment. For priorities two and four, the focus should be progression within employment.

11. THIRD-PARTY DELIVERY

'Third-party delivery' is used by the Combined Authority to describe all situations where an element of the provision we fund is delivered by an organisation other than the provider directly funded by us. This includes both subcontracting and other forms of third-party involvement in learning delivery on our behalf.

We will consider applications which contain an element of third-party delivery, and particularly welcomes this as a mechanism through which to support and develop

smaller providers who offer effective provision but lack the scale required to satisfy our minimum contract value threshold.

Where an applicant wishes to incorporate third-party delivery within their application, they should set out precisely which organisation will deliver which programme elements. Applicants should refer to our published guidance concerning third-party delivery and note that the Combined Authority has not adopted an approach which is identical to ESFA.

12. GREEN SKILLS / CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Combined Authority considers Green Skills to be a cross-cutting theme across all Open Application Process priorities so particularly welcomes applications across all priorities which include a meaningful focus on Green Skills. This will be prioritised within our assessment of applications through affording applications which incorporate Green Skills and enhanced weighting.

Equally, we are keen to minimise the risk of 'greenwashing' so have offered more detailed guidance concerning our priorities for green skills in Annex A of this document.

13. HGV AND LOGISTICS

The Logistics sector, and particularly the availability of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers, is seen as critical to both the regional (and national recovery) from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, a recognised lack of HGV drivers is having a negative impact on the recovery. With the West of England hosting major transport and logistics infrastructure (motorways, railways, the Bristol Port/Avonmouth area and Bristol airport) a constrained ability to move goods into, out of and around the sub-region has a negative impact on our businesses, employers and local economy. Therefore, for the West of England, and its local economy, to successfully recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic a strong, vibrant and healthy logistics sector is required. More detailed guidance concerning our priorities for logistics is provided in Annex B of this document.

PRIORITY ONE: EMPLOYABILITY FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

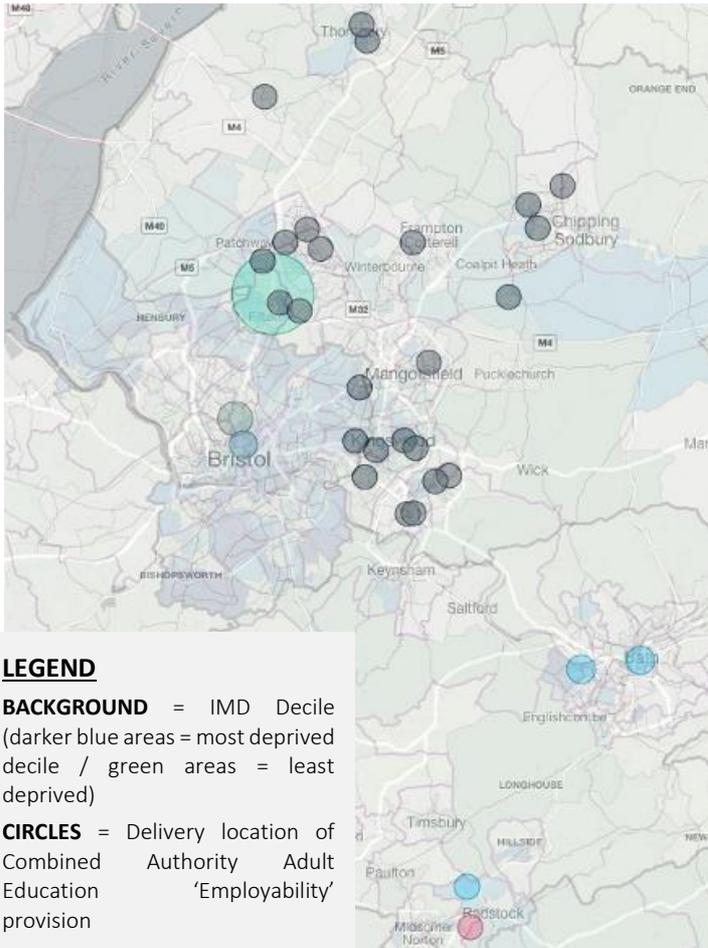
Substantial programmes of Employability provision offering managed progression from existing Engagement provision into work, located within our most disadvantaged communities.

Priority one seeks to establish Employability provision within our most disadvantaged communities, providing effective and managed progression into employment from existing Engagement provision. Whilst many residents will have already been engaged through our Engagement provision, those supported are likely to have multiple and complex barriers to employment. The programme duration should be tailored to suit the needs of the individual learner and be able to accommodate individuals progressing from Engagement (or other first-steps) provision to the point where they can progress into sustainable employment. This is likely to be delivered over several months for most, but for some delivery over multiple academic years may be necessary.

We are not seeking provision supporting individuals who are close to becoming work-ready to progress in a relatively short period through this Open Application Process, as this cohort is well catered for through other Combined Authority programmes and programmes led by other organisations.

Applicants should offer a substantial programme of learning and support which addresses the full range of barriers to employment of each resident. This should be informed by robust CEIAG and Initial Assessment prior to enrolment. At the end of the programme, once all barriers have been effectively addressed, we expect almost all learners to progress into sustained employment.

The provision offered should be located in, or easily accessible from, our most disadvantaged communities where the Combined Authority currently funds Engagement provision but lacks local Employability provision to which learners may progress. The following map contrasts the locations of employability provision planned for delivery during the 2021/22 academic year with the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, highlighting locations where the greatest degree of disadvantage exists which lack local employability provision:



The neighbourhoods within which clear gaps in Employability provision exist are therefore:

1: The 'Northern Arc' of Bristol:

Avonmouth, Shirehampton, Sea Mills, Lawrence Weston, Southmead

2: South Bristol:

Ashton Vale, Withywood, Hartcliffe, Filwood, Knowle West, Hengrove, Stockwood

3: East Bristol:

Barton Hill, Oldbury Court Estate, Hillfields, Eastville, Speedwell

4: Other

Lockleaze, Whiteway

The budget available is unlikely to be sufficient to establish provision in many neighbourhoods. We will therefore prioritise proposals which offer accessible provision to the most disadvantaged residents (particularly those who would otherwise lack reasonable access to any provision), and offers the most coherent managed progression pathways from Engagement provision into employment.

In order to deliver the substantial programmes of learning and support we seek, we anticipate the average level of investment per learner will be in the region of £4,000 per annum. The actual level of investment may vary depending on the specific nature of the learning and support needed by the individual learner. Providers may fund the programme of learning and support through a combination of adult skills, community learning, learner support and learning support funding.

Successful applicants will need to demonstrate:

1. An expert understanding of the learning and skills needs and potential barriers to employment faced by the residents of each community the applicant proposes to support. This should ideally be based upon a proven track record of supporting residents of these specific communities.
2. An expert understanding of the employment opportunities available to the residents supported, and the specific skills required to ensure that learners are able successfully compete for jobs.

3. That the provision has been planned in a collaborative manner with providers delivering Engagement provision to the residents of the communities to be supported, and that an effective referral and progression pipeline has been established.
4. The provision is easily accessible by the residents to be supported in terms of location, delivery times and compatibility with benefit requirements.
5. That the provision offers a substantial programme of learning and support capable of addressing a range of barriers to employment and offers skills relevant to local employment opportunities.
6. That the applicant has secured the commitment from a network of named employers willing to offer work tasters, work experience placements and employment opportunities to residents supported, and how the applicant will maintain and enhance this network throughout delivery.
7. How the applicant will support learners throughout the transition into employment to ensure that progression is sustained.

PRIORITY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

PRIORITY TWO: ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO CAREER PROGRESSION WITH FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Foundation Skills for Work provision equipping residents in insecure and / or low wage employment with the skills required to address barriers to career progression, combining ‘High Value Courses’ with literacy, numeracy and ESOL at Level 2. Skills training which supports the green economy is particularly welcomed.

The West of England Combined Authority Local Industrial Strategy highlights that one of the most significant challenges faced by the area is that in our increasingly high-skill economy, whilst we are relatively successful in our efforts to encourage highly skilled individuals from elsewhere in the country to work within our local economy, historically we have been less successful in efforts to support our indigenous population to successfully compete for the high-quality employment opportunities available.

This priority seeks to support individuals with low-paid and / or insecure jobs to accelerate their career progression through securing new skills which lead to better paid / more secure jobs, either directly or following progression qualifications at higher levels.

We anticipate that most residents supported within this priority will not yet be qualified to full level 2 and many may face significant challenges relating to literacy, numeracy, ESOL and basic digital competence. We therefore seek provision which effectively addresses these significant barriers to career progression. Applicants should aim to equip learners with literacy, numeracy and / or ESOL at level 2 for all learners who have not yet achieved this.

In addition to addressing barriers relating to literacy, numeracy, ESOL and digital skills, applicants should offer qualifications at level 2 (ideally full level 2) which are of greatest relevance to the current and anticipated skills needs of the West of England economy. Applicants should structure their applications around the High Value Qualifications, details of eligible qualifications may be found below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/986309/List_of_L2_and_L3_qualifications_included_in_the_high_value_courses_for_school_and_college_leavers_a_one_year_offer_for_18_and_19_year_olds.ods²

The Combined Authority will also consider applications structured around qualifications not included on the High Value Qualifications list, provided they are equally substantial, and the provider is able to demonstrate that they are of greater relevance to the needs of the West of England economy.

² Although the list was originally developed by DfE primarily in relation to school and college leavers in 2020/21, the Combined Authority is content that the courses detailed remain appropriate for this opportunity.

We are committed to taking action to counter the climate change emergency. We therefore particularly welcome applications which support residents to secure employment within the green economy. Applicants will want to refer to our recently published Green Skills Market Analysis and Retrofit Market Analysis to understand the skills at L2 which are most relevant in terms of both employment and progression to 'green' learning at higher levels.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/green-skills-report/>

As this priority seeks to support residents already employed, delivery at accessible times is likely to be of significant importance. We particularly welcome provision offered at flexible times such as evenings and weekends. Our preference is to secure substantially classroom-based provision, but we anticipate a more substantial element of blended learning is likely to be important within this priority. However, we do not wish to buy software driven distance learning which includes little or no live interaction between tutor and learner. The Combined Authority allows the delivery of non-entitlement adult education in the workplace, and would welcome proposals delivered with employer support.

We expect the majority of learners to either progress within their careers, secure better employment, or progress into further learning at a higher level through routes such as Combined Authority Intermediate Skills for Work provision or Apprenticeships. We will measure levels of progression through a combination of ILR data and learner surveys.

Given the nature of the support which we seek, we anticipate that the average level of investment per learner will be in the region of £2,500 per annum.

Successful applicants will need to demonstrate:

1. An expert understanding of the specific employment opportunities available to residents supported, and the skills required to ensure learners are able successfully compete for jobs (both within their current employment and with different employers).
2. That the provision has been planned in a collaborative manner with other providers offering Foundation Skills for Work provision and does not result in unproductive competition or duplication of effort whilst establishing an effective distribution of opportunities across the West of England.
3. How the applicant plans to identify and actively engage residents with low levels of prior attainment working within low-pay and or insecure jobs.
4. How the applicant proposes to support learners who lack literacy, numeracy and / or ESOL skills to develop their skills to level 2
5. How the applicant proposes to deliver skills training at level 2 which is of significant relevance to the local economy in an accessible manner.
6. How the applicant proposes to establish and manage positive progression pathways to better employment with the same employer, better employment with a new employer or progression to relevant learning at a higher level (such as Intermediate Skills for Work or an Apprenticeship).

PRIORITY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

PRIORITY THREE: SUPPORTING RESIDENTS HARDEST-HIT BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Substantial programmes of Engagement and Employability provision targeting types of residents hardest-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The type of provision sought in priority three is broadly identical to that sought in priority one, however instead of seeking to support residents of specific disadvantaged neighbourhoods, this priority seeks to support groups of residents hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in their ability to secure work.

We are willing to consider applications which seek to support any specific type of disadvantaged group provided there is evidence that their ability to find employment has become more difficult during the pandemic. Equally, the core issues which prove detrimental to their employability are likely to have been present prior to COVID-19 but exacerbated since February 2020. Such groups may include (but are not necessarily limited to):

1. Young Adults (aged 19-25)
2. Residents aged 50 and above
3. Residents from certain BAME Communities
4. Residents with Learning Difficulties and / or Disabilities
5. Residents who are homeless or in insecure accommodation
6. Residents living in isolated rural communities
7. Refugees
8. Ex-Offenders

Irrespective of the group supported, the provision offered should focus on residents who have been predominantly unemployed or economically inactive for at least 12 months prior to enrolment³. We also expect the provision to focus on individuals with significant barriers to employment. Residents who are able to progress into work in a short period of time are not the focus of this priority, and should be supported by other Combined Authority funded Employability provision. As the level of funding available is likely to be limited, we are likely to prioritise bids which either support individuals who are multiply disadvantaged or those which support groups for whom the level of disadvantage is clearly greatest.

³ Short periods of employment within an otherwise consistent pattern of worklessness will not disqualify the learner.

Given the nature of the residents to be supported and the provision sought, we anticipate that the average level of investment per learner will be around £4,000 per annum.

Successful applicants will need to demonstrate:

1. An expert understanding of the learning and skills needs and potential barriers to employment faced by the residents of each community the applicant proposes to support. This should ideally be based upon a proven track record of supporting residents of these specific communities.
2. An expert understanding of the employment opportunities available to the residents supported, and the specific skills required to ensure that learners are able successfully compete for jobs.
3. That the provision has been planned in a collaborative manner with providers delivering Engagement provision in the communities to be supported, and that an effective referral and progression pipeline has been established.
4. The provision is easily accessible by the residents to be supported in terms of location, delivery times and compatibility with benefit requirements.
5. That the provision proposed offers a substantial programme of learning and support capable of addressing a range of barriers to employment and offering skills which are of direct relevance to local employment opportunities.
6. That the applicant has secured the commitment from a network of named employers willing to offer work tasters, work experience placements and employment opportunities to the residents supported through this open application process, and how the applicant will maintain and enhance this network throughout delivery.
7. How the applicant will support learners throughout the transition into employment to ensure that the progression is sustained.

PRIORITY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

PRIORITY FOUR: NATIONAL SKILLS FUND LEVEL 3 OFFER

Intermediate Skills for Work provision offering qualifications forming part of the National Skills Fund Level 3 Offer which are of greatest relevance to local economic need.

Central Government has allocated funds to the Combined Authority to support the delivery of the National Skills Fund Level 3 Offer (NSF L3). Details of this programme may be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-skills-fund#free-level-3-qualifications-for-adults>

We seek proposals to deliver NSF L3 programmes, particularly those which have particular relevance to current and predicted skills needs within the West of England Local Economy. Applicants can find our most recent labour market intelligence published here:

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/regional-insights/>

However, we will expect applicants be able to demonstrate a robust understanding of local economic need and mechanisms through which to maintain this understanding.

We particularly welcome applications offering NSF L3 provision which supports the green economy. Applicants will want to refer to our recently published Green Skills Market Analysis and Retrofit Market Analysis to understand the skills at L3 which are most relevant in terms of both employment and progression to 'green' learning at higher levels.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/green-skills-report/>

Our preference is that the learning funded under this priority is delivered in a classroom setting, though we are willing to consider proposals incorporating a significant element of blended learning. We will not consider proposals which include software driven distance learning with little or no live interaction between learner and tutor.

The national planning assumption for NSF L3 provision is c.£3,000 per annum.

Successful applicants will need to demonstrate:

1. An expert understanding of the specific employment opportunities available to the residents supported, and the specific skills required to ensure that learners are able successfully compete for jobs.

2. That the provision has been planned in a collaborative manner in order to avoid duplication and unconstructive competition whilst establishing an effective distribution of opportunities across the West of England
3. The provision is easily accessible by the residents to be supported in terms of location and delivery times.

Annex A: GREEN SKILLS

BACKGROUND

As indicated above, the Combined Authority will particularly welcome applications which support the development of the Green Economy and make a contribution towards addressing the climate crisis and achieving the realisation of net-zero.

Applications which offer provision which supports the Green Skills Agenda will be afforded an enhanced weighting when applications are reviewed and scored.

The Combined Authority is in the process of implementing our Climate Emergency Action Plan and during 2011, commissioned and published two reports concerning the green agenda, one focussing on green skills in general and the other focussing specifically on retrofit. These are the key documents which providers should refer to whilst developing their applications:

- [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#)
- [Green Skills Market Analysis](#)
- [Retrofit Skills Market Analysis](#)

Many of the specific green skills needs set out in these reports relate to levels of learning higher than those which may be supported by the Adult Education Budget. The Green Skills Report focusses almost exclusively on skills at L4 and above whereas the Retrofit report details skills needs across all levels of learning. Our priority for the open application process is therefore to focus on the specific skills which can be funded within AEB, and those which offer progression pathways to learning at a higher level.

GREEN SKILLS v GENERAL SKILLS

The majority of skills required to support the green economy are not secured through qualifications which are specifically 'green', instead they are secured through well-established general qualifications being delivered in an increasingly green context. For example, well established courses in construction, plumbing, and electrical installation. Similarly, many of the qualifications which are specifically 'green' assume that general competence already exists and are therefore of limited use in absence of general skills already attained.

This annex sets out a range of specific qualifications identified as priorities within our Green Skills and Retrofit Reports. We seek applications which deliver both these specific green qualifications and the more general qualifications which underpin them.

The Retrofit Report provides illustrative learner journeys for both the insulation and energy assessment sector, and the heat sector which detail both general and green specific skills needs at low, intermediate and higher qualification levels.

PROGRESSION PATHWAYS TO LEVEL 4 AND ABOVE

The majority of skills needs identified within the reports relate to learning at level 4 and above. Given this the primary role of Adult Education is to equip individuals with the skills they need to commence learning at this level. This will normally include:

- Literacy and Numeracy at Level 2 and above.
- Other STEM qualifications, ideally those identified within the [National Skills Fund Level 3](#) offer or the [High Value Qualification](#) list.
- Digital Qualifications at Level 2 and above.

In addition to the specific qualifications delivered progression to learning at level 4 and above may be significantly enhanced through the provision of high-quality work experience with businesses operating within the local green economy.

Applicants are encouraged to develop programmes which equip priority learners with these skills and experiences and progress them into further learning in the form of a green skills qualification at level 4 and above. This progression pathway should be actively managed and the progression should ideally follow the AEB intervention directly as opposed to representing a potential progression route at a later date.

DIFFERENTIATION: ADULT EDUCATION v BOOTCAMP

It is likely that the next wave of Bootcamp provision within the West of England will also include a key focus on the delivery of green skills. It is therefore important that both programmes are planned and delivered in a manner which does not lead to unproductive duplication of effort and unconstructive competition. We therefore plan to establish clear differentiation from the outset.

The most obvious means of differentiation relates to the length of programme offered by each programme. The AEB Open Application Process seeks substantial programmes of learning and support whereas Bootcamp seeks relatively short interventions of up to 16 weeks of learning. In addition to this, Bootcamp is able to support learning at level 4 and above whereas AEB is limited to learning up to and including level 3.

Given this, our broad steer is that AEB provision secured through the Open Application Process should focus on:

1. Certificates and Diplomas at levels 2 and 3 which offer the general skills required as a preliminary step towards specialist green skills and offer strong positive progression to specialist green skills and level 4 and above.
2. Certificates and Diplomas at levels 2 and 3 in specific green skills where available and relevant

SPECIFIC GREEN SKILLS

The following table summarises the findings of the Green Skills Report and Retrofit Report in terms of the specific qualifications referenced which are potentially fundable through the Adult Education Budget. Qualifications at L4 and above are excluded from this analysis.

GREEN SECTOR	REF	LEVEL	QUALIFICATION
ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING	60077566	3	Award in Residential, Commercial and Industrial Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment Installation
RETROFIT - HEAT	60377616	3	Award in Low Temperature Heating and Hot Water Systems in Dwellings
	60311885	2	Diploma in Refrigeration, Air-Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems
	60059886	3	Diploma in Refrigeration, Air-Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems
	60060360	2	Diploma in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems
	6007730X	3	Award in the Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pump Systems
	60311903	3	Diploma in Refrigeration, Air-Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems
	60030306	2	Award in Brazing Techniques for Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems
	60030288	3	Award in Hydrocarbon Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pump System Design, Commissioning, Servicing and Maintenance
	6003029X	2	Award in Hydrocarbon Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pump System Installation, Servicing and Maintenance
	60009123	2	NVQ Diploma in Installing, Testing and Maintaining Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Systems

	60134823	2	Award in the Principles of Metering for Renewable Heat Installations
	60052533	3	Award in the Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pumps Systems (Non-refrigerant Circuits)
	60066064	3	Award in the Installation and Maintenance of Heat Pumps Systems (Non-refrigerant Circuits)
RETROFIT [GENERAL]	60371237	2	Award in Understanding Domestic Retrofit
	60368536	3	Certificate for Retrofit Assessors
	60057397	3	Certificate in Domestic Energy Assessment
	60054785	3	Certificate in Domestic Energy Assessment
	60065904	3	Certificate in Non-Domestic Energy Assessment
	60352048	3	NVQ Diploma in Occupational Work Supervision (Construction)
	60336584	3	NVQ Diploma in Occupational Work Supervision (Construction)
	60345135	3	NVQ Diploma in Occupational Work Supervision (Construction)
RETROFIT [INSULATION]	60026339	2	Certificate in Understanding Insulation and Building Treatments
	60130404	3	Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments
	60060177	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Cavity Wall Insulation)
	60060232	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Loft Insulation)
	60372060	2	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)

60373751	3	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60323796	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60083700	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
6032479X	2	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
6033227X	2	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60332281	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60337278	2	NVQ Certificate in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60331677	2	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60337266	2	NVQ Diploma in Insulation and Building Treatments (Construction)
60325914	2	Diploma In Thermal Insulation
60325902	3	Diploma In Thermal Insulation
60110144	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal Insulation (Construction)
60328782	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal insulation (Construction)
60323280	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal insulation (Construction)
60142339	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal insulation (Construction)
60111045	3	NVQ Diploma in Thermal Insulation (Construction)

	60132036	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal Insulation - Fit Protection (Construction)
	60132024	2	NVQ Diploma in Thermal Insulation - Fabricate Protection (Construction)
RETROFIT [SOLAR]	60051759	3	Award in the Installation of Small-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Systems
	60066088	3	Award in the Installation and Maintenance of Solar Thermal Hot Water Systems

Certificates and Diplomas highlighted thus

Awards Highlighted thus

Annex B: LOGISTICS & HGV

BACKGROUND

As indicated above, the Combined Authority will particularly welcome applications which support the development of the logistics sector including HGV drivers.

Applications which offer provision which supports the logistics sector will be afforded an enhanced weighting when applications are reviewed and scored.

West of England GVA data shows that the Land Transport sector contributes approximately £167m (2018) to the west of England. Warehousing and other supporting activities contribute £222m (2018). Despite its economic benefit the sector does not employ the most significant number of individuals in the West of England. The 2020 employment figures show that 11,500 individuals were employed in the whole land transport sector (about 1% of the total recorded workforce in the West of England) and there were approximately 7,000 HGV drivers.

One of the most pressing challenges issues facing the Logistics Sector is recruitment and retention of HGV drivers which is a recognised issue on a national basis. Over the last four years the number of HGV drivers nationally has fallen by 53,000. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue with the 26,000 fewer UK nationals employed as HGV drivers in the year ending June 2021 than in the year end June 2019.

We are seeking proposals that work in partnership with local employers, employer representative bodies, local and national government (including the Department for Work and Pensions) to deliver a structured engagement, marketing and training project to ultimately increase recruitment into the sector.

A Sector Based Work Academy (SWAP) has been developed, supported by DWP, to provide the qualification and to support new entrants to the market. We seeking bids that utilise this method of delivery or that can provide a detailed alternative delivery method to achieve the same goals.

HGV DRIVER TRAINING SWAP:

Training	Learning Outcome	Funded amount	Qualification Aim Number
Initial Assessment	Initial assessment to establish the suitability of the programme of study for the learner	£60	Z0009255
Career Education Advice and Guidance	To look at career options and address barriers to commencing a career in HGV driving	£60	Z0009256
Medical and CPC (theory)	Driver medical funded and support provided sending off Provisional licence. Theory will cover the criteria for the CPC delivered online through a digital platform	£250	Z0009550
Award in employability skills	Support with Interview skills and CV writing	£300	60146801

Certificate in Principles Warehousing	Warehouse Operative (optional, while waiting for provisional licence)	£724 (Optional)	60013448
Test retake support (theory)	Theory support for test retakes	£100	Z0009551
Cat C and E training	Funded training for learners to drive both Cat C and Cat E vehicles 40 hours @ £45p/h	£1,800	Z0009552
Work experience	Work exp/placement (21/44 hours)	£150	Z0009125
Total		£2,720 (£3,444)	

Initial assessment: Is used to assess a learner's suitability for the learning before enrolling onto the programme. If a learner is unable to demonstrate knowledge/suitability at the right level, then steppingstone routes to improve skills will be outlined.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG): Learners will take a deeper a look at the logistics industry and what it means to be an HGV Driver. Potential barriers to employment are discussed and recommendations made. Here learners must provide evidence of a clean car driving licence.

Medical and Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) theory: The Combined authority will fund providers for the learner's medical assessment and fund the CPC theory that will enable learners to take their CPC assessment. This funding does not include funding for the tests, this will be funded in full by the DWP. A learner's job coach will be able to provide full information on how to claim this.

Award in employability skills: This award will be delivered against the expectations of the logistics and haulage industry. The qualification will support a learner develop their interview skills and Curriculum Vitae (CV). It will also identify and help develop learners' soft skills required in the industry such as planning, communication, and the importance of personal appearance.

Certificate in Principles of Warehousing (Optional): This is an additional qualification that will support learners understand how a warehouse operates in relation to loading and unloading HGVs. This additional qualification provides opportunity for work within a warehouse setting whilst waiting for provisional licences to arrive. There might also be opportunity to take a forklift licence at this time.

Test retake support (theory): Funding is available for providers to work 1-2-1 with the learner to support them pass the test at a second attempt. This fund can only be claimed once.

Cat C and E training: Driver training will be funded. Now the tests are combined and have a reduced total learning time of 20 hours the Combined authority will fund this at £35 per hour for 20 hours. The CPC test element will be covered by the DWP.

Work experience: As with any SWAP there should be a period of work experience the Combined Authority will fund this. In the example 21-44 hours of funded work experience has been proposed, although other funded alternatives are available.

Provider information: This substantive programme of learning is available to all providers who can offer HGV training and should be advertised as any traditional SWAP.

The Combined Authority and DWP are supportive of providers making initial links with employers, however the DWP must be made aware of the employers prior to the commensuration of any learning. The DWP will pay for the CPC tests.

Annex C: SUBSTANTIAL PROGRAMMES OF LEARNING AND SUPPORT

SUMMARY

The primary purpose of the Adult Education Provision funded by the West of England Combined Authority is to deliver learning and support that helps learners to secure a positive outcome which will have a meaningful beneficial impact on the life chances of the individual learner. For most learners the most meaningful and beneficial outcomes sought are:

- Progression into work
- Progression within work
- Learning at a higher level than previously attained

Other positive outcomes are legitimate for some learners facing specific challenges (for example residents with learning difficulties and or disabilities moving into independent living), but the majority of learners should be working towards a defined outcome as set out above.

As highlighted within our 2021/22 Adult Education Strategy, we are concerned that ILR data shows that a very small number of learners secure a positive outcome as a result of the learning we fund:

- Only 7% of learners progress into work
- Only 6 % of learners progress to further learning (including learning at the same level of a lower level)

We believe that the very low levels of positive outcomes secured is predominantly attributable to the fact that within the pattern of provision we inherited, the majority of learners were enrolled on a single short qualification which was never likely to fully address the full range of barriers to progression faced by the learner and therefore result on low positive progression rates. We also acknowledge that the pattern is also partly attributable to historic levels of under-reporting.

In order to significantly improve the outcomes secured by our learners we need providers to place more emphasis on identifying the positive destination to which the learner wishes to progress and identify the barriers which prevent the learner from doing this. We have already increased the level of funding available to support CEIAG and Initial Assessment to support this exercise.

Once the individual learners barriers to progression have been identified we then need providers to design programmes of learning and support which address each barrier identified. We anticipate that in order to effectively address barriers, the programmes of learning and support delivered will normally need to be substantial, incorporating multiple learning aims and making effective use of support funding.

SUBSTANTIAL PROGRAMMES OF LEARNING AND SUPPORT

The precise composition of a Substantial Programme of Learning and Support will vary from learner to learner and where possible should be unique to the individual learner, informed by robust CEIAG and Initial assessment through which specific barriers to progression are identified. However, for planning purposes we define this as any programme delivered over at least **150 guided learning hours** (based on actual guided learning hours delivered as opposed to planned), and many will be considerably larger.

The guided learning hours may be delivered through a single qualification, but in order to fully address all barriers to progression identified we anticipate that most will incorporate multiple components and may draw upon the full range of adult education funding lines:

- Regulated Learning Aims (Adult Skills)
- Unregulated Learning (Community Learning)
- Aims created by WECA (Enhanced CEIAG, Enhanced Initial Assessment, Work Experience)
- Learner / Learning Support

Common elements of a Substantial Programme of Learning and Support (defined by needs of the individual learner as identified through robust CEIAG and Initial Assessment) may include:

- Enhanced CEIAG
- Enhanced Initial Assessment
- General Employability Training
- Specific Skills Training (aligned with evidenced local labour market need)
- Personal / Social Development
- Literacy / Numeracy / ESOL
- Digital Skills
- Work Experience
- Additional Learner Support
- Additional Learning Support

The composition of the Substantial Programme of Learning and Support, and the proportion of provision delivered in this manner is also likely to differ between our Categories of Adult Education.

Within each category the following elements are likely to feature in many Substantial Programmes of Learning and Support. We do not expect that all learners will need to undertake all elements. Elements may be added and removed to tailor the provision to best support the identified barriers to progression of the individual learner:

	ENHANCED CEIAG	ENHANCED INITIAL ASSESSMENT	GENERAL EMPLOYABILITY TRAINING	SPECIFIC SKILLS TRAINING	PERSONAL / SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	LITERACY / NUMERACY / ESOL	DIGITAL SKILLS	WORK EXPERIENCE	ADDITIONAL LEARNER SUPPORT	ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT
ENGAGEMENT	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
EMPLOYABILITY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FOUNDATION SKILLS FOR WORK	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
INTERMEDIATE SKILLS FOR WORK			✓	✓			✓			
LEARNING FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT					✓	✓	✓			

Some established programmes which incorporate multiple components will in future fall under the broad description of a Substantial Programme of Learning and Support, for example Sector Based Work Academies and the WECA Recruitment Pipeline.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

A DAM Code will be used to identify learners enrolled on a Substantial Programme of Learning and Support. In addition to this we will use ILR data (including the funding adjustment field) to confirm that learners identified through the DAM code did indeed undertake a programme in excess of 150 g/h as part of our normal validation checks. As we do not expect learners to study all aims concurrently this check will be undertaken periodically and will normally generate a warning as opposed to an error.

We will also incorporate validation of substantial programmes of learning and support within our future audit and spot-check processes.