



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

DIGITAL SKILLS INNOVATION FUND

Guidance for Local Enterprise Partnerships and
Combined Authorities

August 2018

Introduction

1. The purpose of this guidance is to provide Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and combined authorities (CAs) with the information needed to submit a bid to the Digital Skills Innovation Fund.
2. This guidance sets out the funding priorities for the Fund. It then explains the application and assessment processes and provides an indicative timetable.
3. The assessment criteria can be found at Annex A and the application form can be found at Annex B below.

Overview

4. The 2017 UK Digital Strategy set out the Government's approach to ensuring that people have the skills they need to participate fully in the digital economy and are prepared for technological change.¹ The Strategy emphasised the need to support people to up-skill and re-skill throughout their working lives. It also emphasised the need for strong collaboration between the public and private sectors and civil society to improve digital skills in a coordinated and coherent way, so everyone has better access to the training they need. Finally, the Digital Strategy set out the importance of enabling a more diverse digital workforce, both as the right thing to do and as an important step to addressing our digital skills shortages.
5. The purpose of the £1 million Digital Skills Innovation Fund is to pilot or scale up innovative programmes that aim to address local or regional digital challenges while supporting people from underrepresented groups and/ or disadvantaged backgrounds into digital roles. It also aims to encourage partnership working between LEPs, employers, training providers and others to identify and act on opportunities to address local skills challenges and gaps in provision, and to identify and share good practice.
6. It is anticipated that the Fund will make 2 - 4 programme grants of between **£200,000 to £500,000**, up to a total of £1 million. **Any funding awarded will only be available to be claimed in the financial year of 2018-19.**

Funding priorities

7. Bids submitted to the Fund should contribute to both of the primary funding goals:
 - To address a clearly identified local or regional digital skills need or challenge

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy/2-digital-skills-and-inclusion-giving-everyone-access-to-the-digital-skills-they-need>

- To help people from underrepresented groups and/ or disadvantaged backgrounds² gain the skills needed for work in a digital role.³
8. When assessing bids, we will give preference to those that meet some or all of the following criteria in addition to their contribution to the primary funding goals:
- Are aligned with the LEP or combined authority's economic, growth or skills strategies, and emerging plans for Local Industrial Strategies. In particular, we are keen to see bids that seek to ensure that a greater number of people in a local area/ region will be in a position to benefit from opportunities in the digital economy;
 - Involve more than one LEP or CA area;
 - Have the potential to be replicated and scaled by other LEP and Combined Authority areas.
 - Demonstrate partnership working between different sectors including businesses, charities and social enterprises, public sector organisations, training providers etc.
 - Have a credible plan for how they will achieve a lasting and sustainable impact beyond the funding period.

Eligibility

9. The Fund is open to bids from Local Enterprise Partnerships and combined authorities.
10. If submitted by a LEP, the bid should identify a lead Local Authority through which the grant can be awarded.
11. The funding sought should be between **£200,000 and £500,000**.

Application process

12. LEPs and CAs may submit bids to the Fund individually, or collaborate with other LEPs to put forward bids that cover more than one area.

² Women remain underrepresented in digital roles, making up an estimated 19% of the digital tech workforce. (<https://technation.io/insights/report-2018/>). Other underrepresented or disadvantaged groups might include those from minority backgrounds, people with disabilities, lone parents, people who have been out of the labour market for a length of time, the lowest qualified, or those living in economically deprived areas.

³ Examples of digital roles include data analysts, programmers, cyber security specialists, web developers, software developers, digital marketers.

13. LEPs and CAs should invite and manage bids within their individual or collective areas, setting local priorities that fit within the overall priorities for the Fund if desired. We expect LEPs and CAs to work with bidding organisations to develop and refine bids; to assess and prioritise bids received; and to determine which bids should be put forward to Government.
14. Bidders are encouraged to maximise the impact of grants through partnership funding: this may encompass public and/or private investment, and grant and/or repayable finance. There is no minimum co-funding requirement, we would not normally expect to fund more than **70 per cent** of the total eligible programme costs. LEPs and CAs are advised to talk to other potential funders at the earliest possible stage.
15. LEPs must act in accordance with the standards set out in the National LEP Assurance Framework and, in particular, should be able to demonstrate how they have involved local partners in their decision making process.
16. It is LEP's and CA's responsibility to check that projects are state aid compliant, seeking legal advice if necessary. State aid is defined by the treaty establishing the European Commission as "any aid granted by a Member State which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods."

Assessment process

17. Bids will be assessed by a panel led by DCMS with representatives from other government departments including DfE, MHCLG and BEIS. DCMS Ministers will approve the final list of successful bids.
18. DCMS may consult other partners and stakeholders for advice and comments, including other funding bodies, sector expert and any others considered to be appropriate.
19. In addition to the funding priorities set out above in paragraphs 7 and 8, bids will be assessed in relation to value for money, delivery and risk, and plans for monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation of impact of grants

20. DCMS are committed to ensuring that all funded projects are appropriately monitored and evaluated so that lessons learnt and good practice can be shared and improvements made. Applicants are expected to explain how the impact attributable to the grant will be monitored and how they plan to share this information with DCMS. As a minimum, applicants are expected to demonstrate their methods for:
 - Monitoring the impact of the programme, outlining the skills gap or training need prior to the start of the programme then how this position has changed

as result of the programme. This could include number of those employed as a result of participation in the project.

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the programme
- Capturing lessons learnt and using this to make improvements to the delivery of the project.

21. We expect to incorporate evidence and lessons learnt from funded programmes into the 'Playbook' that is being developed to support Local Digital Skills Partnerships. Applicants should be willing to share relevant information for this purpose.

22. The full assessment criteria are set out at Annex A.

Indicative Timetable

23. The indicative timetable is set out below:

28 October 2018	Deadline for LEPs and CAs to submit bids
November 2018	Assessment of bids, decision making and due diligence
Late Nov/ early Dec 2018	Announcement of awards
From Dec 2018	Drawdown of Fund awards begins

Bid Proforma

24. All bids must be submitted on the standard proforma at Annex B, which can also be found on the DCMS website alongside these guidance notes.

25. Applicants may be asked for further information during the assessment process.

26. The following guidance is given to assist in completion of the bid proforma:

Project title: This section should give the name of the project for which you are applying for funding.

Total project costs/income:

Funding sought:

Other project funding: In this section you should indicate where other funding for the project is expected to come from. You should list other funding sources and the sums requested from each of them to cover the balance of the total project costs. It

would be helpful if you could say whether funding has been secured or, if you are at the application phase, when you expect to be informed of a decision. It is expected that successful bids will leverage additional public and private funds to maximise the impact of grants.

Project overview: This section should detail the scope of the project and the benefits that will be delivered as a result of its implementation. Please also indicate whether the project is scaleable should funding not be available at the requested amount.

Please note this section should be around 500 words maximum.

How does the bid meet meeting the funding priorities?: In this section, please address the project's delivery of the Fund's funding priorities and outcomes. You should provide evidence of the need for the project and the rationale for intervention in the local area, eg from consultations or other research. You should set who you expect to benefit from the project. You should also mention any other evidence of the outcomes that will be delivered by the project and any evaluation that has been used to shape your proposals. **Please note this section should be around 1,500 words maximum.**

Project costs: This table should be used to show a breakdown of the eligible project costs.

Project timescale: This table should be used to show the key milestones and corresponding target dates from project start to completion.

Delivery and risk: This section should provide evidence of deliverability, capacity and risks, including details of bid partners and project governance. **Please note this section should be around 300 words maximum.**

Monitoring and evaluation: This section should provide information on monitoring and evaluation arrangements and methods. **Please note this section should be around 200 words maximum.**

Submitting your bid

27. The completed bid proforma must be received in DCMS no later than **23.59pm on 28 October 2018** and should be sent to the Digital Skills Innovation Fund mailbox at dsif@culture.gov.uk or by post to:

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
4th Floor, 100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

Enquiries

28. Please direct any enquiries to dsif@culture.gov.uk

Annex A

Assessment criteria

Criteria	Consideration	Available marks
Rationale for intervention in local area	<p>Clear identification of the skills challenge that the scheme is aiming to address</p> <p>A strong rationale for intervention including market failures and opportunities in the area.</p> <p>Alignment with a broader strategies for growth, skills, development in the region.</p>	15
Outcomes for targeted groups	<p>Clear articulation of expected outcomes and credible plan to achieve them</p> <p>Identification of the specific cohorts that the scheme is intended to help, who are either under-represented in digital tech roles, or from disadvantaged backgrounds</p> <p>Evidence on how the scheme will reach and effectively engage with them</p>	20
Partnership working and scalability	<p>Whether the bid covers more than one LEP area</p> <p>Evidence that it involves and will encourage more partnership working in the local area</p> <p>Willingness to share information on the scheme and lessons learnt</p> <p>Scalability or replicability</p>	15
Value for money		15
Delivery and risk	<p>Evidence of partnership strength and commitment.</p> <p>Robust assessment of deliverability, capacity and risks.</p> <p>Clear explanation of delivery routes, timeframes and key</p>	20

	milestones. Strong arrangements for local transparency and accountability	
Monitoring and evaluation		15

DIGITAL SKILLS INNOVATION FUND BID PROFORMA	
Name of LEP(S) and/ or CA(s)	
Postal address	
Contact name Telephone number Email address	
Project title	
Total project costs/income	
Funding sought	
Other project funding	
[If bid submitted by LEP(s)] Name of lead Local Authority for grant administration purposes	
Project overview (maximum 500 words)	

How does the project deliver against the Fund's primary funding goals and other objectives? (maximum 1,500 words)

Project costs

Principal items

Cost

Project timescales

Activity

Milestone completion date

Delivery and risk (maximum 300 words)

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Monitoring and evaluation (maximum 200 words)

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