



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

Heat Training Grant: Heat Network Competition

Guidance



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1. Overview

This guidance sets out the context, application process and assessment criteria for the 2025/2026 Heat Training Grant: Heat Network Competition. It should be read in advance of submitting any application and should be referred to throughout the competition process.

The competition will be open to applicants between 30 April 2024 and 11 June 2025. The competition will be open for six weeks with multiple reviews of bids taking place throughout this period.

Please note that applications will be assessed on a rolling basis and that submitting early may result in an earlier launch date for your training programme.

The competition is open to providers in England and training provision delivered as a result of the competition should be targeted at trainees based in England. It is expected that there will be training provision across England and as such your application will need to detail which area or areas you are proposing to cover.

Timescales

The following table outlines the steps within the competition, from initial applications to final projects.

Table 1: Competition timetable

Milestones	Planned completion date
Competition launch	30 April 2025
Midlands NetZero Hub Guidance webinar	Details to be provided
Deadline for submission of proposals Deadline for questions from applicants Deadline by which the Department/ the Hub will respond to all applicants' questions	11 June 2025
Final project selection and award notification	11 July 2025
Training end date	March 2026

2. Introduction

Background

Heat networks are critical technologies for decarbonising heat and enabling the UK to meet its legally-binding climate targets. The number of networks in England is steadily growing and we expect the rate of growth to increase. As such, thousands more engineers, installers and operators will be needed to learn to install and maintain heat networks.

Addressing the Heat Network skills gap

While there is a growing heat network market in the UK, supported by government investment, there is a risk that the UK heat network supply chain may not attain the capability and capacity needed at a pace that keeps up with market growth.

The Heat Training Grant aims to tackle this issue, addressing the clear skills gaps within the industry, as well as the lack of available courses.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) highlighted in their 2021 Building Skills for Net Zero report:

“Heat networks would require the quickest and most widespread increase in training, with much of the requirement likely to be at the strategic or systems level. Project planners, engineers, developers, design engineers and control system specialists would all be required. At an installation level, welders and general installers would need to be recruited and trained.”

Once built, heat networks also require specialist operation and maintenance staff to ensure network performance. The 2020 [Heat Network Skills Review](#) considered all stages of heat networks and found that the sector already faced a skills gap, which would become more acute as the industry grew in size.

Recent work by the Department¹ has also indicated that some existing heat networks in England are operating sub-optimally. Improving the capability of those operating and maintaining these networks will be an important part of improving the performance of existing networks.

Upcoming regulation will mandate certain technical requirements for heat networks – the Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS). These requirements will span across several elements of a network (i.e. energy centre, district distribution network, communal distribution network, thermal substation, and consumer connection). The requirements will also apply temporally across a range of stages within a network’s lifecycle (i.e. feasibility, design,

¹ Heat Networks Consumer Survey (2017); Heat Network Optimisation Opportunities (HNOO) project (Jan 2020 – March 2021).

commissioning and operation and maintenance). The introduction of these requirements will apply to both new build and existing networks, introducing the need for the vast majority of existing networks to undertake works to meet performance and reliability thresholds. As such, we know that there will be increased demand for existing heat network skills, as well as an emergent demand for new roles that will be introduced by regulation. Most of the new roles (e.g. HNTAS assessors, HNTAS coordinators, etc) will result from the new regulatory obligations to track the compliance of networks with technical standards through the Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS).

Several HNTAS training courses will be required in due course and there may be potential for these to be funded by the HTG in future. Further information on HNTAS can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-networks-regulation-technical-standards>

To this end, the Heat Training Grant will support training courses covering design, build, operation, and maintenance, targeting the heat networks life cycle.

The Heat Training Grant

The new Heat Training Grant will provide grant payments to support trainees in England undertaking short training courses relevant to heat networks.

The new scheme will provide trainees with grants of up to £500.

Eligible courses will be short courses aimed at trainees working in and around Heat Networks, including those with existing heating, construction or building services experience (including water services and industrial plants) as well as local authorities, housing associations and building managers. Apprenticeships and other longer courses aimed at new entrants to the sector are eligible for other forms of Government support but will not be included for this grant.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (the Department) will work with the Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH) to run a bidding process to select training providers. Heat network training providers have been selected in two previous bidding rounds: one for training delivery in 2023/2024 and one for delivery in 2024/2025. This guidance relates to 2025/26 of training delivery.

By providing heat networks training alongside heat pump training, the Heat Training Grant can better explore areas of overlap and collaboration.

The new grant will support training to March 2026.

Opportunities for training providers

We are looking for training providers interested in offering the grant to trainees. This would give providers the opportunity to offer discounts or rebates of up to £500 towards eligible courses.

Heat network training providers can apply to offer training by completing the application form. Heat network training providers will need to:

- Offer training courses that are specifically aimed at addressing skills gaps in the heat networks sector.
- Offer an eligible training course and meet the other eligibility criteria set out overleaf.
- Ensure that the grant is not offered where training is already in receipt of Government funding, except where explicitly agreed with the Department.
- Provide information as set out in the application form and inform the scheme administrator immediately should any of these details change.
- Provide assurance of accreditation for their course (e.g. UKAS).
- Ensure that all training they have submitted can be launched within one month of the scheme launching. **Training that is not launched in this time will no longer be eligible for funding.**

Applications will be logged and an acknowledgement email will be sent. All applications will be checked for eligibility and only eligible applicants will have their application fully assessed. The scoring criteria for the assessment can be found below:

Section A: (Lead) Applicant Details [Not scored]

Section B: Project Details [70%]

Section C: Deliverability and Supporting Evidence [20%]

Section D: Sustainability and Social Value [10%]

Section E: Breakdown of Costs and Funding [Not Scored]

Section F: Record Keeping, Course Attendees, Delivery Consistency and Financial Management & Control [Pass/Fail]

Section G: Additional Information [Not scored]

Section H: Declaration and Signature [Pass/Fail]

Given the broad nature of the competition, a range of creative and varied responses are expected. To ensure a fair and transparent process, applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of sector experts as well as the Department and the MNZH.

Upon individual completion of the assessments, the assessment panel will meet to review and agree the final recommendations. When considering the awarding of grants, a project may be rejected if its score is unacceptably low in one or more criteria area, even if it achieves a high score overall. Final recommendations will also consider the overall geographical spread of training places across the scope of scheme although lower scoring applications will not be supported over higher scoring applications in order to ensure that regional training aims are met. If applications receive the same scoring, geographical spread may be considered.

Applicants may be asked for additional information to support their bids. The MNZH and the Department reserve the right to ask successful applicants to review and reconsider their proposed content, delivery and delivery areas if necessary. This is with a view to achieving more targeted training courses with better geographical spread and access to training.

Any decision to award by the assessment panel is final and there will not be an opportunity for unsuccessful applicants to appeal. Please note that some high-scoring trainings may not be successful as they will be assessed relative to other training applications.

Please note that all training must be launched in the first month of the scheme, **failure to launch in this period may result in funding being revoked and reallocated.**

The Department and the MNZH reserve the right to terminate the competition at any time and may decide not to award, or to award to a value less than the total funding available. Neither the Department the MNZH will be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of applications.

Following an award, the Department and the MNZH reserve the right to withdraw funding from training programmes that fail to deliver on quality, number of trainees and poor value for money. Courses will be monitored/audited and any failure to deliver or complaints will be reviewed by the Heat Training Grant panel.

Funding for training providers

This grant will only offer discounts or rebates of up to £500 towards eligible courses for trainees at point of delivery.

3. Competition Aims and Objectives

The overall objective of the competition is to make progress in increasing the number of trained designers, installers, operators, and other Heat network professionals needed to deliver the increase in energy efficiency and low carbon heating installations that will be required to meet our net zero targets. This includes both technical and non-technical staff.

The competition aims to:

- Support skills training for heat networks – including training to individuals with existing skills, as well as new entrants to the sector. This may include technical staff such as installers and engineers but may also include supporting staff such as those working in local authorities.
- Increase confidence of training providers to deliver this type of heat network training by demonstrating the demand for such training and supporting them to set up new delivery of courses;
- Gather information about the heat network supply chain and skills provision, to allow us to consider targeted support and other interventions in future.

Competition Objectives

Successful trainings will be expected to achieve one or more of the following competition objectives:

- Upskill the heat network sector and help to address the existing skills gaps and themes outlined below;
- Promote the heat networks sector and highlight the range of careers in heat networks;
- Prepare the market for future standards in heat networks through providing improved training provision to the wider sector;
- Deliver training in the design, installation, operation and maintenance of one or more individual elements of a heat network aimed at improving network performance;
- Enable individuals with transferrable skills (particularly from other sectors) to build heat network specific capabilities.

4. Competition Requirements and Eligibility Criteria

This competition is open to training providers in England who can demonstrate previous relevant experience in delivering training that aligns with one or more of the five training themes outlined below. Training providers can include Further Education colleges, training academies, and manufacturer training centres. Applications from consortia are welcome.

Applications will also be considered from providers who do not meet the definitions above, but who can clearly demonstrate they have the capabilities to deliver the competition requirements to standard.

Applications must also comply with the following requirements:

- The proposed project activities must be conducted in England, with any classroom training delivered in England.
- The training providers must state the professional bodies to which they belong, detailing the accreditations and qualifications essential to delivery of relevant training.
- The training providers must have previously delivered vocational courses in either/ construction, energy efficiency, installation of low carbon technologies, or energy assessment or other courses relevant to heat networks.
- The training providers must produce a scheme of work, outline course content and lesson plans for the training courses.
- Training providers must ensure that courses are examined in some way (marked) and data on this shared.
- Training providers must confirm that their organisation (including any directors or partner or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control) has not been convicted of conspiracy, corruption, bribery, fraud, money laundering or drug trafficking, and has not been declared bankrupt.
- Proposed projects must comply with GDPR requirements.
- Training providers must state if they are on any government frameworks and, if they are, which ones.
- Training providers must offer training subsidised to trainees at point of delivery (this will need to comply with subsidy control).

There is a requirement for training provided as part of the Heat Training Grant: Heat Network Competition to be accredited or certified. Please note that this is a requirement of this scheme and we will be unable to fund trainings which are unaccredited or are not in the process of being accredited. Training providers will also be asked what steps they will take to move towards full accreditation of their courses. A

rigorous monitoring and evaluation process will be implemented by the Midlands Net Zero Hub to ensure quality of training.

Engagement with the Midlands Net Zero Hub

To ensure the delivery of training provision runs smoothly, successful applicants will be required to work closely with the Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH) for the duration of the competition. It is expected that successful applicants will adhere to the following process while participating in the scheme:

Evidence Submission Procedures

1. **Referrals** – Providers are to receive or generate the majority of the referrals themselves e.g. enquires from businesses, Local Energy Partnerships and other stakeholders. There may also be referrals from the MNZH;
2. **Training Needs Assessment** – Providers should undertake training needs assessments, ensuring participants and/or businesses meet programme eligibility criteria;
3. **Training** – Details of the Participants and Businesses undertaking training;
4. **Outcome Summary** – Providers should submit monthly outcome summaries to the MNZH, recording all completed training (this provides the Hub with indicative data, detailing projected successful training outcomes);
5. **Training Records** – Providers should submit monthly training records indicating those successfully passing or failing courses;
6. **Financial Claims** – Providers to submit monthly 'claim packs' to the MNZH. Providers need to register as Nottingham City Council Suppliers to receive funding. Claims will be reviewed by the MNZH and either authorised or declined based on evidence submitted and compliance criteria. Claims will be paid within 30 working days of the date the claim was 'authorised'.

To ensure appropriate performance, MNZH monitoring officers will also:

- Conduct visits to training centres (minimum of one visit per applicant);
- Attend on-line courses;
- Review trainee feedback (trainer expected to provide feedback forms for each trainee) with spot checks on attendees including those successfully passing or failing courses.

Where a training provider is failing to perform as per their grant agreement and KPIs, supportive steps will be taken in the first instance. However, the grant agreement will include a right to terminate the agreement and allocate the funding to an alternative provider if the situation cannot be resolved. Funding could be reallocated to an existing successful applicant

who is over-performing or to an applicant who was not successful in the first instance, subject to the eligibility criteria. This process will be at the discretion of the Department and the MNZH.

Geographic Delivery Areas

Across the competition, the aim is to have a reasonably balanced coverage of training across the five Net Zero Hub Areas: South East, South West, Midlands, North East and North West. This is particularly important where person to person, classroom-based training is required.

As part of their proposal, applicants are required to set out the split between proposed online and classroom-based training, and specify the Net Zero Hub Area(s) any classroom-based training will operate in.

Eligible Training themes

Based on CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020) the Department has identified six key training themes that training should aim to target. These are not exclusive but give an indication of the likely training that will be eligible. The sub topics shown are only examples to highlight some of the key areas where training is needed, but training providers should refer to CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020) for more details of likely training topics. Training can be across multiple training themes. Training that falls outside these general themes should be discussed with the MNZH/Department before making a formal submission.

This funding round will accept applications across five themes, excluding the Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme. The description below gives a sense of the areas we would be interested in being covered, although this is subject to further refinement.

Please ensure all course materials appropriately refer to HNTAS and start to incorporate HNTAS requirements where possible.

Training Theme 1: Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS)

- That HNTAS training (developed by the Department) will be automatically available as part of the Heat Training Grant and will be available from its date of launch. DESNZ has appointed a Shadow Training Provider to design and deliver a suite of training courses to train up a sufficient number of people to undertake new roles that will be created by HNTAS. The courses delivered in England will be automatically available as part of the Heat Training Grant as soon as training delivery commences.
- Training is being offered to introduce HNTAS and its requirements, with eleven modules in total. Within this, we are offering courses to potential HNTAS assessors, providing them the skills to undertake assessments on all elements of a heat network at each stage of a heat network's design, construction and operation. Further training on offer includes courses for Responsible Parties and HNTAS co-ordinators. Most courses will be delivered online, with some workshops planned where required. The duration of training ranges from half a day for the Introduction to the HNTAS course, to up to two days for some assessor modules.

- Attendees will book the training via BESA's LMS system, the link to this can be found on GOV.UK once training is live. Attendees will need to submit evidence of selected and relevant qualifications, skills and experience before being able to attend a course to ensure they have the requisite skillset
- We are currently in the process of selecting which courses will apply for accreditation to provide a robust underpinning to the assurance scheme. Courses are currently in development. We expect that each of the eleven modules will become available once they have been developed, meaning the modules may be released at different times throughout 2025.

Training Theme 2: Local Authorities and Developers

- Energy Master planning
- Heat network zoning
- Heat Network Business structures and governance
- Techno-Economic and financial analysis of heat networks
- Procurement of heat networks
- Becoming an intelligent client in the heat network sector

Training Theme 3: Heat Network Feasibility & Design

- Compliance with Stage 2 and Stage 3 CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020)
- Establishing heat demands
- Identifying suitable low carbon technologies and waste heat sources
- Establishing energy centre location and design
- Low temperature primary and secondary network design, including pipework routing and heat losses
- Large scale heat pump installation in heat networks
- Establishing operating temperatures, building connections
- Life cycle economic analysis and development of a business case

Training Theme 4: Heat Network Construction

- Compliance with Stage 4 and Stage 5 of CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020)
- Civil and structural works
- Pipework installation including below and above ground, jointing, insulation.
- Pipe surveillance systems
- Water quality
- Large-scale heat pump installation and commissioning

- Shared ground loop installation and commissioning
- Secondary systems installation
- Consumer controls and Heat Interface Units (HIU)
- Overall network/system commissioning
- Acceptance testing at a dwelling and block level

Training Theme 5: Heat Networks Operation and Maintenance

- Compliance with Stage 6 of CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020)
- Achieving overall Network performance and optimisation
- Energy centre operation and maintenance
- Distribution system operation and maintenance
- Building connection and HIU operation and maintenance
- Customer supply and heat trust requirements

Training Theme 6: Heat Networks Metering & Billing and Data Collection

- Compliance with CIBSE/ADE CP1 (2020) on all aspects of metering, monitoring and billing
- Metering and billing regulation requirements
- Developing metering strategies for heat networks
- Specification, installation and commissioning of meters
- Data collection and analysis
- Smart monitoring and billing systems

Please note that some changes have been made and we may not provide funding to introductory heat network courses. This is as we have created a suite of Operation and Maintenance Videos which are available to all and should cover introductions to Heat Networks.

Where you have any doubts about whether your training is compliant, please contact the Department or the MNZH.

5. Application Process

The application process for the competition will be run through the Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH) with support from the Department.

How to respond

You will need to complete and submit the separate application form. Applications must be received no later than 23:00 on 11 June 2025. Responses should be in PDF format and clearly show how the bid meets the requirements of the training theme(s) chosen. Responses should be emailed. The subject line of the email should include '**HN Training Competition**'.

Please note that applications will be assessed on a rolling basis and that submitting early may result in an earlier launch date for your training.

Respond by Email to: heatnetworks@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

When responding, please state the training theme and area that your proposal relates to.

Assessment Criteria and Scoring Methodology

Applications will be logged, and an acknowledgement sent within two days of the closing date. All applications will be checked for eligibility. Only those that are eligible will be fully assessed.

Given the broad nature of the competition, a range of creative and varied responses are expected. To ensure a fair and transparent process, applications will be reviewed by both experts chosen by both the Department and the MNZH. The assessors will review each application submission; applications will be scored against the criteria below and weighted accordingly.

Assessment criteria and weightings (sections refer to the separate Application Form)

Section A: (Lead) Applicant Details [Not scored]

Section B: Project Details [70%]

Section C: Deliverability and Supporting Evidence [20%]

Section D: Sustainability and Social Value [10%]

Section E: Breakdown of Costs and Funding [Not Scored]

Section F: Record Keeping, Course Attendees, Delivery Consistency and Financial Management & Control [Pass/Fail]

Section G: Additional Information [Not scored]

Section H: Declaration and Signature [Pass/Fail]

Upon individual completion of the assessments, the assessment panel will meet to review and agree the final recommendations. When considering the awarding of grants, a project may be rejected if its score is unacceptably low in one or more criteria area, even if it achieves a high score overall.

Final recommendations will also take into account the overall spread against the training themes, sector skills gaps and geographical spread across the recommended projects. Lower scoring projects will not be supported over higher scoring ones simply to achieve a better spread of work packages and areas, however the MNZH and the Department reserve the right to ask successful applicants to review and reconsider their proposed delivery areas, if necessary, with a view to achieving better geographic spread and availability of training.

Any decision to award made by the assessment panel is final and there will not be an opportunity for unsuccessful entrants to appeal.

Notification

Applicants will be informed by email whether their application has been successful, subject to compliance with the terms and conditions of the Conditional Grant Offer.

Publication of results

The Department and the MNZH will publicise the results of the competition, which may involve engagement with the media. At the end of the application and assessment process, the Department may issue a press release or publish a notice on its website. Any public notices are likely to include:

- Identity of the participant and any partners;
- Project summary information including aims and expected outcomes of the training delivered;
- Ways for prospective trainees to enrol with particular training offers;
- Total award value.

Any organisation that intends to publicise its project, at any stage, must contact the Hub before doing so.

This publication is available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-providers-how-to-offer-the-heat-training-grant-for-heat-networks

If you need a version of this document in a more accessible format, please email alt.formats@energysecurity.gov.uk. Please tell us what format you need. It will help us if you say what assistive technology you use.