



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR:

Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund: Grants Programme

CONTRACT REF: DN421410

APPENDIX B

SPECIFICATION

Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund: Grants Programme

1 INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

- 1.1 Greater Manchester and Lancashire both demonstrate a growing digital sector and growing demand for specialist digital skills¹ resulting in skills gaps and hard to fill vacancies.
- 1.2 The Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund is a £3 million, joint venture between the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) and aims to help employers, in the Greater Manchester and Lancashire areas, to address their specialist digital skills needs through short, innovative, bespoke training courses.
- 1.3 The fund is seeking applications from **consortia** who can work together to co-design and co-deliver creative approaches to addressing digital skills gaps faced by employers. These can be existing or new collaborations and can consist of any combination of employers, training providers, Colleges, Universities, other community or charity organisations – there is no set formula. Employers applying to the fund must have a base in GM or Lancashire and training organisations must be able to demonstrate that they have clear links to employers in those regions. The fund will be open for the second round of applications in the GMCA & Lancashire LEP areas from Friday 29th November to Friday 31st January. **Consortia can bid for between £50,000 & £250,000.**
- 1.4 In developing this specification, we have been deliberately open about how digital training programmes will be delivered and have focused on defining the outcomes we are looking for to encourage innovation. We hope that this approach will provide a strong evidence base for how we might re-shape the skills system over the coming years in response to employer need.

2 REGIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The strategic aims of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Lancashire LEP are outlined below. Consortia are advised to draw upon this information when developing proposals. There are many commonalities in digital skills gaps and joint projects across both locations are encouraged.
- 2.2 **Greater Manchester's Local Industrial Strategy**² sets out our priorities for building upon our unique digital/tech strengths and ensure all people in GM can benefit by:
 - Growing existing and emerging sector strengths in cyber security, broadcasting, content creation and media, software development, digital telecoms, fintech and e-commerce.
 - Underpinning cross-sectoral growth by developing the digital skills pipeline required to adopt productivity enhancing digital technologies.
- 2.3 Below we have tried to articulate the types of skills and job roles that are most demand in the workforce mapped against the key priorities in the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy:

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807830/No_Longer_Optional_Employer_Demand_for_Digital_Skills.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greater-manchester-local-industrial-strategy>

GM Local Industrial Strategy & Digital Skills Gap



2.4 The digital sector is a priority sector for Lancashire due to its significant projected growth. **Specialist digital skills** are a particular priority ensuring Lancashire businesses have access to skilled people to enable them to drive digital innovation and be at the forefront of Industry 4.0.

2.5 Lancashire Digital Skills Gaps:

- Digital Marketing
- Software & Programming
- Data Analysis
- Manufacturing; AI, Robotics, Process Control
- Cyber Security

2.6 We recognise that this is not a comprehensive list and there will other hard-to-fill digital vacancies. We welcome applications across any area where a clear employer need has been identified.

3 SCOPE & FUND OBJECTIVES

3.1 We are specifically seeking proposals that train individuals for jobs that require specialist digital skills. Simply providing training and developing skills is not enough – **we expect projects to have clearly identified job vacancies in digital roles at the outset with specific employers.**

3.2 Essential digital literacy skills and digital skills for the general workforce whilst important are not within scope of this fund. This fund specifically focuses on developing specialist digital skills.

3.3 The key objectives of the fast track fund are to:

- Address locally identified digital skills gaps; supporting employers to recruit to hard to fill vacancies requiring specialist digital skills and improve productivity.
- Building capacity amongst employers to co-design & co-deliver training in a way that is agile and aligns sharply with the specialist digital skill requirements of local employers.
- Supporting GM and Lancashire residents to undertake training which will result in better quality employment in digital roles both within digital companies and across all sectors e.g. finance, health, manufacturing etc. Career progression is a key focus.
- Diversify the digital talent pipeline by targeting groups that are currently under-represented in digital roles and designing training programmes to meet their specific needs.

- 3.4 As this is a test and learn project, we aim to fund a variety of different creative, innovative and flexible digital skills projects. We are looking to cover a wide range of digital skills, groups underrepresented in digital roles and geographic areas across GM & Lancashire:
- **Digital Skills.** We want to see a range of projects covering different digital skills and job roles. Refer to section two for a non-exhaustive list of the local priorities for GM & Lancs.
 - **Groups.** We want to see different projects working with different target groups – there is no set formula. Diversity is key e.g. women, bame, people with disabilities. We want to open up opportunities to people that may not have considered digital employment previously e.g. career changers, returners to work. And improve social mobility e.g. low pay, underemployed.
 - **Geography.** We want to see projects in Lancashire and reaching outside of the central core of GM. We actively encourage place-based approaches across localities.

4 KEY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Programme Design & Content

- 4.1.1 Proposals must train individuals for 'hard to fill' occupations that require specialist digital skills. Therefore there is an expectation that all projects have clearly identified job vacancies at the outset with specific employers. We do however appreciate that recruitment works differently in different sectors of the economy e.g. freelancing in the creative industries. (Where there is not a clearly defined vacancy at the end the onus is on consortia to explain why that is the case and how they will enable candidates to gain paid work within industry at the end of the course).
- 4.1.2 Proposals should focus on demonstrating progression for candidates; this means bringing in a new member of staff to fill vacancies that require specialist digital skills or progressing staff from lower skilled roles into mid/higher level digital roles.
- 4.1.3 Partnerships delivering the training can be existing or new collaborations and can consist of any combination of employers, training providers, Colleges, Universities, other community or charity organisations. There is no set formula but we expect to see clear roles and responsibilities. We expect to see strong employer involvement in all partnerships – further details are set out below.
- 4.1.4 Expected Employer Involvement
- All proposals must be **designed by or with employers**. Ensuring that, training is relevant to employer need with the content and culture required for specific digital roles.
 - **Guaranteed interviews** to those that satisfactorily complete courses. This doesn't need to follow the traditional model of formal interviews; we are looking for creative approaches e.g. talent days, speed dating with employers, group interviews etc
 - There is an expectation that employers benefiting from the training will offer significant **match fund support**. This can be cash/in-kind but we would be looking for this to be monetised. Examples of in-kind match include; use of premises, loan of kit, releasing staff for co-delivery e.g. masterclasses. Match funding can also be provided from other partners. (The volume/quality of match provided forms a key part of the value for money assessment).
- 4.1.5 Training provision does not need to be qualification based or accredited though it can be if that is important to enter employment. Similarly, we are hoping to work with a wide range of organisations to deliver this pilot and there is no requirement to be an SFA accredited training provider.
- 4.1.6 The focus is on intensive responsive solutions and filling job vacancies and we expect to see this reflected in the length of courses. As a guide, the projects funded in round one tended to be up to 12 weeks full time and up to 20 weeks for part time courses. (Though we will accept a longer time period if there is a strong justification). Ideally, participants should start on training programmes no later than the end of May and complete no later than the end of 2020. We expect participants to move into employment within three months of completing programmes.

- 4.1.7 We are looking to test a range of 'flexible' delivery models to ensure a wide range of candidates can access training including those in-work. Consortia should be creative about the duration of courses, intensity, place/mode of delivery to best meet the needs of candidates & recruiting employers. The onus will be on consortia to explain the rationale for the type of delivery they have chosen.
- 4.1.8 Proposals should be able to demonstrate scalability and the plans for ensuring sustainability of programmes and partnerships over the longer term.

4.2 Target Candidates

- 4.2.1 As a primary target we want training programmes to focus on helping to improve career progression and opportunities to enter digital roles for GM & Lancashire residents particularly those currently in low skilled/low paid work and from underrepresented groups
- 4.2.2 We also want to ensure that training is accessible to a wide range of different people, provides new opportunities to enter digital employment and improves the diversity of the digital talent pipeline. Good quality bids will show a clear focus on a specific group of candidates.
- 4.2.3 Target candidates include:
- Under-represented groups e.g. in low paid work, underemployed.
 - People that need additional support to secure a digital role e.g. career changers, returners to work, returners to the tech industry, graduates underutilising their skills.
 - Groups that tend to be underrepresented in digital roles e.g. women, BAME, people with a health condition/disability, people over 50.
- 4.2.4 Proposals will need to show the approach to recruiting target candidates and additional support that will be provided to help overcome barriers to participating in training and securing employment.
- 4.2.5 **Charging candidates in any form is not permitted under the rules of this fund.** This includes any proposals that involve asking candidates to pay the funding back afterwards.

4.3 Test and Learn Approach

- 4.3.1 We are looking for projects to offer something different to the training that is already available. This fund is designed to address gaps in the marketplace where no fit for purpose digital skills training exists currently. Where existing bootcamp style training exists we will not fund a general expansion however we are interested in proposals that build upon a current offer and adapt the training to the needs of different groups, employers & geographies.
- 4.3.2 We are particularly looking to test a range of different approaches that offer something different to what is already available in the following key areas:
- A programme built around specific job roles with real vacancies & guaranteed interviews.
 - Defined groups of candidates with recruitment and the way in which training is delivered designed to remove barriers to participation
 - Wrap around care that supports participants at all stages from recruitment to employment.
 - Projects that propose doing something entirely new to address an unmet need or using the fund to make significant changes to existing bootcamps e.g. target candidates, geographical reach.
 - New partnerships with clear roles and responsibilities set out.

4.4 Eligibility

- **Employers:** The fund is open to any business that requires specialist digital skills across all sectors (public, private & voluntary) and sizes. Employers must have a base in Greater Manchester or Lancashire and the fund must support training for jobs in those regions.
- **Training Providers:** The fund is open to any organisation with a track record of delivering industry relevant digital training including (but not limited to); private training providers, employer providers, social enterprises, colleges and universities. Organisations must be able to evidence that they have links with employers in Greater Manchester or Lancashire.

- **Candidates:** Candidates participating in training should be resident in Greater Manchester or Lancashire with the focus on providing new opportunities for residents to enter digital employment and improving the diversity of the digital talent pipeline.

5 PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 The aim of this pilot is to train around 900 people.
- 5.2 We expect 85% of participants to enter skilled digital employment or progress into better employment (this includes relevant higher/degree apprenticeships though this is not the key focus of the fund). This is across the entirety of the programme – we recognise that for some target groups this will be challenging to achieve but other projects may achieve closer to 100% and we will look at proposals on a case-by-case basis. We expect that candidates progress into work within 3 months of completing the programme, as the objective is to fill hard to fill vacancies.
- 5.3 Providers will be accountable to GMCA for all delivery undertaken through this grant funding; including providing management information. (See 8.1 for further details).
- 5.4 The Fast Track Fund will be delivered by GMCA in partnership with the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership & DCMS. Suppliers will be required to work with a range of partners to ensure successful delivery of the pilot including local authorities and Jobcentre Plus and we would encourage you to engage with a wide range of partners when developing proposals.

6 OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 **Supply Chains:** As this fund is about testing different approaches and we want to drive social value in this funding round organisations will only be able to lead on one bid. They can however be part of other consortia arrangements. Organisations that received funding in Round 1 may bid again in Round 2 but we would expect to see a significantly different project.
- 6.2 **Eligible Expenditure:** We expect that the majority of the funding will be spent on the delivery of training. The funding can also be spent on activities to support this delivery e.g. recruitment of candidates, support for target cohorts. A small amount of capital funding is acceptable as long as there is a clear rationale for why it is required to deliver the training, including what it will be used for afterwards and we would encourage consortia to bring capital as part of their in-kind match. Wage subsidies for candidates cannot be paid for from the fast track fund though can be covered by match funding and we would expect to see a strong rationale for why it is required. If you have any queries on acceptable eligible expenditure please contact the fast track team. All expenditure proposals will be considered in line with value for public money.
- 6.3 **Use of Match Funding:** Consortia are not permitted to utilise any practices that allow a profit to be made on the public money that is invested in this programme. Any match funding that employers are bringing must be clearly outlined and invested directly in the delivery of this training.

7 TIMESCALES AND MILESTONES

- 7.1 The aim is to award grants by the end of March following which we expecting there to be a short mobilisation period. Ideally, we would be looking for training programmes to start no later than the end of May with all training delivery completed by the end of 2020.
- 7.2 Interested parties should be aware that this is the second of two funding rounds that will be delivered as part of the fast track fund. There are no plans for a third round.

8. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1 **Management Information:** This will be collected on a quarterly basis to manage the performance and success of the provision. The lead provider in each consortia must provide timely

information as required by GMCA the details of which will be set out in grant agreements. Some examples of the types of data we are expecting to ask providers to collect are set out below:

- Details of course starts and employers engaged
- Monitor demographic information and characteristics of those participating
- Baseline employment status, skill level and current salary of participants
- Measurement of job outcomes / progression into work three months after course completion
- Track individuals for 3 months in terms of employment and wages

8.2 Payment: Following receipt of the signed grant Agreement, a first payment will be paid to the provider to get delivery up and running. Further payments will be made in line with the agreed payment schedule set out by consortia within their bids. Payments will be made following receipt of satisfactory monitoring and invoice, which will be paid within 30 days of the date of the invoice.

8.3 Evaluation: DCMS have commissioned an independent evaluation to evaluate the impact of the programme. **Providers will be expected to work closely with the evaluator** for example collecting and sharing participant data, information on course design and in some cases taking part in interviews of focus groups to share your experiences of being part of the pilot. Successful providers will be expected to share their bids with the evaluator following grant award.

9 SKILLS AND EXPERTISE CRITERIA REQUIRED

9.1 This project prioritises the delivery of employment outcomes and expertise of working with employers requiring specialist digital skills. As part of their proposals, organisations must be able to show their ability to work with employers and deliver industry relevant quality training courses.

9.2 Consortia must provide and maintain the necessary facilities and employees with appropriate qualifications, clearances (DBS) and experience to undertake the training and to provide the management information required for regular reporting.