



Funded by
UK Government

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Call for Projects

E37: Employment Related Skills 2025/26 Scope of Call

The scope of this call focuses on the People and Skills investment priority 3 Employment Related Skills of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund:

Supporting local areas to fund gaps in local skills provision to support people to progress in work, and supplement local adult skills provision e.g. by providing additional volumes; delivering provision through wider range of routes or enabling more intensive/innovative provision, both qualification based and non-qualification based. This should be supplementary to provision available through national employment and skills programmes. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

We are looking for locally based skills providers to deliver training to improve skills to enable employees to progress in work and respond to skills needs, highlighted by employers including, but not limited to:

- Skills for key sectors such as Green Skills, Cyber Security, IT and Digital Skills including social media, creative skills, manufacturing and engineering, Construction, Health and Social Care
- Emerging skills priorities of the [Industrial Strategy - GOV.UK](#) [Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) and Herefordshire's [Big Economic Plan](#)
- Essential Skills and improving basic skills.

All training participants must receive individual support, assessment and feedback from a qualified tutor.

The period of delivery will be from September 2025 until 28th February 2026. All outputs and outcomes must be delivered by 28th February 2026. Qualifications achieved can be evidenced up until 31st July 2026.

This project is funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. In line with current Government requirements UKSPF funding must be fully expended, and projects delivered by 31 March 2026. The Council does not have the facility to support projects that go beyond this deadline.

Bidders should refer to UKSPF guidance [UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: Technical note - GOV.UK](#)

Background

Herefordshire has a low skilled, low wage economy with a high proportion of employment in low value sectors such as retail, health and agriculture with average earnings below the national average. Skills attainment is lower in Herefordshire than it is nationally, and a lower proportion of the population are qualified at NVQ4 and above (APS, 2021).

The county is also a social mobility 'cold spot'. Having a high proportion of employment in low skilled and low wage sectors limits the opportunities for career progression and makes residents more vulnerable to rising costs and in-work poverty. Intervention is therefore required to increase skills and qualification levels, especially where this supports social mobility and removes barriers.

Herefordshire Council is seeking to address this by commissioning tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision, to address barriers to accessing education and training courses. This includes supporting the retention of groups who are likely to leave the labour market early.

UKSPF in Herefordshire

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

Herefordshire's UKSPF Investment Plan can be found here [Appendix 2 UKSPF Investment Plan.pdf \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#) The Council has engaged with a number of key stakeholders in developing our plans, ensuring our selected focus for investment is evidence based and demonstrates local needs, challenges and opportunities.

Herefordshire Council's investment in training programmes and opportunities for upskilling will target working people in low-productivity occupations to help them transition towards higher- skilled work. This would have the potential to increase salary, GVA and employee aspirations for working residents, resulting in a better quality of life.

Objectives:

The project objectives are to:

- Address low level skills and low wages by providing opportunities for employees to learn new skills, gain qualifications and progress to higher paid job opportunities
- Support the local economy by helping businesses and enterprises to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance by having a highly skilled workforce.
- Help business upskill or reskill their staff at a reduced cost to the organisation.
- Implement training provision across the whole county of Herefordshire
- Deliver innovative approaches to reducing adult learning barriers by targeting adults with no or low level qualifications and skills

Delivery requirements:

Projects should deliver innovative, bespoke or creative approaches to reducing adult learning barriers by targeting adults with no or low level qualifications and skills. We want to encourage innovation in skills delivery and identify new opportunities to support residents, employees and employers, and create lasting benefits that will improve life chances, create more and better jobs, and support business growth.

We are seeking projects that can demonstrate the ability to work across sectors to design and deliver excellent training and skills opportunities that lead to secure, sustainable, and good quality employment outcomes for local people and employers. This may also include support to sustain employment outcomes where this is necessary. We are particularly interested in collaborations between delivery organisations, which can achieve scale efficiencies, enhance value for money outcomes, provide flexibility for employers and employees, provide clear sector pathways for progression, and reduce duplication/complexity for participants. We would also encourage new collaborations with employers and employer representative bodies.

We expect there to be a range of holistic approaches to addressing the barriers that people face when seeking to upskill or retrain, with approaches tailored to employer and employee needs, skill levels or personal barriers. Delivery models should reflect the needs of the individual supported. A mixed model of face-to-face and digital provision will be appropriate in many circumstances and may be preferred by some employers, employees or residents, for access or other reasons

Successful Projects (s) will be able to address the barriers of sparsity and remoteness to accessing skills, education and training across Herefordshire.

Projects will support people to progress in work, access higher paid roles, and supplement local adult skills provision e.g. by providing additional volumes; delivering provision through wider range of routes or enabling more intensive/innovative provision, both qualification based and non-qualification based.

Projects should be supplementary to provision available through national Government funded employment and skills programmes. Projects can deliver qualifications, licences and skills at entry level and Level 1 and above.

Projects should provide genuine additionality to existing skills support services and fill identified gaps in existing provision. This could include targeted 1-2-1 support for individuals or short courses in essential skills which can fit flexibly around the needs of employers.

Partnership working

Organisations are actively encouraged to work in partnership, rather than working in isolation and not engaging other local organisations or stakeholders.

Capacity, capabilities, and deliverability

Priority for support will be given to high quality projects led by and / or delivered by local organisations which can be delivered on time, to budget and which will achieve strong and sustainable outcomes for Herefordshire. Where appropriate, organisations and partnerships must therefore be able to demonstrate a solid track record of delivery and achievement of outputs and outcomes, with robust governance and project management systems in place. Skills delivery partnerships must demonstrate the following in their submissions:

- Robust approach to information, advice and guidance for every participant to ensure there is a strong rationale for the skills support provided.
- Strong understanding of existing support already available – within Herefordshire - to ensure appropriate and responsive signposting to alternative skills provision and to maximise upskilling, employment opportunities and career progression.
- Excellent knowledge of learning and skills programmes delivered locally by higher and further education institutions, training providers, employers, Public Health, social prescribing delivery organisations, and the VCSE sector.

Courses should be delivered in person or through a blended approach of online and face-to-face in person elements. Face-to-face in person elements can include online face-to-face live delivery through apps such as Teams and Zoom.

Whatever the mode of delivery, all training participants must receive individual support, assessment and feedback from a qualified tutor.

Projects should offer a range of course lengths, with most leading to formal qualifications, but the provider can also deliver less formal top-up skills and knowledge where appropriate.

The successful applicant(s) will undertake a training needs analysis with the employer.

Outputs and outcomes

Outputs:

- Number of people receiving support to sustain employment
- Number of people retraining
- Number of people supported to participate in education
- Number of people supported to access basic skills support

Outcomes:

- People gaining a qualification or completing a course following support

An up-to-date list of Outputs and Outcomes and the indicator definition and unit of measurement that corresponds to each Output and Outcome can be found here: [UKSPF Indicators 25-26 .xlsx](#)

Government may update, amend or add to this additional guidance and all service providers must ensure that they are using the most up to date versions of all documents which will be available on the UKSPF government website. *Subject to additional or amended guidance from the Government during the contract term, the Council will vary the contract accordingly to those changes.*

Key Requirements

- Applicants should have a robust awareness of the range of other government funded skills programmes in Herefordshire and ensure proposed activity does not duplicate this.
- Applicants should have a robust awareness of the range of existing statutory and non-statutory education and training provision. Applicants should demonstrate how proposed activity will align with these to deliver the maximum benefits for participants.
- Applicants must have robust systems and processes for capturing and reporting against a range of beneficiary data, this includes Data Protection Act (Information Commissioner's Office registration and Security Accreditations and/or certifications such as the Cyber Essentials Certificate.
- Applicants should refer to the UKSPF guidance on outputs/outcomes which provides definitions and units of measurements.
- Applicants will ensure that all participants are deemed eligible to participate on this programme and receive UKSPF funding.

The service provider will target the following groups:

- People in employment looking to retrain or upskill
- People in employment who are likely to leave the labour market early
- People living in remote rural areas of Herefordshire
- People living in areas of socio-economic deprivation such as Hereford City, Leominster, Ross-on-Wye and Bromyard. For more information please refer to Understanding Herefordshire website [Inequalities - Understanding Herefordshire](#)
- People from under-represented groups including but not limited to, LGBTQ+, black and minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people

Delivery period: September 2025 to 28 February 2026.

Delivery geography

Project delivery should benefit all of the County of Herefordshire local authority area. UKSPF provision should be easily accessible to participants, residents and employees, including from training locations and employer premises within the county.

Match funding

The level of UKSPF requested should be the minimum for the project to proceed and must not be used to replace existing funding sources. It must enable activity to take place that would not otherwise happen or to increase the scope, scale, duration or intensity of activity.

Match funding of 50% is a requirement of this UKSPF project call, applicants must identify other funding that can be aligned to maximise the impact of the county's UKSPF resource.

Constraints

- a) The service activities must be completed, and outputs and outcomes must be achieved by 28 February 2026.
- b) Evidence of qualifications achieved by participants must be provided to Council by 31st July 2026.
- c) This project is time and budget restricted. Funding must be fully defrayed within the 2025/2026 financial year to be eligible, with no roll over of underspend into the subsequent year permitted.
- d) The Council will not supply a location or premises for the delivery of the face-to-face in person sessions and this will be the responsibility of the provider. The provider must ensure that the premises used are based **within Herefordshire county boundaries** and are safe and suitable for the delivery of the service. In addition premises must:
 - comply with health and safety legislation, including fire regulations
 - have disability access
 - be appropriately furnished and equipped with necessary equipment
 - be easily accessible by public transport
- e) This funding is to be used to support skills needs of Herefordshire employers and employees only. At least 90% of participants must live within the Herefordshire county boundaries

f) Applicants must satisfy the following criteria: fit into one of the following partner categories (with a United Kingdom Provider Reference Number):

- Higher and Further Education Institutions
- DfE registered Independent Training Providers (ITPs)
- Community Interest Companies
- Registered Charities
- Employability Support Organisation
- Voluntary Organisations, which are constituted
- Private sector businesses, where a partnership with a DfE registered training provider can be demonstrated.

g) The following organisations are ineligible:

- Individuals
- Organisations without an institution

Performance measures and project success

Provider(s) should ultimately deliver quality training to targeted groups (see description of services) and have developed innovative approaches to reducing adult learning barriers by targeting adults with no or low level qualifications and skills.

Provider (s) will engage with a wide number of employers, of different sizes and across a range of sectors to support their employees to improve their skills set and aide their career progression.

Provider (s) will successfully deliver all of the contractual outputs and outcomes and will collect case studies and success stories as part of the monitoring process to demonstrate the benefits of these courses to both businesses and individuals and will also be used to shape future training delivery.

Forms and documentation confirming all data collection required, as well as feedback forms, will be agreed at the project implementation meeting.

Providers will be required to share supporting information and evidence in relation to KPI performance with Herefordshire Council officers on a monthly basis. In case of underperformance, the review will be on a weekly basis.

The following KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) of this call as a minimum must be achieved by 28 February 2026:

Outputs

- **A minimum of 150 people supported to participate in education by 28 February 2026**

Outcomes:

- **The minimum number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support is 150**

Applicants applying for the full amount would be expected to meet these targets as a minimum. Where an applicant is applying for a share of the funding, we expect outputs and outcomes to be delivered in proportion to the share applied for.

Any additional KPIs will be agreed before the start of the contract.

How much you can apply for?

You can apply for revenue funding only. Funding is for the 2025/2026 financial year.

You can apply for a:

- Minimum grant of £10,000

If applying for more than one project intervention you will need to **complete a separate application for each one.**