**Adult Education Budget Early Supplier Market Engagement**

 **Description**

*What this early market engagement is about?*

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) funds education and skills provision for eligible learners aged 19+ to help them gain qualifications and skills enabling them to progress either into work, an apprenticeship or other learning. Where applicable it also provides funding to help learners overcome the barriers which prevent them from taking part in adult education.

In the 2022/23 academic year approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ) is aimed at learners 19 or over who do not have a full level 3 qualification or higher, or who already have a level 3 qualification or higher but are earning below the National Living Wage annually (£18,525 from April 2022) or are unemployed. FCFJ allows eligible learners to access free level 3 qualifications in sector subject areas with good wage outcomes and the ability to meet key skills priorities. Many are available to study online or part-time. Learners may also be able to get help to pay for childcare, travel and other costs.

This market engagement notice applies to ESFA AEB and FCFJ which funds learners resident in non-devolved areas of England. Circa 11% of the ESFA AEB is currently delivered through contracts for services.

*Why are we conducting this early market engagement?*

The purpose of this early engagement notice is to notify the market that the Department for Education is interested in talking to suppliers, delivering adult education in non-devolved areas of England, to support the development of any potential future procurement exercise for ESFA AEB contracts for services. The purpose of engaging the market at this time is to:

* Understand learner needs in non-devolved areas and what kind of provision needs to be prioritised.
* Understand issues or blockers to ESFA AEB and Free Courses for Jobs delivery, reflections on previous procurements and use this to explore potential delivery models and performance standards.
* Discuss how potential procurement will interact with the proposed FE reforms and potential further devolution of skills provision. This includes the possible introduction of new funding rates, accountability arrangements, and the implications of devolution deals for contracts which are currently being consulted upon.
* Test market capacity to deliver ESFA AEB amongst other procurements occurring across the skills landscape including Multiply, Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs, Traineeships and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

We are keen to discuss experiences of ESFA AEB procured provision and therefore we will be hosting a series of market engagement opportunities across England. The Authority does not commit to running a procurement exercise as a result of this engagement process.

*How can you get involved?*

Market engagement events will be hosted by DfE in late September and you can sign up to your preferred event below. We will only be discussing the procurements of the ESFA AEB in non-devolved areas.

* [September 27, 11am-12pm, Microsoft Teams](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/yXfS-grGoU2187O4s0qC-Q%2CZu8bIDsVkESvU0iblwEzeA%2CIrSxdMkyA0akQ9kX1FKUIg%2CQBG8sKtD70qqDBn22tJMcA%2CLjJgYsBnzE-6aPg2fPq4Sw%2C8odT66XWv0iRkZi_Nci5ag?mode=read&tenantId=fad277c9-c60a-4da1-b5f3-b3b8b34a82f9)
* [September 29, 10am-11am, Microsoft Teams](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/yXfS-grGoU2187O4s0qC-Q%2CZu8bIDsVkESvU0iblwEzeA%2CIrSxdMkyA0akQ9kX1FKUIg%2CmsnYooyAOke2KrVJbQfqAA%2CsksStgs-B0eyTGKq1OMU1g%2C47NgAtgti0qsR6scXAY5pA?mode=read&tenantId=fad277c9-c60a-4da1-b5f3-b3b8b34a82f9)

Attendance at market engagement events will not be a pre-requisite for being able to submit a tender if DfE decide to procure these services. If you are unable to attend one of the market engagement events, the information pack, slides and Q&A can be made available.

For any assistance required in registering please contact: aebprocurement.help@education.gov.uk

Please note that these are exploratory events and will not commit us to procuring or procuring services in specific ways.