**Local Skills Improvement Fund**

**(LSIF):**

**Request for Expressions of Interest**

# **Introduction**

**Local Skills Improvement Fund**

The Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges (AoLCRC), alongside stakeholders including Greater Merseyside Learning Providers’ Federation, is working together to build the capacity and capability of the region’s FES sector to respond to the priorities of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

A series of coherent and inter-linked projects, all designed to address LSIP priorities, were designed and developed. These then formed part of a request to the Department for Education for Local Skills Improvement Funding (LSIF).

The request for funding was successful and work commenced during the 2023-24 financial year. The LSIF programme of activities is structured around 6 core thematic or project ideas:

* Project 1: Building for the Future – Green technologies & Digitalisation.
* Project 2: New Skills for Net Zero
* Project 3: LCR Talent Bank & Career Pathways
* Project 4: New Pathways to Learning
* Project 5: Creating the Region’s Freeport Academy
* Project 6: Building Employer Partnership

The LSIF funding will provide both revenue and capital funding and will facilitate, amongst other things, new curriculum development as well as the purchase of new equipment to support the delivery of training to meet the emerging needs of employers and the local economy.

**Request for Expressions of Interest: Context**

Project 1: Building for the future – Green Technologies and Digitalisation has an allocation of capital funding. The focus of this strand of the LSIF programme is upon investment in equipment and training facilities that will support curriculum development, reskilling and upskilling in digitalisation and low carbon (net zero) technologies.

Investment in a range of equipment and facilities will allow providers to offer training that aligns directly with industry demands, particularly those articulated through the LSIP.

Access to such equipment will help prepare students to enter the workforce with the appropriate knowledge and skills to thrive in their chosen fields and develop their career. Project 1, will also support innovations in Digitalisation and Net Zero curriculum development, in turn supporting the reskilling and upskilling of the region’s workforce.

Capital investment will also enable Liverpool City Region Further Education and Skills providers to respond to emergent skills needs and which complement existing local capital investments and build local capacity.

The Building for the Future: Green Technologies & Digitalisation project (Project 1) is making an investment of £1.2m in FE facilities, to support their ability to develop and deliver skills programmes in a number of areas including:

* Retrofit and Green
* Green Transport
* Hydrogen Technology
* Full Fibre Networks
* Digital Skills for Industry

The City of Liverpool College (CoLC) is responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of Project 1, its outputs and claims to the Department for Education.

# **Request for Expressions of Interest from ITPs**

Within Project 1: Building for the Future – Green technologies & Digitalisation £200,000 has been ringfenced to support locally based Independent Training Providers (those who have a base and a history of operations in the Liverpool City Region) to make new investment in equipment.

This investment will help unlock their ability to offer new and innovative training, which will help meet employer needs, and will add value to, and not duplicate, what local FE Colleges are able to provide. This could include purchase of equipment to deliver new Apprenticeship Standards or Standards that are being adapted to include Digitalisation or Net Zero elements where the provider lacks equipment. Investment in equipment could also support the development and delivery of short, customised training programmes such as Bootcamps that help deliver LSIP priorities.

It will also help ensure a broader range of post-16 learning providers across the LCR have access to modern, cutting-edge facilities and equipment.

The City of Liverpool College, working in conjunction with Greater Merseyside Learning Providers’ Federation, now wishes to receive Expressions of Interest from local Independent Training Providers for capital investment (investment in equipment) from the LSIF.

We would like to receive carefully considered, clear and costed Expressions of Interest that describe:

* What equipment the LSIF investment would purchase?

Indicative costs for the equipment that the Independent Training Provider would like to purchase (in line with procurement rules we would expect the provider to secure and submit evidence of 3 supplier quotes and submit costs along the lines of the cheapest quote to underpin the cost assumptions.)

A robust rationale from the Independent Training Provider (ITP) as to why the equipment is needed and how it would support the delivery of the LSIF project.

* How the purchase of the new equipment would support the development and delivery of training programmes such as Apprenticeships, Bootcamps etc?
* Provide details of what outputs and outcomes will arise from the purchase of any equipment (in particular how it supports core LSIF outcomes as described later in this document).
* How the investment is unique and how the proposed investment will complement other capital and facilities investment made by LCR based FE Colleges?
* How the proposal supports innovation in training and unlocks barriers to the delivery of training?
* How the proposals build the long-term capacity and capability of ITPs in the City Region?

Through LSIF, the City of Liverpool College has a maximum budget of £200,000 of capital funding to invest in new equipment within ITPs locally. This funding can only be used to fund the purchase of equipment that can be used to support the delivery of training and cannot cover other costs such as building costs or other fees like project management etc.

At this point the City of Liverpool College and GMLPF envisage supporting a maximum of 4 individual investments with investment of up to £50,000. It is assumed that such investments in that investment range will be fully funded by LSIF. However, there may be scope to make investments greater than that figure depending on the level of applications received. Should the level of investment be greater than £50,000 we would expect the Independent Training Provider to make some co-investment to cover the funding gap.

Where Independent Training Providers, who submit robust expressions of interest, are identified as having projects that can receive investment, they will then be responsible for ensuring procurement is aligned with DfE guidelines (a minimum of 3 quotes have been received) and underwriting the funds until the claim has been made and received by COLC.

Initial thoughts are that such investment might be made in areas where there is little training provision locally and the lack of facilities and equipment is constraining the ability of ITPs, as well as other providers, to address employer needs.

This could include but not be restricted to onshore or offshore wind and tidal energy, but the expectation is a clear link to Digitalisation and Net Zero. The partners are open to receiving proposals from ITPs for investment in equipment (not investment in capital works and buildings) in these areas but equally in complementary areas where Independent Training Providers can make a compelling case for investment.

# **Guidance for Providers Considering Submitting an Expression of Interest**

As detailed above, the City of Liverpool College has a budget of £200,000 to invest in equipment. It is anticipated that 4 projects will be funded with an indicative funding allocation of £50,000 per project. Ultimately, the package of investment will be shaped by the range of investment proposals submitted by ITPs locally.

Providers should be aware that the investment needs to be made before the end of March 2025 although we would anticipate all expenditure to be defrayed earlier than this and, preferably, before the end of February 2025 to enable COLC to submit all claims by 31st March as all programme expenditure needs to be fully defrayed by 31st March 2025 meaning equipment must be delivered, invoiced and paid for.

The City of Liverpool College cannot guarantee payment if these conditions are not met, and the ITP will need sufficient cash reserves to underwrite the investment until the grant funds have been received.

**Contributing to LSIF Outcomes**  
Providers submitting expressions of interest for financial support will be expected to indicate how their proposal for funding will assist in delivering these targets, which include (a more detailed Outcomes Matrix is attached):

**Overarching Outcomes:**

* Supporting the creation of additional jobs in the green and advanced digital industries and driving economic growth locally
* Supporting sustainable growth in green technology and digital connectivity
* Supporting the levelling up agenda, boosting growth and reducing disparities between the LCR and other areas

**Increased Skills Provision**

* Number of new Level 3 courses aligned to LSIP priorities.
* Forecast additional learner starts at Level 3
* Forecast learner completions at Level 3

**Employer Engagement & Support**

* Number of employers reporting that training is giving learners the skills needed.
* Training and support to improve capability of teaching staff.

**Improved Quality**

* Number of teaching staff undertaking CPD or benefitting from cascade training

**Spend on facilities and equipment linked directly to LSIF Priorities**

* Number of new teaching facilities created (e.g., number workshops / classrooms refurbished / fitted out with new industry standard equipment).

# **Opportunity to Provide Expressions of Interest – Specific Requirements**

The City of Liverpool College is looking for costed and evidenced based proposals from Independent Training Providers to help it make capital investments in the local provider base and which respond to the key tender requirements outlined above. We would like Independent Training Providers to provide Expressions of Interest using the form below.

Independent Training Providers must have a UKPRN and a registered address and training base in the Liverpool City Region.

When submitting costings ITPs should be aware that where they are VAT registered and able to reclaim VAT, they should provide VAT exclusive figures. Where providers are not registered for VAT and are thus unable to reclaim VAT the irrecoverable VAT element is an eligible cost and needs to be shown as part of the overall costs (within the indicative budget).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Expression of Interest Form - LCR Local Skills Improvement Fund** | | |
| **Name of Independent Training Provider**: | | |
| **Contact Name:** | | **Registered Office & Address in LCR:** |
| **Phone:** | | **Email:** |
| **Brief Description of Independent Training Provider:** Please give a description of the training services and programmes you currently deliver? 200 Words | | |
|  | | |
| **UKPRN:** |  | |
| **Overview:** Please describe what equipment you would wish to purchase with assistance from LSIF? 150 Words | | |
|  | | |
| **A.1 Business Case:** A robust rationale from the Independent Training Provider (ITP) as to why the equipment is needed and how it would support the delivery of the LSIF project, in particular how it would contribute to Digitalisation and Net Zero priorities? 200 words | | |
|  | | |
| **A2. Activities:** How the purchase of the new equipment would build the capacity and capability of the ITP and how it would support the development and delivery of training programmes such as Apprenticeships, Bootcamps, other skills interventions etc? 200 words | | |
|  | | |
| **B.1 Innovation:** How the proposal supports innovation in training and unlocks barriers to the delivery of training? 150 words | | |
|  | | |
| **B.2 Complementarity:** How the investment is unique and how the proposed investment will complement other capital and facilities investment made by LCR based FE Colleges? 150 words | | |
|  | | |
| **C.1 Outcomes:** Provide details of what outputs and outcomes will arise from the purchase of any equipment? In particular, how it will contribute to supporting core LSIF targets and outcomes described below? 150 words | | |
|  | | |
| **D.1 Costs:** Please provide indicative costs for the equipment that the Independent Training Provider would like to purchase? 150 words | | |
|  | | |
| **Confirmations:** Please confirm that you are happy to comply with the LSIF funding and procurement guidelines, will be able to purchase and cashflow the equipment and submit a claim for LSIF funding by 31st March 2025 150 words | | |
|  | | |

# **Assessment of Expressions of Interest**

It is anticipated that there will be strong demand for this funding. As such, the Expressions of Interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

**Overview -** Please describe what equipment you would wish to purchase with assistance from LSIF? **Not Scored**

**Business Case & Activities (40%)**

Business Case - a robust rationale from the Independent Training Provider (ITP) as to why the equipment is needed and how it would support the delivery of the LSIF project, in particular how it would contribute to Digitalisation and Net Zero priorities?

Activities - How the purchase of the new equipment would build the capacity and capability of the ITP and how it would support the development and delivery of training programmes such as Apprenticeships, Bootcamps, other skills interventions etc?

**Innovation & Complementarity (20%)**

Innovation - How the proposal supports innovation in training and unlocks barriers to the delivery of training?

Complementarity - How the investment is unique and how the proposed investment will complement other capital and facilities investment made by LCR based FE Colleges?

**Outcomes & Outputs - 10%**

Outcomes - provide details of how the investment will contribute towards core LSIF outputs and outcomes. Providers are asked to provide an overview and explanation of how the investment will deliver against core LSIF deliverables in the text box and also complete the attached KPI / Outcomes matrix.

**Cost – 30%**

Please provide indicative costs for the equipment that the Independent Training Provider would like to purchase and how the project offers good value for money?

**Confirmations –** please confirm that you are happy to comply with the LSIF funding and procurement guidelines, will be able to purchase and cashflow the equipment and submit a claim for LSIF by 31st January 2025 **Not Scored**

# **Submission of Expression of Interest**

Suitable organisations are asked to tender for this opportunity.

Suppliers should return their completed tender response (both the Expression of Interest and KPI / Outcome matrix)

To: [colcbusiness@liv-coll.ac.uk](mailto:colcbusiness@liv-coll.ac.uk)

By: 5.00pm on Friday 23rd August 2024

With: LSIF Expressions of Interest in the Subject Heading of the e-mail

# **Expression of Interest Queries**

Where providers have queries about the expression of interest, they should direct any inquiries to: [colcbusiness@liv-coll.ac.uk](mailto:colcbusiness@liv-coll.ac.uk)

# **Programme Evaluation Timetable**

City of Liverpool College and GMLPF anticipate the following timetable post tender submission:

Appraisal of submissions & Queries – 27th August to 20th September 2024

Shortlisting & Interviews – 20th – 27th September 2024

Notification of Tender Results – 30th September 2024

Contracting & Expenditure Profile – October 2024

Programme Implementation – October 2024 – February 2025

Financial Completion of the Programme (full defrayal of expenditure and submission of claims) – 31st March 2025