



European Union
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Investing in jobs and skills

**LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL
NORTHWEST**

ESF CO-FINANCE

OPEN TENDER SPECIFICATIONS

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Leading learning and skills

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Title: Cumbria - Pathways to Progress through Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Reference: NW/ADULT/S25
<p>Aim</p> <p>The aim of this specification is to enhance existing Information, Advice and Guidance services to support unemployed and economically inactive adults (19+) to make informed decisions about learning and job opportunities that meet their personal circumstances, skills needs and aspirations and lead to sustainable job outcomes and further learning.</p> <p>This will be achieved by linking people who want to work with employers/sectors where there are vacancies and supporting individuals to identify pathways of activities which will progress their skills and abilities to secure and sustain employment and further learning.</p> <p>A key opportunity for providers of IAG is to identify gaps in pre-employment provision and influence the responsiveness of providers, in particular where gaps exist in appropriate responses to the needs of relevant priority target groups.</p>	
<p>Service requirement</p> <p>This specification is part of the LSC's Skills for Jobs Framework which aims to support the delivery of an integrated employment and skills system (please refer also to the Introduction and Guidance to Skills for Jobs). In delivery terms, this means connecting skills and employment in a clear journey for individuals through the stages of pre-recruitment, skills development, sustainable employment, and further learning. The role of IAG in Skills for Jobs is to ensure that participants come first and are enabled to make informed decisions about a range of learning, personal support, job opportunities and further learning that meet their personal needs and aspirations.</p> <p>Skills for Jobs in the North West is organised through three 'Routeways':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Employability Skills Routeway 2. The Individualised Routeway 3. The Sector Routeway <p>However, the Sector Routeway is the only routeway which is operational within Cumbria. It is a service requirement that applicants clearly demonstrate how their enhanced IAG service will support the Skills for Jobs Sector Routeways and link to existing complimentary skills provision in the routeways. In preparing their submission, applicants are advised to read and make appropriate references to the relevant sub-regional Skills for Jobs specification and the Introduction and Guidance to Skills for Jobs which accompanies this tender specification.</p> <p>Enhanced IAG supported by ESF must complement and be additional to the new two year nexstep IAG contracts now operating across the region and strong applicants will demonstrate how their proposed activities will connect to existing IAG to provide additional support for priority target groups, above and beyond the nexstep universal and personalised and differentiated services. Successful applicants will also need to take account of a range of developments, including the emerging Adult Careers Service and Flexible New Deal, aspects of which will be trialled / implemented between 2008-2011.</p> <p>Applicants must explain how they will work with a range of providers to develop a comprehensive menu of progression opportunities and ensure smooth transition arrangements for participants to navigate through pre and post employment provision. It is expected that successful applicants will forge relationships with existing mainstream providers (especially provision under the Foundation Learning Tier), Jobcentre Plus, organisations that were successful under the LSC's ESF Skills for Jobs – Sector Routeways tender and Jobcentre Plus Co-financing Prime Contractors. IAG will need to link to the learning infrastructure and applicants will need to demonstrate effective referral mechanisms and how identified gaps in provision will be addressed. Strong applicants will be able to demonstrate how they will work with voluntary and community organisations and ensure that</p>	

provision responds to the needs of priority target groups.

Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate their ability to provide impartial IAG that maximises the range of opportunities available for participants to secure and sustain job outcomes and further learning. **This must enhance and be additional to existing bespoke IAG services under the LSCs nextstep programme.** Participants should be provided with a continuum of support through a case-work approach that follows the participant through all stages of their progression including aligning provision to other existing pre and post employment IAG (e.g. under Train to Gain). Applicants for the delivery of IAG under ESF must be Matrix accredited and a copy of the Matrix accreditation certificate must be provided to the LSC during the contracting process.

Activities under this specification **must** demonstrate how they will develop or build on working relationships with existing local provision and other ESF Skills for Jobs activities which have been procured through **both** LSC ESF Co-financing and Jobcentre Plus ESF Co-financing. In particular, successful applicants will need to set out IAG activities for individuals in relation to each stage of Skills for Jobs Routeways. We are seeking innovative proposals which include a range of activities that extend beyond current IAG provision. Examples of appropriate activities are described below, assigned to the Stages of Skills for Jobs. Other appropriate activities can be factored in as necessary to achieve IAG objectives.

Stages 1 and 2 – Learner/Employer Engagement

- Recruitment mechanisms to provide IAG to individuals who are being supported by Jobcentre Plus ESF Co-financing activities to engage hard to reach communities or individuals facing many barriers to participation.
- Recruitment mechanisms to provide IAG to eligible individuals who are being supported initially by existing Nextstep or Learndirect IAG services but who would benefit from enhanced IAG to achieve sustainable jobs.
- Initial access interview to gauge the individual's suitability for support.

Stage 3 – The Pre Employment Phase

- Intensive structured one-to-one interventions. In-depth support to help individuals explore, clarify, assess and understand their needs, skills and aspirations in relation to learning and work and how to meet them together with the opportunities / options open to them and how to access them.
- Psychometric and aptitude tests; occupational inventories and checklists related to learning and work. Helping individuals to make realistic judgements about the appropriateness of a comprehensive menu of options/ opportunities in learning and work.
- Arranging learning tasters.
- Effective diagnosis of individual skills needs and production of Individual Development Plans. Helping individuals to construct a plan including realistic goals and objectives, identified barriers and timescales for action.
- Signposting individuals to additional specialist support where needed e.g. debt management, housing etc including services delivered under Jobcentre Plus's ESF Co-financing activities.
- Enabling individuals to develop and move through progression steps in their plan by supporting them in dealing with learning and work providers.
- Lobbying and negotiating with learning providers on behalf of the individual where provision to meet identified needs is not readily available or accessible.
- Following entry into learning, a 'learning check-up' to identify any issues and provide support

Stage 4 – The Entry to Employment Phase

- Progression interview to help the individual make the transition into sustained employment with learning.
- Intensive support in developing a CV from scratch or interview preparation through

- e.g. mock interviews / video interviews with feedback.
- Arranging work tasters.
- Enabling individuals to develop and move through progression steps in their plan by supporting them in dealing with employers.
- Lobbying and negotiating with employers on behalf of the participant where learning provision and support to meet identified needs is not readily available or accessible.

Stage 5 – The Post Employment Phase

- Managed transfer between pre and post employment to ensure continuation of learning in work.
- In employment initiatives such as coaching for promotion and development, developing 'learning for life' plans in employment settings, ensuring continuity of learning.
- Supporting referrals to Train to Gain and other work based learning options, taking account of current in-work IAG services.

More details relating to the Skills for Jobs stages are available in the Introduction and Guidance to Skills for Jobs accompanying this tender.

Successful applicants will be able to demonstrate their ability to work with participants from within the priority target groups and locations described below.

In addition to the activities described above for individuals accessing the service, successful applicants will demonstrate clear plans for:

- Working with a range of delivery partners to engage priority target groups.
- Liaison with Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisors to promote the service and support individuals through a joined up service into employment.
- Developing protocols with key partners to ensure smooth transition for customers and sharing of information. Joint development work around the emerging Adult Careers Service alongside Learndirect Advice, Jobcentre Plus and learning providers.
- Improved provision of labour market information, developing a menu of skills and employment opportunities linked to local employers and real jobs, connected to Skills for Jobs Sector Routeways provision, Employability Skills Programme, Local Employment Partnerships and the Sustainable Employability Programme where available.
- Informing strategic partnerships and provider organisations of gaps in provision to meet individuals' needs.
- Working with existing and emerging regional, sub-regional and local infrastructures with a remit for skills and employment / local economic development / social cohesion to ensure services are joined up and address local priorities.

Target groups & priority

Skills for Jobs is intended to create better engagement of disadvantaged adults who are unemployed or economically inactive, and who need additional IAG, training, up-skilling and support to prepare them for employment; and in-work training and help to enable them to sustain and progress in employment.

The target group is adults (19+) not currently in employment who want to work but lack skills and qualifications that are up-to-date and relevant to the job market and who are residents of the geographic locations identified for this tender specification. Within this broad category, groups facing specific barriers and experiencing significant disadvantage will be prioritised, reflecting local and sub-regional needs, as detailed below.

- Lone Parents
- Workless Households

- Incapacity Benefit claimants
- Income Support benefit claimants
- Ex Offenders and Offenders under supervision in the community
- People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- People from BME Communities
- People over 50 years of age
- Homeless people
- People with Skills for Life needs below Level 2

We would expect delivery to the above groups to be in line with the statistical profile of economic inactivity for each local LSC area as identified in the [NW Employment and Skills Evidence Base 2008](#) available on the LSC's website.

It is strongly advised that applicants read the specifications for Skills for Jobs LSC ESF Co-financing which provide sub-regional context for Skills for Jobs activities. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their proposed IAG services meet Skills for Jobs priority target groups in the sub-regions.

Where applicants are seeking to support offenders who are serving their sentence, or are under probation supervision, in the community, it is important that applicants are aware that ESF programmes delivered until July 2008 generated evidence of effective practice and that their proposals demonstrate how they will build on this.

There are established local partnerships responsible for employment, learning and skills for offenders. Applicants will need to specify how they will work with these partnerships so that offenders in the community benefit from a holistic, integrated package of support which takes account of their sentence requirements.

Applications that are able to demonstrate the provision of culturally sensitive and mother-tongue services in response to the needs of priority BME communities are encouraged.

For ESF purposes unemployment is a period where a person is not in paid employment (subject to certain exceptions). Claiming a benefit allowance from Jobcentre Plus is not needed as evidence of unemployment. However, it is your responsibility to make sure that you accurately record the length of time all the beneficiaries were unemployed before they started on an ESF project. The following are considered as periods of unemployment. Time spent:

- on Jobseeker's Allowance;
- on Income Support;
- on Incapacity Benefits;
- on Invalid Care Allowance;
- on a New Deal Option or Gateway (except the employment option);
- in custody.

The following conditions do not affect qualifying periods of unemployment for beneficiaries:

- periods of unpaid work;
- casual or temporary work of not more than four weeks;
- part-time work of less than 16 hours a week in total, provided that the skills needed for the work will not lead to greater involvement in the labour market;
- time spent on an earlier ESF project where the current project will develop the previous one. Where you cannot clearly show this, the beneficiaries will need to serve the qualifying period again. Beneficiaries may only continue to work on the current project if you agree; and
- time spent on government-funded programmes under four weeks long such as New Deals or work-based learning where people are not considered part of the workforce.

The following do not count as periods of unemployment:

- time spent on work-related government programmes such as New Deal where people are

- considered to form part of the workforce;
- days for which Statutory Sick Pay or Statutory Maternity Pay have been claimed;
- time spent in compulsory education; and
- time spent on training or education courses that last longer than four weeks.

For ESF purposes, people who are economically inactive are:

- of working age;
- not employed;
- not self-employed; and
- not actively seeking work.

Geography / area of delivery

Applicants are invited to submit proposals to deliver face-to-face activities in the Cumbria sub-region, across the county and particularly in the more rural parts.

It is strongly advised that applicants read the specifications for Skills for Jobs LSC ESF Co-financing which provide sub-regional context for Skills for Jobs activities. Applicants will need to demonstrate how their proposed IAG services meet Skills for Jobs priority areas.

Outputs

Indicative outputs are as follows:

- 396 adults engaged in IAG provision (100% participants)
- 396 Individual Action Plans completed (100% participants)
- 277 progression outcomes achieved (70% of participants)

Results

Indicative results are as follows:

- 158 adults entering employment with learning (40% of participants)
- 132 sustainable job outcomes with learning (13 weeks in employment) (33% of participants).
- 103 long-term job outcomes (6 months with or without learning) (26% of participants).

Other outcomes

A key requirement of Skills for Jobs is the integration of employment and skills solutions to improve lives through sustainable jobs in disadvantaged areas and communities. This requires real partnership work based on strategic dialogue, joined up planning and practical implementation.

It is a requirement of this specification that successful providers of IAG demonstrate their current awareness of and engagement with appropriate partners and a clear commitment to how they will work in the wider partnership context to meet the aims of Skills for Jobs.

Successful applicants will describe their additional ways of working leading to outcomes which might include but should not be restricted to the following:

- Protocols developed, agreed and enacted between referring agencies including nextstep, Ufl Learndirect Advice, JobCentre Plus, learning providers, Train to Gain etc to include information sharing and referral mechanisms.
- A menu of clearly identified 'pathways' available to individuals, drawing on the Skills for Jobs Routeways, the Employability Skills Programme, Sustainable Employment Programme and other local provision in response to employer and individual demand.
- Evaluation reports identifying successful provision and areas for improvement
- Participation in appropriate multi-agency partnerships to ensure IAG offer is responsive to local, sub-regional and regional priorities.
- Mechanisms for identifying gaps in provision and for influencing Skills for Jobs and

mainstream providers to ensure provision meets the needs of priority target groups.

Successful organisations will be required to capture evidence of job outcomes which do not include learning activity (in addition to the target outcomes for jobs with learning).

Successful organisations will be required to provide a 6 monthly performance and evaluation report.

Funding available

The overall funding available for this Tender Specification is :£158,300

The average unit cost per individual is £400.

Start and end dates

For projects starting no earlier than 1st May 2009 and ending no later than 31st December 2010.

The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

It is anticipated that contracts will be awarded on a sub-regional basis, to organisations and partnerships that demonstrate local level provision in line with the requirements stated above in 'Geography / Area of Delivery'.

Applications from organisations wishing to deliver provision at a local level rather than sub-regional level are acceptable but LSC reserves the right to broker relationships between any successful 'local' applicants and successful 'sub-regional' applicants.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, such as starts, qualifications, job outcomes, companies assisted; as applicable with the activity defined in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

Subcontracting

If the Contractor wishes to work with a sub-contractor that is not named in the original bid and the value of the sub-contracting arrangement exceeds £10,000, the activity must be competitively tendered for. Where only one provider is available then permission must be sought from the LSC before the sub-contract is agreed. Where the value is £10,000 or below, then, providing they can demonstrate value for money, the Contractor can source specialist providers directly to sub-contract with, without the need for tendering.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1st May 2009 and 31st December 2010.

Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

The table below is provided as an example of how a contract award for the full allocation of funding

and associated deliverables would look. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Deliverable ID	Deliverable Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
S2	Adults engaged in Matrix Accredited IAG provision and completing a Skills for Jobs Action Plan	£200	396	£79,200
P3	Progression into a job, that is not part of another LSC funded SFJ Programme and that lasts for 16 hours or more per week (or 8 hours or more if the participant is on Incapacity Benefit). This includes employed and self employed people	£250	79	£19,750
P4	Still in a job at 13 weeks that lasts for 16 hours or more per week (or 8 hours or more if the participant is on Incapacity Benefit), and has started on LSC funded training provision. This includes employed and self employed people	£300	132	£39,600
P7	Referral to a Skills for Jobs Provider and progression into a job that lasts for 16 hours or more per week (or 8 hours if the participant is on Incapacity Benefit). This includes employed and self employed people	£250	79	£19,750
M4	Project evaluation including case studies (evaluation to be submitted February and August and Case studies May and November) Format will be agreed by LSC.	£0		
Total				£158,300

In the above illustration the number of people gaining employment after working through a Skills for Jobs provider and those gaining employment without working with a Skills for Jobs provider has just been split 50:50.

Title: North West including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area - Inward Investor and Restructuring Company Response Programme in the North West	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S31
<p>Aim</p> <p>This programme will provide a rapid response fund to support skills development in companies which are inward investing, undertaking significant expansion or downsizing and creating redundancies. It is being established both to stimulate and to address demand for workforce development amongst SMEs and large companies in the North West Region.</p> <p>The aim is to enable the North West region to compete with other regions to attract new employers, ensure companies are competitive following restructuring or redundancy and to enable workers facing redundancy to re-enter the labour market with the enhanced skills to make them competitive.</p> <p>The skills development will be targeted on companies and their supply chains or will assist staff back into the labour market following the announcement of redundancies. The programme will provide an incentive to take up the Skills Pledge and facilitate access to Train to Gain provision.</p> <p>The importance of responding to the needs of companies is paramount. Providers are expected to develop a variety of bespoke solutions depending upon the needs identified by the employer.</p>	
<p>Service requirement</p> <p>This programme is designed to align with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Demand Led – addressing current demand and stimulating latent demand to increase the number of companies investing in Workforce Development. B. Comprehensive – covering the full spectrum of companies’ demand, including all business areas, all training types, levels and delivery methods, addressing specific sectoral needs and complete geographical coverage. C. Effective –streamlined, cost effective and high impact. D. Timely - capable of meeting company needs rapidly. E. Accessible and User Friendly - a straightforward process that enables companies to access support promptly and appropriately. F. Simple - uncomplicated for all users and stakeholders including companies. G. Establishes Clear Relationships – develops a sense of partnership and clarity of role for all partners and company beneficiaries. H. Value for Money – ensures that appropriate resources are focused upon the company. I. Developmental - builds upon established good practice to develop new capacity and capability to create a new culture of workforce development across the North West. J. Deliverable - capable of delivering programme targets. K. Company Choice - enabling, where possible, companies to have maximum choice and flexibility in the selection of providers and provision (content and delivery). <p>The applicant selected to deliver this programme will work with companies referred from a variety of sources and will be expected to be in a position to assemble a customised programme rapidly, bringing in other organisations and providers as required to deliver key elements. The organisation selected need not be a training provider themselves, as long as they are able to source the training package required to meet employers’ needs.</p> <p>The provider must be prepared to work with the key agencies in the field, especially Train to Gain providers and Business Link. If the provider does not currently deliver Train to Gain, they will be expected to work with Train to Gain providers, or commence delivery themselves at the earliest opportunity.</p>	

Key Elements of the Programme

The Skills Pledge Commitment

In order to receive support from this programme, employers are expected to commit to the Skills Pledge. This must be done in co-operation with the Train to Gain Skills broker. Details of the Pledge can be found at <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge/>. Applicants should set out within their tender how they will gain companies' commitment to the pledge.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) (and Sector Skills Passports for individuals)

Those companies that are referred to the provider may well have already carried out a TNA, and where this is the case, providers must not duplicate this activity. However, where no TNA has been carried out providers should offer TNAs as appropriate.

If employers approach providers without a clear understanding and appreciation of their workforce development needs, early engagement of the Train to Gain brokerage service is essential to allow a needs analysis to be undertaken. Such an analysis will identify training support required and is provided free of charge by the Train to Gain broker. Providers will then deliver the required support directly themselves or via appropriate sub-contracting arrangements.

Should the company require a Training Needs Analysis in greater depth than can be provided by the Train to Gain Brokerage Service then the provider can deliver this service at a cost to the employer which will be included and detailed within an itemised and costed TNA. As part of their tender, providers must indicate the average cost of their TNA process and demonstrate value for money.

In an addition to previous programmes, providers will be asked to re-visit the Training Needs Analysis (or Training Action Plan if a TNA is not in place) at a later date with the employer, to ensure their original needs have been met and whether any other needs can be addressed working alongside the Train to Gain Skills Broker.

The programme will also provide funding for appropriate access to the Sector Skills Passports to ensure skills and qualifications gained can be tracked and recorded by the individual and company and become more transferable as a result.

Redundancy Support

The successful provider will support companies undergoing restructuring, with the aim of enabling employees in these companies to obtain the skills needed to undertake a new job role. In providing this support, the successful provider will be required to work flexibly alongside Train to Gain providers. This support could include re-training for a new job within the same company as well as preparation for jobs outside the company. This programme should not displace other available resource (e.g. JCP administered Rapid Response Funding for large scale redundancies).

Inward Investment Support

The successful applicant will provide support for companies planning to expand within or relocate to the North West. This will involve working with key inward investment support organisations such as The Mersey Partnership, Liverpool Vision, MIDAS and individual Local Authority Economic Development teams.

There must be a designated key contact for inward investors, who will be responsible for bringing in other brokers/providers as and when needed. The support must be available on demand.

Brokerage

Providers must be flexible in order that employers receive the most appropriate training solution as quickly as possible. If an employer's needs are immediately clear, the provider must document these needs, pull together an action plan and roll-out the required training. The provider may deliver the training themselves or may choose to use a sub-contractor depending upon which is the most appropriate option. This will facilitate company choice (principle K above). Providers must also work with the Train to Gain brokerage

service to allow brokers to identify any further training that may benefit the company, particularly LSC core programmes.

The successful applicant should maximise referrals to other LSC provision wherever it is appropriate and can meet the employer's needs e.g. Train to Gain, Skills for Life and Apprenticeships or Further Education funded courses. Applicants must indicate as part of their tender how they will manage the referral process alongside the Train to Gain broker.

Administrative costs in sub-contracting

It is expected that, when sub-contracting, the appropriate costs of administrative work should be charged to the company. However these costs must be evidenced and appropriate and proportional to the training delivered. Providers will be required to demonstrate that their administrative costs in sub-contracting are transparent to the employer and LSC.

All other administrative work must be the responsibility of the provider as an integral part of the programme, with the employers time on administration minimised at every opportunity.

Marketing

Potential providers are asked to note that they are expected to work with the LSC and a third party marketing company in the Merseyside area on marketing and communication issues. Applicants are required to set out their plans for marketing the programme .

Engaging Companies

Applicants are required to detail how they will engage companies, addressing the following issues:

- The organisations they will work with to develop channels to market, including both traditional and non-traditional routes e.g. The Mersey Partnership, Liverpool Vision, MIDAS, Business Link, Banks, Professional Firms, Chambers of Commerce, Trades Unions and other potential channels to market etc.;
- How the applicant's sector specialisms will be utilised to promote the programme;
- How companies will be engaged, including those with whom they currently do not have a relationship – or the “hard to reach” companies i.e. those who remain unconvinced about the merits of workforce development or do not have a history of investing in it;
- How latent demand will be identified and actualised;
- What geographical area the provider traditionally covers, and any plans to widen the target market;
- How the provider might develop employer contacts into longer-term relationships, as it is unlikely that many company needs will be met from short-term interventions;

Companies will become clients of the successful applicant(s) either through direct links with providers, or through referral from approved intermediaries/business support agencies (e.g. Business Link / Train to Gain Brokerage Service, Chambers of Commerce) or through leads generated by other marketing.

Responding to Need

This programme places an emphasis upon identifying and meeting the specific needs of companies, including the development and delivery of customised training. Therefore the LSC requires applicants to provide detail on the following:

- How they will address the full spectrum of workforce development needs, including function area, training subject, content and level. Function areas of business may include:
 - General Management;
 - Sales and Marketing;
 - Operations;
 - New Product Development;
 - Financial and Business Accounting;
 - Information Computer Technology;
 - Human Resources;
 - Health, Safety and the Environment.
- How they will respond fully to the needs of companies regarding the practical arrangements for

delivery of provision e.g. timing and location, so as to minimise disruption to day to day operations. This must include an explicit commitment to provide year-round delivery, meeting customer needs rather than conforming to institutional patterns of delivery;

Capacity

Previous programmes have generated substantial, additional demand for workforce development. The scope and scale of potential demand is such that it is unlikely to be accommodated by any one individual provider. As a result, it is assumed that lead providers will be selected, who will need to enter into partnership arrangements or develop consortia to acquire the capacity to meet demand. Organisations, therefore, are required to set out the following:

- Their existing provision and details of how they will address demand for an increased volume and variety of workforce development support from companies locally;
- Their experience of working in partnership with other providers (or through sub-contracting arrangements) to meet the needs of individual companies, and how they anticipate working with other local providers within the context of this programme. This **explicitly excludes the role of managing agents**;
- The extent to which they are already charging companies for services, or any plans for introducing charges for workforce development support;

Capability

This relates to the skills and professional expertise of the organisation or consortium of providers.

Providers are required to detail the following:

- Organisational quality standards and arrangements for ensuring that quality is consistent across the full range of potential sub-contractors or consortium members;
- Their commitment to or recognition as an Investor in People;
- Qualifications of individual members of staff e.g. CVs.

Providers will need to demonstrate they have a track record of delivering high quality provision to employers and employees. Evidence of inspection grades of 3 or above or external quality assurance such as the Training Quality Standard accreditation or application made to become accredited, awarding bodies' external verification reports, ISO9000 accreditation and Investor in People status will serve to support providers' applications.

Providers should note that the direction of travel for the LSC is that the preferred external accredited standard is the Training Quality Standard. Information about the Training Quality Standard may be obtained from <http://www.newstandard.co.uk> .

Delivery

The LSC requires assurances that contracting arrangements for delivery of the programme are robust and effective. It therefore requires organisations to set out clearly:

- Their ability to offer a whole organisation approach to workforce development where need has been identified, either by themselves or through consortium/partnership or sub-contracting arrangements, that provides for the provision of training at all levels of the organisation and to all levels of ability;
- Delivery, output and financial profiles providing details of the number of clients they would expect to support in total with a further analysis of company numbers by sector;
- The arrangements for meeting the individual learning needs of employees e.g. childcare when training is offered out of working hours, ensuring that part time and shift workers are not disadvantaged etc;
- Aftercare arrangements – providing ongoing support to employer customers;
- Their understanding of cash flow issues for employers and experience of charging companies for training services.
- Their Equality of Opportunity policy and Environmental policy.

Target groups & priority

This programme has 2 focuses:

- Meeting training needs of the workforce of inward investing companies to the North West

- Assisting companies that are experiencing redundancies as a result of infrastructure changes.

In order to benefit from this programme, companies must be located in the North West Region (including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area) and their employees must either be residents of the North West or be employed in the North West Region.

The target group for this programme is both SMEs and large employers and their supply chains (or potential supply chains for inward investors), from any sector, that are:

- inward investing,
- expanding or
- downsizing (with resulting redundancies)

in the North West Region.

For ESF purposes an SME is defined as an enterprise which has:

- fewer than 250 employees; and **either**
- an annual turnover of 50 million euros or less; **or**
- an annual balance-sheet total of 43 million euros or less.

Large Company eligibility for the purposes of this tender specification are:

- those employing 250 employees or more in the North West Region;
- inward investors into the North West Region who propose to employ 250 or more employees.

Where a company is targeted or enquires about accessing this programme, the successful applicant must contact the Learning and Skills Council's contract manager to ensure, firstly that funds are available, and secondly, that applicants are eligible. Contact with the LSC contract manager must take place before any initial meetings with the company and before any Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is conducted.

Geography / area of delivery

This programme should be available across the North West (Cheshire & Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Halton and Lancashire) and the Merseyside Phasing-In Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral).

Outputs

These output assumptions are based on each company accessing up to £40,000 in the North West excluding Merseyside and up to £90,000 worth of support in the Merseyside Phasing-In Area (excluding the employer contribution).

The minimum outputs to be delivered are:

Output	Cheshire & Warrington	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Halton	Lancashire	Merseyside Phasing-In Area	Total
Company beneficiaries engaged and committing to the Skills Pledge	13	6	50	2	25	75	171
Employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity	125	63	501	24	251	750	1714
Employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications	125	63	501	24	251	750	1714
Company/organisation	13	6	50	2	25	75	171

training needs analysis (TNA) completed							
Individuals accessing appropriate sector skills passports	13	6	50	2	25	75	171

The target volumes for employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity is based on an assumption of an average cost of £2000 per individual.

The target volumes for employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications is based on an assumption of an average cost of £2000 per individual.

There are some ESF funding restrictions regarding the qualification levels which can be supported, therefore within the:

- North West (Cheshire & Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Halton and Lancashire, level 4 + qualifications may only be offered to organisations classified as a Small Enterprise. A Small Enterprise is defined as an enterprise which has fewer than 50 employees; and either an annual turnover of 10 million euros or less; or an annual balance-sheet total of 10 million euros or less.
- Merseyside Phasing-In Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral), level 4+ qualifications may only be offered to organisations classified as an SME (Please see target groups & priorities for a definition of an SME).

Results

The minimum results to be delivered are:

Output	Cheshire & Warrington	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Halton	Lancashire	Merseyside Phasing-In Area	Total
Company/organisation supported i.e. employers receiving training	13	6	50	2	25	75	171
Achievement of externally accredited qualifications	94	47	376	18	188	563	1286
Completion of non-accredited learning activity	94	47	376	18	188	563	1286

The target volumes for the achievement of externally accredited qualifications is based on an average cost of £2000 per individual.

The target volumes for the completion of non-accredited learning activity is based on an average cost of £2000 per individual.

Other outcomes

These outcome assumptions are based on each company accessing £100,000 worth of support (including the employer contribution).

Proposals should identify the number of other outcomes including:

Outcome	Total for programme
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Skills for Life referrals	A minimum of 150 referrals
Leadership & Management referrals	A minimum of 20 referrals
Apprenticeship referrals	A minimum of 50 referrals
Train to Gain referrals	A minimum of 100 referrals

Successful providers will be required to produce a 6 monthly performance and evaluation report.

Funding available

Total ESF funding for this programme is approximately **£6,900,000, of which £2,100,000 is available for the Merseyside Phasing-In Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral) and £4,800,000 is available for the rest of the Northwest.**

The split of funds identified below is indicative; the exception to this is the allocation for Merseyside Phasing-In area which is exclusively available for that area.

Cheshire and Warrington - 13%

- Cumbria - 6.5%
- Greater Manchester – 52%
- Lancashire – 26%
- Halton – 2.5%

The programme will provide flexible skills on a demand led basis up to a limit of £40,000 ESF¹ per company in the North West (Excluding Merseyside) and up to £90,000 of support in the Merseyside Phasing-In Area, with an additional employer contribution as required for State Aid purposes. The delivery process will follow the demand led² methodology. The programme will provide funding for customised training needs (up to £40,000 (NW) and £90,000 (Merseyside) of ESF per company supported) which cannot be delivered through LSC mainstream delivery. The employer must make a cash contribution to the programme which is in line with the requirements set out in the tables below.

Contracts that are awarded under this Tender Specification will have to follow State Aid regulations. State Aid is defined as any aid to a commercial under taking through 'state resources' that distorts or threatens to distort competition within the European Union. In practice this means that any co-financed (ESF) funding support given to enterprises that could be construed as giving them a competitive advantage over other enterprises in the European Union will fall under European rules regarding State Aid.

It is important to note that State Aid can apply to public and private sector organisations and also charities if they are producing or selling products or services that can compete in a commercial environment (whether for profit or not).

Guidance will be provided on State Aid to the successful applicant(s), however it is important to note the following limits to ESF for SME and Large Enterprises that are benefiting from State Aid (training resulting from this Tender Specification) under the State Aid General Block Exemption. Above these limits cash or where agreed with the LSC, in-kind contributions must be sought from the employer.

It should also be noted that the LSC expects that **ALL** training delivered under this Tender Specification to be 'General' as defined below.

¹ ESF – European Social Fund. Details on ESF can be found at http://www.esf.gov.uk/introduction_to_esf/

² More information can be found at http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/demand-led-funding/Further_Education_Funding_Policy_Documents_2008-09.htm

Large Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate	25%	60%

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate (rates are for information and relate to minimum state aid requirements, this programme requires an intervention rate of 60% for SMEs)	35%	70%

Definition of General training is: If the training of employees is applicable not only to an employees' present or future position in the enterprise being assisted because the provision of qualifications provides transferable skills that substantially improve the employability of the employee concerned. Where training leads to the award of National Vocational qualifications and Key Skills Qualifications training will be considered to be general in nature

Definition of Specific training is: Where training provided is principally applicable to the employee's present or future position in the assisted enterprise and provides qualifications that are not transferable, the maximum aid intensities for specific training will apply.

The programme will provide 60% funding support for customised training needs which cannot be delivered through LSC mainstream delivery. The employer must make a 40% cash contribution to the programme (unless under exceptional circumstances and where specifically agreed with the LSC in writing and in advance, where in kind contributions or Deminimis may be agreed as applicable).

Each month providers will be expected to submit a monitoring claim and performance claim to the Learning and Skills Council.

State Aid requirements dictate that each beneficiary company must contribute to the total cost of support provided. Therefore this allocation is conditional on the beneficiary company providing the correct financial contribution to the cost of training by each benefiting company. The company contribution must be financial and cannot be made in-kind (unless under exceptional circumstances and when specifically agreed with the LSC in writing and in advance, where in kind contributions or Deminimis may be agreed as applicable). The employer contribution may change in future years. All evidence of employer financial contributions must be readily available for audit purposes.

Providers will be responsible for securing and evidencing the employer contribution, this evidence must be readily available for audit purposes. No claim against the ESF will be valid until the employer contribution has been received by the provider. The provider will be required to complete company information records and state aid documentation for all companies supported through the programme.

Under Structural Fund Regulations the LSC is required to ensure that support is used to obtain added value in a cost effective way. This means that statutory training or assessment is specifically excluded from the programme. For example, where a Training Needs Analysis identifies a requirement for Gas Fitters, the programme would be unable to pay for the Gas Fitter training, or any associated assessment or registration fees required by statutory legislation.

Payment Methodology

Payments will be based on the individuals accessing the programme.

1. Payment will be in arrears and on actual delivery. Approximately 50% of contract funding will be paid against starts (including the cost for the production of an ILP) and 50% against achievement of learning goals (contained within the ILP).
2. These payments may differ (and are likely to exceed) the actual cost of training delivered to each

individual learner.

3. Successful applicants will make returns detailing the monthly provider declaration for expenditure and a running total of any surplus generated by the provider from delivery where actual training costs are less than the indicative costs for starts and achievements on the programme.
4. If the surplus total accrued totals more than 10% of the annual contract value then payments will be put on hold until such time as the provider has caught up with the paid amount through the delivery of training to 'additional learners'.
5. Contracts will be split annually to allow for a catch up period at the end of each year i.e. so that the contract is not continually accruing surplus. Once the annual contract has been fully earned, then the next year's amount allocation can begin.

Otherwise a profile of funding and activity will be agreed during contract clarification.

Each month providers will be expected to submit a monitoring claim and performance claim to the Learning and Skills Council. This will, in the early phases of the programme, demonstrate progress against indicative profile, and will result in subsequent cash payments once the initial advance payment has been fully defrayed.

State Aid requirements dictate that each beneficiary company must contribute to the total cost of support provided. Therefore this allocation is conditional on the beneficiary company providing the correct financial contribution to the cost of training by each benefiting company. The company contribution must be financial and cannot be made in-kind. The employer contribution may change in future years. All evidence of employer financial contributions must be readily available for audit purposes.

Providers will be responsible for securing and evidencing the employer contribution, this evidence must be readily available for audit purposes. No claim against the ESF will be valid until the employer contribution has been received by the provider.

Start and end dates

Projects must not start activity before 1 May 2009 and must complete all of their activity by 31 July 2011. (including evaluation and dissemination activities). Where applicants seek to deliver activity across the North West and Merseyside Phasing-In Area then the LSC would need to issue 2 contracts.

Projects must not recruit individuals if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve the outcomes of the project. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

The Learning and Skills Council would expect no more than 6 contracts to deliver this programme. Where applicants seek to deliver activity across the North West and Merseyside Phasing-In Area then the LSC would need to issue 2 contracts.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, such as starts, qualifications, job outcomes, companies assisted; as applicable with the activity defined in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1 May 2009 and 31 July 2011. Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both

financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

The below table is provided as an example of how a full contract award for the full allocation of funding and associated deliverables would look like. For this illustration, volumes have been split between accredited and non accredited deliverables; in the contract issued the volumes will need to be split across specific levels of accredited qualifications as listed below. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Deliverable ID	Deliverable Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
S2	Employees engaged in learning activity	£130	3428	£445,640
S4	Employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity	£870.00	1714	£1,491,180
S5	Employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications	£870.00	1714	£1,491,180
S6	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 1 or Notional Level 1	£870.00		£0
S7	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 2 or Notional Level 2	£870.00		£0
S8	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 3 or Notional Level 3	£870.00		£0
S9	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 4 or Notional Level 4	£870.00		£0
S10	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 5 or Notional Level 5	£870.00		£0
A2	Completion of non-accredited learning activity	£1,350.00	1286	£1,736,100
A2	Achievement of externally accredited qualifications	£1,350.00	1286	£1,736,100
A3	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 1 or notional Level 1	£1,350.00		£0
A4	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 2 or notional Level 2	£1,350.00		£0
A5	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 3 or notional Level 3	£1,350.00		£0
A6	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 4 or notional Level 4	£1,350.00		£0
A7	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 5 or notional Level 5	£1,350.00		
A8	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 1 or notional Level 1	£1,350.00		
A9	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 2 or notional Level 2	£1,350.00		
A10	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 3 or notional Level 3	£1,350.00		
A11	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 4 or notional Level 4	£1,350.00		
A12	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 5 or notional Level 5	£1,350.00		
C3	Companies engaged	£0.00	171	£0
M11	Project Evaluation including Case	£0.00		£0

	May and November) + Final Evaluation at Project End			
Total				£6,900,200

Subcontracting

If the Contractor wishes to work with a sub-contractor that is not named in the original bid and the value of the sub-contracting arrangement exceeds £10,000, the activity must be competitively tendered for. Where only one provider is available then permission must be sought from the LSC before the sub-contract is agreed. Where the value is £10,000 or below, then, providing they can demonstrate value for money, the Contractor can source specialist providers directly to sub-contract with, without the need for tendering.

Title: Greater Merseyside – Merseyside Phasing-In Area – Voluntary/Community Sector - Skills Pledge Plus	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S32
Aim	
<p>The project is intended to stimulate and address demand for workforce development amongst Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) employers across the Merseyside phasing-in area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral) through commitment to the Skills Pledge. The funds will be used to incentivise employers to sign the Skills Pledge by providing funded additional learning and skills provision not accessible through other routes e.g. Train to Gain.</p>	
Service requirement	
<p>The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs). The purpose is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company/organisation.</p>	
<p>The requirement is for a third party to manage a fund from which employers may receive up to £1000 funding support for customised training needs and which cannot be delivered through LSC mainstream delivery and are not accessible as part of The Train to Gain offer. The funding is conditional on the employer signing the Skills Pledge. The funding support cannot be used towards L4 or L5 qualifications for employees in large companies.</p>	
<p>It is a requirement that the successful contractor will need to work closely with the skills brokerage service (Business Link North West) and other Skills Pledge agents, the contractor will identify potential eligible employers who could benefit from Skills Pledge Plus. Therefore applicants must outline existing relationships with the brokerage service or should detail how effective working relationships will be developed. Tenders should clearly detail how the contractor proposes to market Skills Pledge Plus to VCS employers.</p>	
<p>Providers are also invited to propose innovative ways of maximising take up of the Skills Pledge that could be funded from the contract allocation. This could include; awareness raising activities e.g. workshops and events organised on a geographical basis; capacity building of providers to enable them to manage VCS employers through the pledge process; development of case studies and dissemination through employer forums.</p>	
<p>Tenders must clearly demonstrate the rationale for the proposed activities and explain how they will promote the Skills Pledge.</p>	
<p>When the VCS employer has reached the commitment stage of the Skills Pledge they will be eligible to receive free training to the value of £1000, which does not have to lead to qualifications. The training may be either sourced by the Skills brokerage service or by the Skills Pledge Plus provider.</p>	
<p>Providers will need to ensure that this funding does not displace other mainstream funding. Skills Pledge Plus funding should not be used to fund activities that can be funded through Train to Gain or Leadership and Management funding.</p>	
<p>The contractor will be required to process invoices from providers of training and to produce comprehensive accounts for the Learning and Skills Council detailing the employers who have benefited from the funding. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the administrative capability and/or track record and quality systems to manage a Fund as described above.</p>	

Skills Pledge Plus providers will provide a positive example for workforce development, will be recognised or currently committed to Investors in People (IiP) and will act as ambassadors in promoting the IiP and Train to Gain to SME beneficiaries.

Potential Skills Pledge Plus providers do not necessarily need to be based within the region, but will need to be able to demonstrate that they can effectively deliver to employers within the North West.

Providers will be expected to work within the emerging delivery framework of the LSC's employer offer and to make referrals as appropriate to employer needs. As a minimum providers will have a thorough knowledge of:

- Investors in People;
- Apprenticeships;
- Entry to Employment (E2E);
- Train to Gain for first Level 2 delivery;
- Skills for Life;
- Other LSC programmes.

Providers should ensure Skills Pledge activities are closely aligned with The Local Employer Partnerships (LEP) and Jobcentre Plus. A Jobs Pledge is a significant element of The LEP Framework and we are working closely with Jobcentre Plus to ensure maximum integration between the two offers; reduction of duplication and minimising confusion for employers. Employers who recruit Jobcentre Plus customers will access Train to Gain and The Skills Pledge to ensure all eligible employees progress to a first Level 2 and undertake Skills for Life qualifications where appropriate.

For further information about the Skills pledge please refer to www.traintogain.gov.uk

Target groups & priority

The primary target group for this Tender Specification are employers who are categorised as small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the voluntary and community sector. For ESF purposes an SME is defined as an enterprise which has:

- fewer than 250 employees; and **either**
- an annual turnover of 50 million euros (approximately £35m) or less; **or**
- an annual balance-sheet total of 43 million euros (approximately £30m) or less.

However, in exceptional circumstances, large companies from the voluntary and community sector may be supported.

Geography / area of delivery

The fund should be available to VCS employers across the Merseyside Phasing In Area.

Outputs

- Not applicable

Results

The following results must be delivered:

- 780 employers completing Stage 4 of the Skills Pledge.

Other outcomes

The LSC is also seeking the delivery of the following outcomes:

- A 6 monthly performance and evaluation report which identifies the volumes of potential learner starts on Skills for Life, Level 2 and Level 3 programmes and any other LSC funded programmes eg Apprenticeships.
- List of employers that have accessed the funding, the names of the individuals who have received training, along with details of the training delivered and the cost of the training.
- Innovative proposals for maximising the take up of the Skills Pledge.

Funding available

A total of £1,201,200 is available over the contract period. No more than £120,00 of this funding may be used on management and administration costs and up to £301,200 may be used to fund innovative activities which seek to maximise the take up of the Skills Pledge.

The free training offer is triggered when the employer reaches the commitment stage (stage 4) of the Skills Pledge process.

Contracts that are awarded under this Tender Specification will have to follow State Aid regulations. State Aid is defined as any aid to a commercial under taking through 'state resources' that distorts or threatens to distort competition within the European Union. In practice this means that any co-financed (ESF) funding support given to enterprises that could be construed as giving them a competitive advantage over other enterprises in the European Union will fall under European rules regarding State Aid.

It is important to note that State Aid can apply to public and private sector organisations and also charities if they are producing or selling products or services that can compete in a commercial environment (whether for profit or not).

Guidance will be provided on State Aid to the successful applicant(s), however it is important to note the LSC will initially be operating De Minimis. Successful providers will need to ensure that employers have not breached the £138,000 ceiling over 3 fiscal years. If this ceiling is breached then the following limits will be applied for SME and Large Enterprises that are benefiting from State Aid (training resulting from this Tender Specification) under the State Aid General Block Exemption. Above these limits cash or where agreed with the LSC, in-kind contributions must be sought from the employer.

It should also be noted that the LSC expects that **ALL** training delivered under this Tender Specification to be 'General' as defined below.

Large Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate	25%	60%

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate	35%	70%

Definition of General training is: If the training of employees is applicable not only to an employees' present or future position in the enterprise being assisted because the provision of qualifications provides transferable skills that substantially improve the employability of the employee concerned. Where training leads to the award of National Vocational qualifications and Key Skills Qualifications training will be considered to be general in nature

Definition of Specific training is: Where training provided is principally applicable to the employee's present or future position in the assisted enterprise and provides qualifications that are not transferable,

the maximum aid intensities for specific training will apply.

Where Deminimis has been limits have been exceeded, providers are required to ensure that each beneficiary company must contribute to the total cost of support provided. Therefore this allocation is conditional on the beneficiary company providing the correct contribution to the cost of training they have received. The company contribution can either be financial or in-kind (unless the LSC instructs that financial or in kind is specifically required). The employer contribution may change in future years. All evidence of employer contributions must be readily available for audit purposes.

It should be noted that the LSC will be applying for the General Block Exemption to be applied to LSC ESF funded activity for the 07/13 ESF programme, but until this application is approved, Deminimis is the only valid exemption.

Providers will be responsible for securing and evidencing the employer contribution, this evidence must be readily available for audit purposes. No claim against the ESF will be valid until the employer contribution has been received by the provider. The provider will be required to complete company information records and state aid documentation for all companies supported through the programme.

Start and end dates

The project should commence on 1 June 2009 and be completed by 31 December 2010. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

The preferred option is for one contract to be issued for the administration of the fund across the Merseyside Phasing-In Area.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, such as starts, qualifications, job outcomes, companies assisted; as applicable with the activity defined in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1 June 2009 and 31 December 2010.

Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

The below table is provided as an example of how a full contract award for the full allocation of funding and associated deliverables would look like. For this illustration, volumes have been split between accredited and non accredited deliverables; in the contract issued the volumes will need to be split across specific levels of accredited qualifications as listed below. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Deliverable ID	Deliverable Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
C1*	Company Supported (Stage 4			

	of Skills Pledge achieved) and training delivered. (Details of companies and individuals supported and actual costs of training must be provided to allow cash reconciliation. The unit cost includes the element for management and administration and the fund for innovative activities, the value of which must also be reported to allow reconciliation)	£1,540	780	£1,201,200
M4	Project evaluation and case studies	£0.00		

***NB Deliverables for this tender specification are subject to change at contract clarification as new deliverables may be introduced that are not currently available**

Title: Greater Merseyside (Merseyside Phasing-In Area) – SkillWorks	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S33
<p>Aim</p> <p>This programme has been established to stimulate and address demand for workforce development amongst Small and Medium sized companies (SMEs) in Merseyside specifically. The programme builds on the success of the SkillWorks programme and provides additionality to Train to Gain provision locally.</p> <p>The programme will also be utilised to extend and incentivise companies to take up the Skills Pledge and facilitate access to Train to Gain provision. The importance of responding to the needs of small and medium enterprises is paramount. Providers are expected to develop a variety of bespoke solutions depending upon the needs identified by the employer.</p>	
<p>Service requirement</p> <p>This programme combines ‘on demand’ training and has been established to stimulate and address demand for workforce development amongst Small and Medium sized companies (SMEs) in the Merseyside area.</p> <p>SkillWorks has been designed to meet the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L. Demand Led – the identification of actual and the stimulation of latent demand so as to increase the number of SMEs locally actually investing in Workforce Development. M. Comprehensive – covering the full spectrum of demand as it is expressed by SMEs, including the full range of functional business areas, all training types, levels and delivery methods, specific sectoral needs and complete geographical coverage within Merseyside. N. Effective – ensuring the programme is streamlined and enables maximum impact to be derived from programme investments. O. Timely - capable of meeting SME needs rapidly. P. Accessible and Understandable - a straightforward process that enables SMEs to access support promptly and appropriately. Q. Simple - uncomplicated for all users and stakeholders including SMEs. R. Establishes Clear Relationships – develops a sense of partnership and clarity of role for all partners and SME beneficiaries. S. Value for Money – ensures that available resources are focused upon the SME. T. Developmental - builds upon established good practice and effective practices and develops both new capacity and capability and a new culture of workforce development across Merseyside. U. Deliverable - capable of enabling programme targets to be delivered. V. SME Choice - enabling, where possible, SMEs to have maximum choice and flexibility in the selection of providers and provision (content and delivery). <p>Brokerage</p> <p>SkillWorks providers must be flexible in order that employers receive the most appropriate training solution as quickly as possible. If an employers needs are immediately clear, the SkillWorks provider should document these needs, pull together an action plan and roll-out the required training. The provider may deliver the training themselves or may choose to use a sub-contractor depending upon which is the most appropriate option. This will facilitate SME choice (principle K above). Providers must also work with the Train to Gain brokerage service to allow brokers to identify any further training that may benefit the company, particularly of LSC core programmes.</p> <p>The provider must maximise referrals to other LSC provision wherever it can meet the employers needs e.g. Train to Gain, Skills for Life and Apprenticeships or Further Education funded courses. Applicants must indicate as part of their tender how they will manage the referral process alongside the Train to Gain broker.</p>	

Administrative costs in sub-contracting

It is expected that when sub-contracting the appropriate costs of administrative work should be charged to the company. However these costs must be evidenced and appropriate and proportional to the training delivered. Providers will be required to demonstrate that their administrative costs in sub-contracting are transparent to the employer and LSC.

All other administrative work must be the responsibility of the provider as an integral part of the programme, with the employers time on administration minimised at every opportunity.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) (and Sector Skills Passports for individuals)

If employers approach SkillWorks providers without a clear understanding and appreciation of their workforce development needs, early engagement of the Train to Gain brokerage service is essential to allow an organisational needs analysis to be undertaken. Such an analysis will identify training support required and is provided free of charge by the Train to Gain broker. Providers will then deliver the required SkillWorks support directly themselves or via appropriate sub-contracting arrangements.

Should the company require a Training Needs Analysis in greater depth than can be provided by the Train to Gain Brokerage Service then the provider can deliver this service at a cost to the employer which will be included and detailed within an itemised and costed TNA. As part of their tender providers should indicate the average cost of their TNA process and demonstrate value for money.

In an addition to previous programmes providers will be asked to re-visit the Training Needs Analysis or Training Action Plan if a TNA is not in place at a later date with the employer to ensure their original needs have been met and whether any other services can be met working alongside the Train to Gain Skills Broker. Those SMEs that are referred to the provider may well have already carried out a TNA, and where this is the case, providers should not duplicate this activity. However, where no TNA has been carried out providers should offer TNAs as appropriate.

The programme will also provide funding for appropriate access to the Sector Skills Passports to ensure skills and qualifications gained can be tracked and recorded by the individual and company and become more transferable as a result.

Marketing

Potential providers are asked to note that they are expected to work with LSCGM and a third party marketing company regarding marketing and communication issues. Applicants are required to set out their experience in working with marketing companies.

Engaging SMEs

This involves individual organisations or consortia setting out in detail how they would seek to engage SMEs and addressing the following issues:

- > Which organisations the providers will work with to develop channels to market, including both traditional and non-traditional routes e.g. Business Link Greater Merseyside, Banks, Professional Firms, Chambers of Commerce, Trades Unions and other potential channels to market etc.;
- > How providers sector specialisms will be utilised to promote the programme;
- > How SMEs will be engaged, including those with whom they currently do not have a relationship – or the “hard to reach” SME i.e. those who remain unconvinced about the merits of or do not have a history of investing in Workforce Development;
- > How latent demand will be identified and actualised;
- > What geographical area the provider traditionally covers, and any plans to widen the target market;
- > How the provider might develop SME contacts into longer-term relationships, as it is unlikely that many SME needs will be met from short-term interventions;

- > SMEs will become clients of successful providers either through direct links with providers, or through referral from approved intermediaries/business support agencies (e.g. Business Link / Train to Gain Brokerage Service, Chambers of Commerce) or through leads generated by other marketing.

The Skills Pledge commitment

In order to receive support from this programme it is expected that employers will commit to the Skills Pledge. This should be done in co-operation with the Train to Gain Skills broker, details of the pledge can be found at <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge/>. Applicants should set out within their tender how they will gain SMEs' commitment to the pledge.

Responding to Need

This programme places an emphasis upon identifying and meeting the specific needs of SMEs including the development and delivery of customised training. Therefore the LSC wishes to see organisations providing detail on the following:

- > How they will meet the variety of workforce development needs including function area, training subject, content and level. Function areas of business are thought to include:
 - > General Management;
 - > Sales and Marketing;
 - > Operations;
 - > New Product Development;
 - > Financial and Business Accounting;
 - > Information Computer Technology;
 - > Human Resources;
 - > Health, Safety and the Environment.
- > How they will respond fully to the needs of SMEs in terms of practical arrangements for delivery of provision e.g. timing and location, so as to minimise disruption to day to day operations, and including an explicit commitment to provide year-round delivery, meeting SME needs rather than institutional patterns of delivery;

Capacity

The programme has generated substantial, additional demand for workforce development support. The LSC believes that the breadth of potential demand cannot be accommodated by any one individual provider, rather it believes that lead providers will need to enter into partnerships or consortia to develop the capacity to meet demand. Organisations, therefore, are required to set out the following:

- > Their existing provision and details of how they would seek to address demand for an increased volume and variety of workforce development support from SMEs locally;
- > Their experience of working in partnership with other providers (or through sub-contracting arrangements) to meet the needs of individual SMEs and how they would anticipate working with other local providers within the context of this programme. This explicitly excludes the role of managing agents;
- > The extent to which they are already charging SMEs for services or their plans for introducing charges for workforce development support;

Capability

This relates to the skills and professional expertise of the organisation or consortium of providers. Providers are required to detail the following:

- > Organisational quality standards and arrangements for ensuring that quality is consistent across the full range of potential sub-contractors or consortium members;
- > Their commitment to or recognition as an Investor in People;
- > Qualifications of individual members of staff e.g. CVs.

Delivery

LSCGM requires assurance that the contracting arrangements it makes for delivery of the SkillWorks programme are robust and effective. It therefore requires organisations to set out clearly:

- > Their ability to offer a whole organisation approach to Workforce Development where need has been identified, either by themselves or through consortium/partnership or sub-contracting arrangements, that provides for the provision of training at all levels of the organisation and to all levels of ability;
- > Delivery, output and financial profiles providing details of the number of clients they would expect to support in total with a further analysis of company numbers by sector;
- > The arrangements for meeting the individual learning needs of employees e.g. childcare when training is offered out of working hours, ensuring that part time and shift workers are not disadvantaged;
- > Aftercare arrangements – providing ongoing support to SME customers;
- > Their understanding of cash flow issues for employers and experience of charging SMEs for training services.
- > Their Equality of Opportunity policy and Environmental policy.

Target groups & priority

The programme targets Small and Medium sized employers based in the geographic locations identified and their employees with targeted support.

This programme is designed to promote the uptake of workforce development opportunities by SMEs, particularly those who have not previously participated in Workforce Development activity and who need support to articulate their training needs.

For ESF purposes an SME is defined as an enterprise which has:

- > fewer than 250 employees; and either
- > an annual turnover of 50 million euros (approximately £35m) or less; or
- > an annual balance-sheet total of 43 million euros (approximately £30m) or less.
- > They also must be independently owned with less than 25% ownership or control by a large company.

Geography / area of delivery

In order to benefit from this programme, SMEs must be located in one of the five Merseyside boroughs of Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens or Wirral.

Outputs

SkillWorks

These output assumptions are based on each company accessing £60,000 worth of support (including the 40% employer contribution), however providers should be aware that the average total training accessed by companies is expected to circa £10,000 and LSC would hope for much higher outputs than the minimum suggested below.

Proposals should identify the number of:

Output	Total for programme
SME beneficiaries engaged and committing to the Skills Pledge	A minimum of 200 companies
Employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications	A minimum of 2000 (based on a on assumption of an average cost of £1500 ESF per individual)
Employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity	A minimum of 2000 (based on a on assumption of an average cost of £1500

	ESF per individual)
Company/organisation training needs analysis (TNA) completed	A minimum of 200 companies
Individuals accessing appropriate sector skills passports	A minimum of 200 (based on an assumption of 5% of overall learners)

Results

- > Company/organisation supported i.e. employers receiving training– a minimum of 200 companies
- > Completion of non-accredited learning activity – a minimum of 1500
- > Achievement of externally accredited learning qualifications – a minimum of 1500

Other outcomes

These outcome assumptions are based on each company accessing £60,000 worth of support, however providers should be aware that the average total training accessed by each company is expected to be circa £10,000 and LSC would hope for much higher outputs than the minimum suggested below.

Proposals should identify the number of other outcomes including:

Outcome	Total for programme
Skills for Life referrals	A minimum of 10 referrals
Leadership & Management referrals	A minimum of 4 referrals
Apprenticeship referrals	A minimum of 10 referrals
Train to Gain referrals	A minimum of 20 referrals

Successful providers are required to produce a 6 monthly performance and evaluation report.

Funding available

Total ESF funding for this programme is approximately **£6,000,000**. The total budget for SkillWorks including the employer 40% contribution will be **£10,000,000**. The level of support is limited to total costs with any individual SME of £60,000 (ESF) from this new SkillWorks programme unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LSC.

Contracts that are awarded under this Tender Specification will have to follow State Aid regulations. State Aid is defined as any aid to a commercial under taking through 'state resources' that distorts or threatens to distort competition within the European Union. In practice this means that any co-financed (ESF) funding support given to enterprises that could be construed as giving them a competitive advantage over other enterprises in the European Union will fall under European rules regarding State Aid.

It is important to note that State Aid can apply to public and private sector organisations and also charities if they are producing or selling products or services that can compete in a commercial environment (whether for profit or not).

Guidance will be provided on State Aid to the successful applicant(s), however it is important to note the following limits to ESF for SME and Large Enterprises that are benefiting from State Aid (training resulting from this Tender Specification) under the State Aid General Block Exemption. Above these limits cash or where agreed with the LSC, in-kind contributions must be sought from the employer.

It should also be noted that the LSC expects that **ALL** training delivered under this Tender Specification to be 'General' as defined below.

Large Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate (rates are for	25%	60%

information and relate to minimum state aid requirements, this tender is restricted to SMEs)		
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Small and Medium-sized Enterprises	Specific Training	General Training
Intervention Rate (rates are for information and relate to minimum state aid requirements, this tender is restricted to SMEs and requires an intervention rate of 60% for SMEs)	35%	70%

Definition of General training is: If the training of employees is applicable not only to an employees' present or future position in the enterprise being assisted because the provision of qualifications provides transferable skills that substantially improve the employability of the employee concerned. Where training leads to the award of National Vocational qualifications and Key Skills Qualifications training will be considered to be general in nature

Definition of Specific training is: Where training provided is principally applicable to the employee's present or future position in the assisted enterprise and provides qualifications that are not transferable, the maximum aid intensities for specific training will apply.

The programme will provide 60% funding support for customised training needs which cannot be delivered through LSC mainstream delivery. The employer must make a 40% cash contribution to the programme (unless under exceptional circumstances and where specifically agreed with the LSC in writing and in advance, where in kind contributions or Deminimis may be agreed as applicable).

Under Structural Fund Regulations the LSC is required to ensure that SkillWorks support is used to obtain added value in a cost effective way. This means that statutory training or assessment is specifically excluded from the programme. For example, where a Training Needs Analysis identifies a requirement for Gas Fitters, SkillWorks would be unable to pay for the Gas Fitter training, or any associated assessment or registration fees required by statutory legislation.

Each month providers will be expected to submit a monitoring claim and performance claim to the Learning and Skills Council.

State Aid requirements dictate that each beneficiary company must contribute to the total cost of support provided. Therefore this allocation is conditional on the beneficiary company providing the correct financial contribution to the cost of training by each benefiting company. The company contribution must be financial and cannot be made in-kind (unless under exceptional circumstances and where specifically agreed with the LSC in writing and in advance, where in kind contributions or Deminimis may be agreed as applicable). The employer contribution may change in future years. All evidence of employer financial contributions must be readily available for audit purposes.

Providers will be responsible for securing and evidencing the employer contribution, this evidence must be readily available for audit purposes. No claim against the ESF will be valid until the employer contribution has been received by the provider. The provider will be required to complete company information records and state aid documentation for all companies supported through the programme.

Start and end dates

Projects must not start activity before 1 June 2009 and must complete all of their activity by 31 December 2010 (including evaluation and dissemination activities). Projects must not recruit

individuals if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve the outcomes of the project. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

The Learning and Skills Council would expect no more than 4 contracts to deliver this element of the programme.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, such as starts, qualifications, job outcomes, companies assisted; as applicable with the activity defined in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1 June 2009 and 31st December 2010.

Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

The below table is provided as an example of how a full contract award for the full allocation of funding and associated deliverables would look like. For this illustration, volumes have been split between accredited and non accredited deliverables; in the contract issued the volumes will need to be split across specific levels of accredited qualifications as listed below. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Deliverable ID	Deliverable Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
S2	SME Employees engaged in learning activity	£100	4000	£400,000
S4	Employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity	£650	2000	£1,300,000
S5	Employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications	£650	2000	£1,300,000
S6	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 1 or Notional Level 1	£650		
S7	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 2 or Notional Level 2	£650		
S8	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 3 or Notional Level 3	£650		
S9	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 4 or Notional Level 4	£650		
S10	Employees undertaking qualification at Level 5 or Notional Level 5	£650		
A2	Completion of non-accredited learning activity	£1,000	1500	£1,500,000
A2	Achievement of externally accredited qualifications	£1,000	1500	£1,500,000

A3	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 1 or notional Level 1	£1,000.		
A4	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 2 or notional Level 2	£1,000		
A5	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 3 or notional Level 3	£1,000		
A6	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 4 or notional Level 4	£1,000		
A7	Part Achievement of a qualification at Level 5 or notional Level 5	£1,000		
A8	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 1 or notional Level 1	£1,000		
A9	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 2 or notional Level 2	£1,000		
A10	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 3 or notional Level 3	£1,000		
A11	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 4 or notional Level 4	£1,000		
A12	Full achievement of a Qualification at Level 5 or notional Level 5	£1,000		
C3	SMEs engaged	£0.00	200	£0
M11	Project Evaluation including Case Studies (evaluations to be submitted February and August and Case Studies May and November) + Final Evaluation at Project End	£0.00		£0
Total				£6,000,000

Subcontracting

If the Contractor wishes to work with a sub-contractor that is not named in the original bid and the value of the sub-contracting arrangement exceeds £10,000, the activity must be competitively tendered for. Where only one provider is available then permission must be sought from the LSC before the sub-contract is agreed. Where the value is £10,000 or below, then, providing they can demonstrate value for money, the Contractor can source specialist providers directly to sub-contract with, without the need for tendering.

Title: North West including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area – Employer Pool and Integrated Career Development Mentoring Programme	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S34
<p>Aim</p> <p>The Learning and Skills Council is seeking to appoint organisations or consortia of organisations to develop, and deliver an innovative method of providing Apprentices with real work opportunities using a matrix approach to portfolio development with different employers.</p> <p>The aim of the programme is to offer employers and individuals the chance to access a wider range of employment / Apprentice opportunities by pooling part time employment opportunities in different employers to create a full time Apprenticeship opportunity.</p> <p>This programme also aims to increase participation and achievement on the Apprenticeship programme by young people, whilst providing opportunities for employers to meet their workforce development and employment needs.</p>	
<p>Service requirement</p> <p>LSC seeks to procure a range of pilot programmes to test different delivery models to fulfil the above aim. A core aspect of the delivery models will be the generation of employment opportunities and co-ordination between part time Apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Through this Invitation to Tender, LSC is seeking a suitably qualified and experienced Apprenticeship or similar training provider as a lead or consortium member who will identify an employer, group of employers, sector or geographic area to pilot this activity.</p>	
<p>Scope of the employer pool</p> <p>The LSC believes employer needs can be addressed through greater innovation and flexibility in identifying Apprentice placement opportunities. This model may be applicable to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ micro / smaller employers - an obvious example where the employer cannot commit to a full time opportunity for an Apprentice, but could offer a part time opportunity. It is envisaged that a particular sector group (potentially catering and hospitality, retail or technology park/ICT or voluntary and community sector) or a particular industrial estate or borough could be the setting; or ○ public sector - where a matrix approach across departments may be more desirable and appropriate to the Apprentice; or ○ construction sector - where a greater range of experience could be developed by sharing a pool of Apprentices across a major construction site or development; or ○ a particular large employer e.g. from the Automotive sector - working with their supply chain to offer a wider range of opportunities without needing the initial commitment to offering full time opportunities; or ○ a group of employers from a member organisation – such as chambers of commerce or a provider with a close working relationship to a business federation either local or regional. In this case the member organisation could provide the co-ordination and key employer links, demonstrating links with other providers. <p>The above bullets reflect LSC thoughts on the potential opportunities for this contract; however more innovative models are welcomed. Please note that there is a separate Tender Specification focused entirely on the Creative and Media industries therefore we are not seeking proposals for this sector via this Tender Specification.</p> <p>Capacity</p>	

The successful applicant will demonstrate the capacity to:

- flexibly respond to employer Apprentice needs;
- design and maintain a programme such as the Employer Pool and their approach to establishing an 'Employer Pool' and its working parameters;
- organise the logistics of Apprentice travel between work placements;
- monitor the agreed activities and work with an Apprenticeship provider against an agreed activity plan or career progression pathway;
- deliver a career management and mentoring support programme, to assist young people with the next steps in their career development with support from Connexions.

In addition the successful applicant will demonstrate:

- a thorough understanding of LSC funded Apprentice programmes in the Northwest and understand the benefits to local businesses;
- a track record of delivering and co-ordinating collaborative projects across employers, individuals and stakeholders;
- a track record of delivery of mentoring support to young people.

Capability

The successful applicant will demonstrate the capability to:

- engage employers. The successful applicant must be capable of bringing together Apprentices and employers for mutual benefit. It is preferable for applicants to identify the employer(s) and partners committed to their model as part of their tender;
- manage or provide a 'host' organisation that would employ the individual Apprentices within the pool of talent available for the employer pool to hire;
- develop a unitised portfolio approach to the completion of the individuals framework;
- develop an evaluation framework as an integral part of the programme.

Operating Methodology

As the service requirement is complex, the LSC will consider proposals that require additional development time prior to delivery. Providers should set out within their tender wherever possible how their employer pool will operate i.e:

- who will employ the Apprentices as the 'host' employer;
- which Apprentice providers will be involved in delivery;
- Programme led whilst not in placement - how and where Apprentices will undertake a programme led approach to their Apprenticeship in-between placements with companies;
- which employers are or will be engaged within the employer pool and what 'boundaries' in terms of sector or geographic location will be set.

LSC are aware that providers may have concerns regarding success rates in implementing an untested methodology of Apprenticeship delivery. LSC are willing to discuss methods of ensuring providers maintain their success rates during their participation in the Employer Pool.

Host employer

The LSC recognises the importance of the host employer role and the potential complication of committing to longer term employment after 12 months. In some employer pool models the identification of a host employer, be that a large employer or provider may be easier than others. LSC envisages Apprentices 'graduating' from the pool after the completion of their framework or earlier if an employer (within the pool or outside of it) requires their services on a full time basis.

Career Development Mentoring

It is envisaged that Employer Pool Apprentices will require additional mentoring support in order to develop their career. Applicants should outline as stated earlier their capability and capacity for providing mentoring support and how Employer Pool Apprentices will be supported. As part of this support, the Apprentices should be assisted in developing a portfolio of their placement experiences in order to develop CVs to help secure longer term placements either within the

Employer Pool or with other companies.

Sustainability through mainstream provision

A major outcome of this work will be a sustainable Employer Pool(s) which will provide Apprentice placements via new and innovative methods. Providers should outline how they will evaluate the project on an on-going basis. Successful applicants' evaluation reports will identify how their development will be sustainable through mainstream Apprenticeship provision in the longer term.

Potential pilots should demonstrate employer or sector initial commitment to a long term relationship to meet their employment needs as part of the tender, successful applicants will then evaluate this commitment on an on-going basis in order to inform the final evaluation report and future work.

Target groups & priority

The main focus of this programme are employers of any size and in any sector who have workforce needs on a part time basis that could benefit an Apprentice portfolio.

Geography / area of delivery

The provision should be available across the whole of the Northwest including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area.

Geography or thematic distinction

Applicants should outline the limits of this activity within their application within the North West. The limits of the activity may be employers within a borough, sub-region or for example, a particular industrial park.

Alternatively the limits may be thematic to a particular sector, for example the LSC envisage opportunities within the Construction and Automotive sectors and/or with a key employer and their supply chain.

Outputs

Proposals should identify delivery of the following outputs:

Merseyside Phasing-In Area

Output	Total for programme
Employer Pool Network	up to 4 (1 per contract)
Co-ordinated activity Plans for Apprentices Produced and agreed	284
Employers recruited as members of the Employer Pool	142

North West Region (excluding the Merseyside Phasing-In Area)

Output	Total for programme
Employer Pool Network	up to 6 (1 per contract)
Co-ordinated activity Plans for Apprentices Produced and agreed	458
Employers recruited as members of the Employer Pool	229

Results

This programme should generate the following results:

Merseyside Phasing-In Area

Result	Total for programme
Participants move into full time employment	142

at end of support	
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North West Region (excluding the Merseyside Phasing-In Area)

Result	Total for programme
Participants move into full time employment at end of support	229

In addition, projects should also deliver the following:

- Increased penetration rate of hard to reach SMEs into apprenticeships;
- More employers accessing LSC services such as Apprenticeships and Train to Gain;
- More employers with an incentive to engage with the Train to Gain Brokerage service and Skills Pledge.

Other outcomes

The following outcomes are required:

Outcome	Total for programme
Opportunities for individuals provided through the employer pool	742
Additional referrals to Train to Gain Service from the Employer Pool	742
Sustainability / Evaluation - The successful applicant will be required to conduct regular on going evaluation, collating: the views of employers; participants; and providers to inform future procurement.	up to 4 (1 per contract) in the North West (excluding Merseyside Phasing In Area) in addition up to 6 (1 per contract) for Merseyside Phasing In Area

Successful providers will also be required to submit a 6 monthly Performance and Evaluation Report.

Funding available

The total amount of funding available for this invitation to tender is £2,819,515 of which £1,080,000 is ringfenced for the Merseyside Phasing In Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral) and £1,739,515 is available for the rest of the Northwest. Payments will be made on a monthly basis in accordance with a profile agreed between the LSC and the provider.

Costings

Applicants should detail the following within their costings :

- cost of further development time prior to commencement of delivery;
- estimated cost of participant allowances for Employer Pool Apprentices;
- administration and co-ordination costs..
- mentoring support costs including induction to the Employer Pool.

Delivery costs should be met from LSC mainstream Apprenticeship contracts. LSC does not envisage any additional Assessor costs as a result of the Employer Pool. The associated Apprenticeship provider will be fully aware of how functional skills will replace key skills within frameworks from 2010.

Apprentice Participant Allowance

Apprentices should receive a Participant Allowance of £80 per week. Minimum earnings for all Apprentices will rise from £80 to £95 August 2009. The allowance will comply with minimum earnings throughout the programme. Whilst on placement the allowance must be paid by the employer through the provider, whilst between placements the allowance must be paid by the successful applicant lead using monies detailed within this Tender Specification. It is assumed that on average each participant will spend on average 10 weeks between employer placements.

State Aid

State Aid will not apply to contracts awarded via this Tender Specification as this programme is supporting the delivery of the Apprenticeship programme which is available to all enterprises.

Start and end dates

Projects may not start activity before 1st May 2009 and must complete all of their activity by 31st July 2011 (including evaluation and dissemination activities). Projects must not recruit individuals if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve the outcomes of the project.

The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary

Contracting details

The Learning and Skills Council would expect to award no more than 10 contracts to deliver this programme. We anticipate that the minimum contract size would be 30 Apprentices.

The below table is provided as an example of how a full contract award for the full allocation of funding and associated deliverables would look. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Del ID	Del Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
S32	Brokerage Activity (employer pools formed)	£5,000	10	£50,000
S2	Participant Assessment (activity plan)	£50	742	£37,100
S4	Participant Start (receives mentoring and 2 nd part time/short term full time job)	£500	742	£371,000
S22	Participant On Programme Payment (two per learner showing mentoring/support received)	£1,250	1113	£1,391,250
A2	Participant Achievement (completed support)	£900	371	£333,900
P3	Progression into employment (progresses to full time job role at end of support)	£900	371	£333,900
C1	Companies supported (employers engaged in employer pool)	£815	371	£302,365
M11	Referral to Train to Gain (from employers – not necessarily learners on this project)	£0	742	£0
Total Funding				£2,819,515

Note – where contracts span Merseyside Phasing in and the North West then 2 contracts will be issued.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, as detailed above and in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and

performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1st May 2009 and 31st July 2011.

Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

Subcontracting

If the Contractor wishes to work with a sub-contractor that is not named in the original bid and the value of the sub-contracting arrangement exceeds £10,000, the activity must be competitively tendered for. Where only one provider is available then permission must be sought from the LSC before the sub-contract is agreed. Where the value is £10,000 or below, then, providing they can demonstrate value for money, the Contractor can source specialist providers directly to sub-contract with, without the need for tendering.

Title: North West including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area - Employer Engagement in Creative and Media Apprentices	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S35
<p>Aim</p> <p>The Learning and Skills Council is seeking to appoint a single organisation or consortium of organisations to develop, and deliver an innovative method of providing Media and Creative Apprentices with real work opportunities on a portfolio basis.</p> <p>This programme aims to increase participation and achievement on the Apprenticeship programme by young people, whilst also providing opportunities for employers to meet workforce development needs. Evidence (through employer feedback) suggests that for some employers, there are several factors that prevent them from engaging fully in the Apprenticeship programme. For example, for smaller employers an apprenticeship opportunity can only be offered on a part time basis.</p> <p>Whilst much progress has been made working with employers to generate apprenticeship opportunities locally, there remains considerable work to be done to increase the company penetration rate in terms of the numbers offering apprenticeship places throughout the region.</p>	
<p>Service requirement</p> <p>The Learning and Skills Council is seeking to run a pilot programme to test out different delivery models. A key aspect of the delivery models will be the generation, co-ordination and collaboration of apprenticeship opportunities within a number of different sub sectors and with several employers. This method of Apprentice delivery has the potential to offer employers and individuals the chance to access a wider range of employment/ apprentice opportunities by pooling part –time opportunities to create a full time apprenticeship opportunity.</p> <p>A key requirement of the programme will be regular on going evaluation; the views of employers, participants and providers should form part of the evaluation and will also form part of the final report.</p>	
<p>Identification of Apprentices</p> <p>The successful applicant will work with employers in the sectors to generate opportunities for Apprentices and will broker across employers a collaborative delivery model to create a full time opportunity. The applicant will then work with providers and with Connexions to identify and match up suitable candidates with employers.</p>	
<p>Apprenticeship provision</p> <p>This programme will not replace or provide monies for Apprenticeship qualification delivery. The successful applicant as part of their consortium or from within their own organisation will work with a provider or range of Apprenticeship providers.</p>	
<p>Responsibilities</p> <p>The successful applicant will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of an evaluation framework as an integral part of the programme; • the establishment of an ‘Employer Pool’ and its working parameters; • the logistics of Apprentice travel between work placements; • the development of a unitised portfolio approach to the completion of the individuals framework working with an established Apprenticeship provider; • managing or providing a ‘host ‘organisation that would employ the individual Apprentices within the pool of talent available for the employer pool to hire; 	

- a 'host' or co-ordinating body who would have the capacity and capability to carefully monitor the agreed activities and work with the apprenticeship provider so that the needs of both the employer and individual are met fully within an agreed activity plan or career progression pathway;
- a Career Management and Mentoring Programme that is integrated within this offer to programme participants, which will assist the individual to understand the next steps in career development and progression, and which links into appropriate Information, Advice and Guidance working with Connexions;
- the provision of opportunities for the employer to have a trial period with the individual to see how they fit into their company or organisation;

Companies making up the employer pool

The LSC believes these employer needs can be addressed through greater innovation and flexibility. Whilst smaller employers are an obvious example for a potential employer pool, this scenario may also be relevant to other sectors such as the public sector.

The provider will be responsible for investigating whether employers need to be provided with incentives to become a member of the 'employer' pool. This element of the programme will be treated as action research and will be considered in consultation with the LSC should demand for the programme not be immediately apparent.

Additionally, there may exist a group of businesses or organisations who, whilst being in a position to provide full-time apprenticeship opportunities (including facilitation of the full framework completion) may be receptive to providing a number of shorter opportunities to a greater number of apprenticeship participants who could then complete their framework (and perhaps with more than one business or organisation).

Company Engagement

Applicants will demonstrate their ability to meet the part time employment needs of small employers and how they will be engaged.

The successful applicant must also be capable of bringing together Apprentices and employers to mutual benefit. One of the primary mechanisms for employer engagement will be through intermediaries such as Business Link, Professional Firms, Chambers of Commerce, Trades Unions and other potential channels to market.

Tender Requirements

Through this Tender Specification, the LSC is seeking a suitably qualified and experienced Apprenticeship provider in this sector with experience for young people delivery and to deliver a fully integrated programme of promotional activity to achieve the responsibilities stated above.

The Learning and Skills Council requires that potential providers satisfy the following requirements:

- Be able to demonstrate the ability to be flexible in their approach and be able to respond to employer needs within a rapidly changing employment/ learning and development agenda;
- Be able to demonstrate their ability to work across and engage with apprenticeship providers across the North West Region
- Have a thorough understanding of LSC funded Apprentice programmes and understand the benefits that each can bring to local businesses;
- Have a track record of delivering and co-ordinating collaborative projects across employers, individuals and stakeholders;

- Possess the technical ability to design and maintain a management information system to track and report on progress of individual apprentices.

Target groups & priority

The main focus of this programme are Small and Medium Enterprises (although large employers are not excluded) who have workforce needs, possibly on a part time basis, that could benefit an Apprentice portfolio.

For ESF purposes an SME is defined as an enterprise which has:

- fewer than 250 employees; and **either**
- an annual turnover of 50 million euros (approximately £35m) or less; **or**
- an annual balance-sheet total of 43 million euros (approximately £30m) or less.

The organisations supported must be located within the Northwest or the Merseyside Phasing-In Area.

Geography / area of delivery

The provision should be available across the whole of the Northwest including the Merseyside Phasing-In Area.

Outputs

Proposals must identify delivery of the following outputs:

Output	Northwest	Merseyside Phasing-In Area	Total for programme
Employer Pool Network	4	1	5
Co-ordinated activity Plans for Apprentices Produced and agreed	66	24	90
Employers recruited as members of the Employer Pool	30	12	42

Results

Proposals must identify delivery of the following results:

Results	Northwest	Merseyside Phasing-In Area	Total for programme
Participants move into full time employment at end of support	32	12	44

Other outcomes

This programme should generate the following outcomes:

- Increased penetration rate of hard to reach SMEs into apprenticeships;
- More employers accessing LSC services such as Apprenticeships and Train to Gain;
- Promotional materials and awareness raising activities targeted at which informs employers and employer intermediaries of opportunities and good practice;
- Production of new good news case studies;

Successful providers will be required to provide a 6 monthly performance and evaluation report.

Funding available

The total amount of funding available for this invitation to tender is £300,100 of this £81,000 is ringfenced for the Merseyside Phasing-In Area (Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral)

and £219,100 is available for the rest of the Northwest.

Payments will be made on a monthly basis in accordance with a profile agreed between the LSC and the provider.

State Aid

State Aid will not apply to contracts awarded via this Tender Specification as this programme is supporting the delivery of the Apprenticeship programme which is available to all enterprises.

Start and end dates

Projects must not start activity before 1 May 2009 and must complete all of their activity by 31 July 2011 (including evaluation and dissemination activities). Projects must not recruit individuals if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve the outcomes of the project. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

The Learning and Skills Council would expect no more than 1 contract to deliver this programme.

The below table is provided as an example of how a full contract award for the full allocation of funding and associated deliverables would look. Providers should use these deliverables to profile their delivery. These deliverables will be used to identify the contribution providers are making to the delivery of the outputs and results required for this Tender Specification.

Del ID	Del Name	Unit Cost	Volume	Payment
S32	Brokerage Activity (employer pools formed)	£4,000	5	£20,000
S2	Participant Assessment (activity plan)	£40	90	£3,600
S4	Participant Start (receives mentoring and 2 nd part time/short term full time job)	£500	90	£45,000
S22	Participant On Programme Payment (two per learner showing mentoring/support received)	£1,000	134	£134,000
A2	Participant Achievement (completed support)	£750	44	£33,000
P3	Progression into employment (progresses to full time job role at end of support)	£750	44	£33,000
C1	Companies supported (employers engaged in employer pool)	£750	42	£31,500
M11	Referral to Train to Gain (from	£0		£0

	employers – not necessarily learners on this project)			
Total Funding				£300,100

Note – where contracts span Merseyside Phasing in and the North West then 2 contracts will be issued.

The Learning and Skills Council intends to contract the activity within this tender specification against a set of deliverables, as detailed above and in the Outputs and Results section of this Tender Specification. Each key deliverable will be assigned a unit cost and the LSC will pay against this profile of activity. Successful applicants will be required to submit regular learner and performance related information to the LSC and the LSC will normally reconcile contracts on a quarterly basis, which will affect future profile payments, or seek to recover funds where necessary.

The Learning and Skills Council may also choose to invite projects to be retained on a reserve list to enable them to be funded at a later point.

Providers' responses to the tender should indicate the maximum amount of funding expected to be drawn down between 1 May 2009 and 31 July 2011.

Initial contracts may be small in size, but will have the potential to be increased subject to performance and budget availability. Contract increases will be both financial and for a proportionate level of volumes. Providers are asked to identify any issues regarding the scaling back of provision.

Subcontracting

If the Contractor wishes to work with a sub-contractor that is not named in the original bid and the value of the sub-contracting arrangement exceeds £10,000, the activity must be competitively tendered for. Where only one provider is available then permission must be sought from the LSC before the sub-contract is agreed. Where the value is £10,000 or below, then, providing they can demonstrate value for money, the Contractor can source specialist providers directly to sub-contract with, without the need for tendering.