



European Union
European Social Fund
Investing in jobs and skills

**LEARNING AND SKILLS
COUNCIL NORTH WEST**

ESF CO-FINANCE



Leading learning and skills

EMPLOYER SPECIFICATIONS

MARCH 2008

Reference	Title	Page No
NW/EMPLOYER/S16	Greater Merseyside (Merseyside Phasing In Area) – SkillWorks	2
NW/EMPLOYER/S17	Northwest including Halton - Skills Pledge Plus	9
NW/EMPLOYER/S18	Northwest including Merseyside – NVQ Level 4	13
NW/EMPLOYER/S19	Northwest including Merseyside Vocationally Relevant Second NVQ Level 2	19

For Information Only

Title: Greater Merseyside (Merseyside Phasing In Area) – SkillWorks	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S16
<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"> A. 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. B. 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. C. Effective – ensuring the programme is streamlined and enables maximum impact to be derived from programme investments. D. Timely - capable of meeting SME needs rapidly. E. Accessible and Understandable - a straightforward process that enables SMEs to access support promptly and appropriately. F. Simple - uncomplicated for all users and stakeholders including SMEs. G. Establishes Clear Relationships – develops a sense of partnership and clarity of role for all partners and SME beneficiaries. H. Value for Money – ensures that available resources are focused upon the SME. I. 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. J. Deliverable - capable of enabling programme targets to be delivered. K. 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.</p>	

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

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.

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;

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

- > 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 be 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 (delivery ref: 45);	A minimum of 55 companies
Employees undertaking externally accredited qualifications	A minimum of 555 (based on a on assumption of an average cost of £3000 per individual)
Employees undertaking non-accredited learning activity	A minimum of 555 (based on a on assumption of an average cost of £3000 per individual)
Company/organisation training needs analysis (TNA) completed	A minimum of 55 companies
Individuals accessing appropriate sector skills passports	A minimum of 55(based on an assumption of 5% of overall learners)

Results

- > Company/organisation supported i.e. employers receiving training– a minimum of 55 companies
- > Completion of non-accredited learning activity – a minimum of 555
- > Achievement of externally accredited learning qualifications – a minimum of 555

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

Funding available

Total ESF funding for this programme is approximately **£2,000,000**. The total budget for SkillWorks including the employer 40% contribution will be **£3,333,333**. 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.

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

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).

New guidance is currently being developed on State Aid. This guidance will be provided to the successful applicant(s); however providers should anticipate requiring a 40% contribution from SMEs. Contributions can be cash or in-kind contributions.

For successful applicants the contract value may be split equally across the number of months the contract will run. This will enable providers to start the programme promptly and to manage cash flow in the initial stages of the programme. 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 August 2008 and must complete all of their activity by 31st 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 1 contract 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

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

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.

For Information Only

Title: Northwest including Halton - Skills Pledge Plus	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S17
Aim	
<p>The project is intended to stimulate and address demand for workforce development amongst employers across the region (excluding the Merseyside phasing-in area) 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 eg 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 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. This funding may not be used to fund any statutory training. The funding may only be used to support the delivery of L4 or L5 qualifications for employees of small organisations in the Northwest excluding Merseyside and in the Merseyside Phasing-In area may be used to support employees of SMEs.</p> <p>For ESF purposes a small enterprise is defined as an enterprise which has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ fewer than 50 employees; and either➤ an annual turnover of 10 million euros (approximately £7m) or less; or➤ an annual balance-sheet total of 10 million euros (approximately £7m) or less. <p>For ESF purposes an SME is defined as an enterprise which has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 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. <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 detail how effective working relationships will be developed. Tenders should clearly explain how the contractor proposes to market Skills Pledge Plus to 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 eg workshops and events organised on a geographical or sectoral basis; capacity building of providers to enable them to manage employers through the pledge process; development of North West case studies and dissemination through employer forums.</p> <p>Tenders must clearly demonstrate the rationale for the proposed activities and explain how they will contribute to promoting the Skills Pledge.</p> <p>When the employer has reached the commitment stage of the Skills Pledge, within State Aid</p>	

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

regulations 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.

Applicants must clearly demonstrate in their tenders how they will ensure impartiality in finding training solutions, particularly where the applicant is also a deliverer of training provision.

Providers will need to ensure that this funding does not displace other mainstream funding. For example, Skills Pledge Plus funding should not be used to fund activities that can be funded through Train to Gain or Leadership and Management funding.

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.

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). 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 including public sector organisations may be supported. Training to support low skilled public sector workers to gain basic skills and level 2

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

qualifications is eligible. This is because the benefits of training at this level primarily benefit the individuals concerned and promote career development and mobility. Training of public sector workers at level 3 and above is ineligible except in the following cases:

- Training of trainers in the public sector to deliver basic skills and other provision to support ESF priority groups, is eligible at any level;
- Where specific gaps in level 3 training are identified in regional ESF frameworks

The following are considered to be part of the public sector:

- Central Government;
- local authorities;
- the armed forces;
- NHS Trusts; and
- public education sector.

Geography / area of delivery

The fund should be available to employers across the whole of the North West excluding Merseyside. Indicative sub-regional share of the provision is as follows:

- Cheshire and Warrington - £236,250
- Cumbria - £121,500
- Greater Manchester – £621,000
- Lancashire – £358,425
- Halton – £12,825

Outputs

- Not applicable

Results

The following results must be delivered:

- 1,000 employers completing Stage 4 of the Skills Pledge.

Other outcomes

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

- An annual 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.
- Innovative proposals for maximising the take up of the Skills Pledge.

Funding available

A total of £1,350,000 is available over three years. No more than £100,000 of this funding may be used on management and administration costs and up to £250,000 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.

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

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).

New guidance is currently being developed on State Aid. This guidance will be provided to the successful applicant(s); however providers should anticipate requiring a 40% contribution from SMEs and 50% contributions from large companies. Contributions can be cash or in-kind contributions.

Start and end dates

The project should commence on 1 August 2008 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 North West excluding Merseyside.

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.

Title: Northwest including Merseyside – NVQ Level 4	Reference: NWEMPLOYER/S18
<p>Aim</p> <p>This activity aims to support employers in the North West to develop their workforce and to raise regional skills levels by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enabling employees who do not hold a NVQ Level 4 or equivalent to achieve their first full NVQ Level 4, at a subsidised cost to the employer.• Enabling employees who already hold a NVQ Level 4 or equivalent to achieve an NVQ 4 that is vocationally relevant to their current job.• Expanding the Train to Gain offer by ensuring individuals have access to progression routes, for example from NVQ Level 3 to NVQ Level 4 and from Foundation Degree to NVQ Level 4.• Enhancing the higher level skills offer across the region, complementing the provision already available.• Supporting sectors identified as priorities in relation to higher level skills. <p>Service requirement</p> <p>The requirement is for providers to deliver the full NVQ Level 4 qualification, primarily for employees who do not already hold an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent, but who do hold a full Level 3 qualification. Employees without a Level 3 but for whom a Level 4 is appropriate should be supported as ‘level 4 jumpers’ through mainstream Train to Gain.</p> <p>Where providers are proposing to deliver vocationally relevant second NVQ Level 4s, applicants should note that it is the intention of the Learning and Skills Council to restrict allocations for second L4 to no more than 20% of the total funding available for this provision. Such allocations will be made alongside allocations for first Level 4s. Applicants should note that tenders solely for delivery of second Level 4 provision will not be approved.</p> <p>Applicants should also note that this tender specification is strategically aligned to the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder (HLSP). The HLSP is being expanded to cover an additional three priority sectors, and will also support the development of provision which is not eligible for Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding i.e. non-prescribed HE (including NVQs).</p> <p>It is anticipated that any non-prescribed programmes developed through HLSP that meet the requirements set out in this specification could be delivered through providers successful in securing contracts against this Invitation to Tender.</p> <p>The Learning and Skills Council will consider applications for delivery of full qualifications that are equivalent to NVQ Level 4, provided that an NVQ Level 4 does not exist in the relevant sector and that the applicant can clearly demonstrate there is a demand for the qualification. Applicants will be expected to clearly show that equivalents are “true” equivalents in terms of delivery hours and content.</p> <p>This funding can only be used to deliver qualification types currently fundable by the LSC, and therefore cannot be used to deliver qualifications fundable by HEFCE.</p> <p>Sectors</p> <p>Provision for full NVQ Level 4 can be delivered across all sectors, however applicants should note that the Learning and Skills Council will prioritise funding for qualifications to be delivered in the</p>	

following North West regional priority sectors;

- Advanced engineering and materials (especially aerospace and engineering, automotive, chemicals, advanced flexible materials/technical textiles)
- Bio-medical
- Business and professional services
- Construction
- Digital and creative industries
- Energy and environmental technologies
- Food and Drink
- Voluntary and Community Sector (particularly for Leadership and Management)

Applicants must complete Appendix A to identify the sectors and qualifications they propose to deliver.

Successful providers will be part of the broad Train to Gain service, and should seek where possible to make available a wide range of provision to employers, drawing on the range of funding and contracts they have available to meet their needs.

Providers should also ensure that where an employer has skill needs they are unable to address, an appropriate referral is made to another provider or the Skills Brokerage service to ensure that the employer's needs are met.

Engagement of employers and individuals

Applicants should explain how they will engage employers, whether through existing relationships with employers (e.g. employers already engaged with Train to Gain) or through the engagement of new employers in upskilling their workforce. Applicants should also explain how they will market the programme to employers as part of an integrated package of skills solutions and how they will work with Business Link Northwest and with other providers to ensure that where appropriate, employers working with providers that do not deliver NVQ Level 4 provision are referred to this programme.

Applicants should explain how they will recruit individuals for the programme and should describe in detail how they will carry out initial assessment to ascertain the learners' skills, experience and learning styles together with any Accredited Prior Learning.

The proposal must also describe how individual needs will be identified and addressed, including assessment of Skills for Life (SfL). The provider will be expected to produce an Individual Learning Plan for each learner with milestones to show progress, including SfL where appropriate.

Effective Information, Advice and Guidance are an important aspect of this programme, in particular in terms of encouraging participation, giving ongoing support to learners during the programme and facilitating progression. Applicants must state whether they hold the Matrix standard for IAG or are working towards it. Applicants who do not hold Matrix should explain how they will provide an equivalent level of support, for example delivery of IAG by partners who are Matrix-accredited.

Successful providers will be required to obtain the employer's Unique Reference Number (URN) from the LSC (or its contractor) which must be entered on each learner's Individual Learner Record (ILR). Providers must ensure that they have appropriate management information systems in place to collect and submit data to the Learning and Skills Council on a monthly basis.

Delivery of training

Applicants should explain how they will ensure that delivery is flexible to meet learners' and employers' needs. The expectation is that the Assess-Train-Assess model will be utilised to ensure learners receive credit for prior learning. The delivery of NVQs should be focused on workplace delivery; for other qualification types the delivery model should be designed to meet employer needs; providers should set out how their delivery model will operate and show how that approach best meets employer needs.

Quality

Applicants must demonstrate in their tenders how they will provide training to the required quality, as detailed below.

- Providers will need to demonstrate they have a track record of delivering high quality provision to employers and employees. 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. Applicants are required to provide a narrative in Question 8 – Ensuring Quality of Provision which addresses this, this will be checked during Contract Clarification.
- Providers should note that the direction of travel for the LSC is that the preferred external accredited standard is the Training Quality Standard.
- Providers will need to show appropriate completion rates for each sector in which they wish to deliver. Previous and planned completion rates will be an important aspect in the assessment of bids.

Notes

Applicants should note that during the lifetime of any contracts resulting from this tender specification, some of the eligible qualifications may change as a result of the appropriate Sector Skills Council (SSC) sector qualification strategy. The strategy will state which qualifications the SSC considers are priority qualifications for its sector and the LSC will agree with each SSC which qualifications it will prioritise for future funding. Providers will therefore need to ensure that the qualifications they are delivering continue to be amongst those that are approved by SSCs and agreed with the LSC for funding.

Target groups & priority

Learner eligibility

Employees aged 19+ who do not already hold an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent.
The provision will also be available to employees who already hold an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent and who wish to acquire a vocationally relevant NVQ Level 4 for their current job.

Company size

1) North West excluding Merseyside but including Halton

Eligible employees must be employed by Small Enterprises as defined below.

A Small Enterprise is defined as having:

- fewer than 50 employees; and **either**
- an annual turnover of less than €10m, or
- an annual balance sheet of less than €10m and;
- *is not more than one quarter owned by firms that do not qualify as SMEs under the above requirements*

2) Merseyside phasing-in area

Eligible employees must be employed by Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as defined below.

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.

All individual participants must either be a resident of or work in an organisation which is based in the geographic locations identified for this Tender Specification.

Geography / area of delivery

The provision should be available across the whole of the Northwest including Greater Merseyside.

Indicative contract values are provided below:

- Cheshire and Warrington – £272,477
- Cumbria - £141,338
- Greater Manchester – £708,349
- Lancashire – £403,087
- Halton - £30,000
- Merseyside phasing-in area - £1,072,000

Outputs

The **minimum outputs** which are required are:

North West including Halton

- 880 starts on NVQ Level 4
- Initial assessment for each learner including identification of SfL needs where appropriate
- Production of an individual learning plan for each learner reflecting the outcome of information, advice and guidance

Merseyside phasing-in area

- 610 starts on NVQ Level 4
- Initial assessment for each learner including identification of SfL needs where appropriate
- Production of an individual learning plan for each learner reflecting the outcome of information, advice and guidance

Results

The **minimum results** which are required are:

North West including Halton

- 572 (65%) of learners achieving an NVQ Level 4

Merseyside phasing-in area

- 397 (65%) of learners achieving an NVQ Level 4

Other outcomes

Funding available

A total of £2,627,000 comprised of £1,555,000 for the Northwest including Halton and £1,072,000 for the Merseyside phasing-in area.

The payment methodology will be based on the Employer Responsive model, i.e. 75% paid following the learner start, in monthly instalments over the expected length of stay on programme and the remainder when the learner achieves their NVQ Level 4.

The rates for the academic year 2008-09 in the table below reflect an assumed employer contribution of 42.5% which will increase in subsequent years. These rates will also apply to delivery of qualifications equivalent to NVQ Level 4.

Sector Subject Area	LSC Contribution	Assumed Employer Contribution (08/09: 42.5%)	Total Funding
Health, Public Services and Care	1927	1139	3066
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	1927	1139	3066
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	2312	1139	3452
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	2312	1139	3452
Information and Communication Technology	1541	1139	2681
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	1541	1139	2681
Transportation	2312	1139	3452
Hair and Beauty	1927	1139	3066
Hospitality	1541	1139	2681
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	1541	1139	2681
Business, Administration and Law	1541	1139	2681
Education and Training	1541	1139	2681

Start and end dates

Delivery should commence on 1 August 2008 and be completed by 31 December 2010.

Individuals must not be recruited for NVQ Level 4 if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve their learning outcomes. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary

Contracting details

Contracts may be awarded on a sub-regional basis or alternatively for the whole of the North West. To reduce administrative costs there will be a minimum contract value of £100,000 for each year of the contract.

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 date.

For Information Only

Title: Northwest including Merseyside Vocationally Relevant Second NVQ Level 2	Reference: NW/EMPLOYER/S19
Aim <p>The aim of this tender specification is to support employers to develop their workforce through the delivery of vocationally relevant second NVQ level 2 qualifications at a subsidised cost to the employer.</p> <p>This provision is intended to enhance the Train to Gain offer by widening the scope of employees who can benefit from subsidised training provision.</p>	
Service requirement <p>The LSC is seeking providers to deliver vocationally relevant second NVQ Level 2 qualifications as part of a holistic offer to employers. Provision can be delivered in any sector where there is demand, subject to the employer committing to provision of first NVQ Level 2 for eligible employees.</p> Employer engagement <p>Successful providers will need to both generate their own employer leads for the delivery of this activity and to work with Business Link North West to meet the needs of employers who have accessed Train to Gain via the Brokerage Service. Applicants should explain how they will engage employers, whether through existing relationships with employers or through the engagement of new employers.</p> <p>Successful providers will be part of the broad Train to Gain service, and should seek where possible to make available a wide range of provision to employers, drawing on the range of funding and contracts they have available, including for example Apprenticeships and ESF funded provision. Providers should also ensure that where an employer has skill needs they are unable to address, an appropriate referral is made to another provider or Business Link NW to ensure that the employer's needs are met.</p> <p>Applicants should explain how they will market and deliver Train to Gain to employers as an integrated solution to their skill needs.</p>	
Delivery Method <p>Providers are expected to deliver the qualifications in the workplace and to be flexible in meeting learners' and employers' needs. The Assess-Train-Assess model should be utilised to ensure learners receive credit for prior learning. Applicants should explain how they will ensure that delivery is flexible in order to meet both learners' and employer needs.</p> <p>Applicants must demonstrate how they would carry out initial assessment to ascertain the learners' individual needs, including assessment of Skills for Life (SfL). The provider will be expected to produce an individual learning plan for each learner with milestones to show progress and which must include SfL support if appropriate.</p> <p>It is not intended that this programme will fund separate SfL qualifications as they are already funded through Train to Gain and the European Social Fund. If the applicant does not hold a</p>	

contract for SfL provision, they must explain how they will work with partners to provide this support.

Effective Information, Advice and Guidance are an important aspect of this programme, in particular in terms of encouraging participation, giving ongoing support to learners during the programme and facilitating progression. Applicants must state whether they hold the Matrix standard for IAG or are working towards it. Applicants who do not hold Matrix should explain how they will provide an equivalent level of support, for example delivery of IAG by partners who are Matrix-accredited.

Quality

Applicants must demonstrate in their tenders how they will provide training to the required quality, as detailed below.

- Providers will need to demonstrate they have a track record of delivering high quality provision to employers and employees. Evidence of inspections grades of 3 or above or external quality assurance such as 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.
- Providers will need to show appropriate completion rates for each sector in which they wish to deliver. Previous and planned completion rates will be an important aspect in the assessment of bids.

Further information

Applicants should refer to the latest version of the Train to Gain Funding Requirements <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/traintogain/> for further information about the delivery of provision in the workplace, SfL support and Information, Advice and Guidance. Applicants should also refer to *Train to Gain: A Plan for Growth* available for download at <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/> for information about the programme flexibilities available through mainstream Train to Gain funding, and visit <http://www.newstandard.co.uk> for information regarding the Training Quality Standard.

Applicants should note that during the lifetime of any contracts resulting from this tender specification, some of the eligible qualifications may change as a result of the appropriate Sector Skills Council (SSC) sector qualification strategy. The strategy will state which qualifications the SSC considers are priority qualifications for its sector and the LSC will agree with each SSC which qualifications it will prioritise for future funding. Providers will therefore need to ensure that the qualifications they are delivering continue to be amongst those that are approved by SSCs and agreed with the LSC for funding.

Employer Unique Reference Number (URN)

Successful providers will be required to contact Business Link Northwest in order to obtain the employer's URN which must be entered on each learner's Individual Learner Record (ILR). Providers must ensure that they have appropriate management information systems in place to collect and submit data to the Learning and Skills Council on a monthly basis.

Target groups & priority

Employees aged 19+ who fall into these categories:

- 1) Already hold an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualification (or higher qualification), gained more than 5 years ago and who need a vocationally relevant NVQ2 for their current job role or;
- 2) Already hold an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualification (or higher qualification), have changed job role or moved into a new occupational sector for which they require a vocationally relevant NVQ2 ;

And who are a resident of or work in an organisation which is based in the geographic locations identified for this Tender Specification.

And whose employer has already committed or is willing to commit to provision of first NVQ Level 2 for eligible employees.

Volunteers are also eligible (as part of the organisation's workforce where the employer is involved in Train to Gain) and some self-employed learners, especially those within regional sector arrangements.

Where a learner's initial assessment and job role indicate that they would benefit from undertaking an NVQ Level 3 instead of NVQ Level 2, this will be funded at the same rate as for NVQ Level 2 (known as Level 3 jumpers)

Note : this tender excludes employees who achieve employment as a result of JobCentre Plus's Local Employment Partnership arrangements and who need to undertake a vocationally relevant NVQ Level 2, as they are eligible under Train to Gain.

Training of public sector workers at level 3 and above is ineligible except in the following cases:

- Training of trainers in the public sector to deliver basic skills and other provision to support ESF priority groups, is eligible at any level;
- Where specific gaps in level 3 training are identified in regional ESF frameworks

The following are considered to be part of the public sector:

- Central Government;
- local authorities;
- the armed forces;
- NHS Trusts; and
- public education sector.

Geography / area of delivery

The provision should be available across the whole of the Northwest including Greater

Merseyside.

Indicative proportions of funding available for each sub-region
Cheshire and Warrington - 15.5% = £936,883
Cumbria - 10% = £604,440
Greater Manchester – 46% = £2,780,426
Lancashire – 26% = £1,571,545
Halton – 2.5% = £151,110
Merseyside excluding Halton - £5,410,684 (Please note that this allocation is specifically ringfenced for the Merseyside Phasing-In Area.)

Total = £ 11,455,088
Providers should complete Appendix A indicating proposed volumes of starts for each SSA and sub-region.

Outputs

The minimum outputs which are required are detailed below:

North West excluding Merseyside

- 6,200 starts on NVQ Level 2 including NVQ Level 3 “jumpers”
- Initial assessment including identification of SfL needs where appropriate
- Production of an individual learning plan for each learner reflecting the outcome of information, advice and guidance

Merseyside phasing-in area

- 5,600 starts on NVQ Level 2 including NVQ Level 3 “jumpers”
- Initial assessment including identification of SfL needs where appropriate
- Production of an individual learning plan for each learner reflecting the outcome of information, advice and guidance

Results

As a minimum the results which are required are:

North West excluding Merseyside

- 4,340 (70%) of learners achieving an NVQ Level 2 (or NVQ Level 3 for L3 “jumpers”).
- Progression to NVQ Level 3 where this is appropriate for the learner

Merseyside phasing-in area

- 3,920 (70%) of learners achieving an NVQ Level 2 (or NVQ Level 3 for L3 “jumpers”).
- Progression to NVQ Level 3 where this is appropriate for the learner

Other outcomes

- SfL qualifications where appropriate delivered either by the applicant or by partners.

Funding available

A total of £11,455,088, comprised of £6,044,404 for the Northwest including Halton and £5,410,684 for the Merseyside phasing-in area.

The payment methodology will be based on the Employer Responsive model, i.e. 75% paid following the learner start, in monthly instalments over the expected length of stay on programme and the remainder when the learner achieves their NVQ.

The rates in the table below are for Year 1 (1 August 2008 to 31 December 2008) and reflect an assumed employer contribution of 42.5% which will increase in subsequent years.

Sector Subject Area	LSC Contribution	Assumed Employer Contribution (08/09: 42.5%)	Total Funding
Health, Public Services and Care	£1,040	£536	£1,576
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	£1,040	£536	£1,576
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	£1,355	£536	£1,891
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	£1,355	£536	£1,891
Information and Communication Technology	£725	£536	£1,261
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	£725	£536	£1,261
Transportation	£1,355	£536	£1,891
Hair and Beauty	£1,040	£536	£1,576
Hospitality	£725	£536	£1,261
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	£725	£536	£1,261
Business, Administration and Law	£725	£536	£1,261
Education and Training	£1,040	£536	£1,576

Published for information purposes only. Speculative Proposals will not be accepted.

The Learning and Skills Council reserve the right to;

- Revise the rates in future years to align with mainstream funding
- Switch funding for Second NVQ Level 2 to mainstream TtG in response to changes in policy eg broadening of eligibility criteria for Train to Gain

Start and end dates

Delivery should commence on 1 August 2008 and be completed by 31 December 2010.

Individuals must not be recruited if there is insufficient time available to allow them to achieve their learning outcomes. The LSC reserves the right to extend the end date of individual contracts where necessary.

Contracting details

Contracts may be awarded on a sub-regional basis or alternatively for the whole of the North West. To reduce administrative costs there will be a minimum contract value of £100,000 for each year of the contract.

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.