

Introduction

Apprenticeships are a key part of the post-16 education offer and will play a central role in the Government's plans for growing skills in the economy. *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All*, published by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families in January 2008, indicated the Government's intention to increase the Apprenticeship opportunities available through those employers already offering high-quality Apprenticeships.

It is recognised that achieving this will require a more innovative and flexible approach to the delivery of Apprenticeships in the future. That is why we are making available public funds to support trials that develop and test the concept of **Apprenticeship Expansion Programmes**.

This Prospectus invites **Expressions of Interest** directly from **employers who already offer high-quality Apprenticeship programmes**, and **groups of small and medium-sized employers working individually or in partnership**, to develop Apprenticeship Expansion Programmes that build on existing provision, training **additional** apprentices for the benefit of the sector at large.

The Prospectus identifies the aims and objectives of these trials, the principles, the funding and the selection process, along with the timeline and application process.

What

are the aims and objectives of the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme?

The Government wants to work closely with employers who already have a strong reputation for delivering high-quality Apprenticeship programmes. We believe that good-quality provision encourages other employers to engage with Apprenticeships and aspire to be seen as the best.

The Apprenticeship Expansion Programme trial aims to develop and test models that support high-quality employers engaged in the delivery of Apprenticeship programmes so that they can recruit and train additional apprentices. These apprentices will either secure employment with employers in the supply chain or with those in the wider sector. The aim is to ensure that these additional apprentices benefit the supply chain and the sector at large, and that both the current and the future skills base of the sector is protected.

The trials will inform decisions regarding potential future roll-out of the programme.

We will want to test a number of models so that we can determine which has the greater impact and offers the best return on our investment. The broad aims and objectives of the trials are set out below.

Objectives	Aims
To develop and test models for supporting additional places on employer Apprenticeship programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To enable more apprentices to benefit from high-quality Apprenticeships with world-class employers.• To be flexible in the range of funding and support offered and to be responsive to the needs and requirements of particular employers and sectors.
To support new apprentices to secure sustainable employment either in the supply chain or in the wider sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To expand the number of employers engaged in the Apprenticeship programme.• To support sector and regional priorities.• To support small and medium-sized employers to engage in the Apprenticeships programme and benefit from highly trained individuals.

By recruiting and training additional apprentices, the trials will test whether such an approach can support and engage employers who are new to the Apprenticeships programme, engage new and atypical learners and deliver a programme that minimises bureaucracy and offers value for money.

Who

is eligible to participate?

The trials are primarily aimed at the following groups.

- Large employers that already offer high-quality Apprenticeship programmes.
- Small and medium-sized employers working individually or in partnership with each other and an LSC-contracted Apprenticeship provider to offer additional places.
- Employers in priority sectors where growth or replacement labour has been identified by the sector skills council or in LSC regional commissioning plans as a key priority, working individually or in partnership with an LSC-contracted Apprenticeship provider.

All applicants must be able to demonstrate that they offer high-quality Apprenticeship programmes. We are particularly interested in applicants that have been awarded a grade 2 (good) or grade 1 (outstanding), overall as well as in the relevant sector subject area, at their last Ofsted inspection, and those who have achieved the Training Quality Standard and/or are engaged in their sector's National Skills Academy.

Additionally, current success rates should be above the minimum levels of performance in the relevant sector subject area.

What

are the target groups and priorities?

The following target groups and priorities have been identified for the trial:

- Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3) programmes; and
- potential apprentices over the age of 16 who would not otherwise participate in the Apprenticeships programme.

The following learners will be not be eligible for the trial:

- learners already participating on an Apprenticeship programme with another employer or provider; and
- learners who have received an offer of an Apprenticeship place with another employer or provider.

What

is the Learning and Skills Council looking for?

Employers selected for the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme trial need to demonstrate that they will:

- engage with key partners such as the LSC, sector skills councils, the National Skills Academy for the sector (where relevant) and their supply chain in the development and delivery of the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme trial;
- develop models to ensure that the additional apprentices hold a contract of employment from day one with either the 'host' employer or a suitable third party;
- develop arrangements, in conjunction with the LSC, to ensure that all apprentices progress to employment within the supply chain or with partner organisations (preferably not currently involved in the Apprenticeships programme)* at the earliest opportunity;
- ensure that all vacancies for the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme are advertised on the National Apprenticeship Service website through the Vacancy Matching System; and
- ensure that, where additional apprentices are not successful on the programme, appropriate information, advice and guidance (IAG) is delivered to help them progress to an alternative option.

* 'Not currently involved' means employers who have lapsed (have not participated in any form of Apprenticeship programme for the past five years) or employers who have never participated (employers that have no previous involvement in the Apprenticeship programme).

What

is the Learning and Skills Council looking to invest in?

As outlined in *World-class Apprenticeships*, we recognise that training additional apprentices may represent an extra cost to or require additional resources for the 'host' employer. Funding of over **£10 million** has been made available over the next three years to offset the reasonable costs of supplying additional places.

Each trial will be different, and applicants will need to outline the anticipated associated additional costs involved in delivering their proposed model in the Expression of Interest. Costs could include elements such as:

- a contribution to the costs of additional trainers;
- a contribution to the costs of additional placement officers; and
- a contribution to the wage costs* of learners on the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme.

This is by no means an exhaustive list and has been included to generate ideas.

The LSC is looking to invest in proposals that set out **innovative and flexible approaches to meeting the trials' aims and objectives and deliver value for money** and welcomes proposals for support for other associated costs over and above those listed.

Applications should justify the amount of funding being sought, be realistic and demonstrate clear value for money. There must be a direct correlation between the activity and the methods of delivery being proposed and the funding sought.

The allocation of funding will be based on the identified needs and priorities of a sector in terms of growth requirements and replacement labour as well as on clear evidence of value for money.

* Any wage subsidy under this scheme is a de minimis aid, under EC Regulation 69/2001. Please note that there is a ceiling of €200,000 for all de minimis aid provided to one enterprise over any three financial years. If you are selected to receive a wage subsidy, it will be necessary for your firm to certify that the receipt of a wage subsidy would not result in a breach of the de minimis aid ceiling.

What

makes a good proposal?

The Apprenticeship Expansion Programme is a dynamic and evolving idea, which is why the LSC is inviting high-level proposals at this stage, rather than a full and detailed proposal.

The intention is to identify employers with innovative ideas and potential solutions to work in partnership with the LSC to develop trials that both offer value for money and test a number of different models.

Your Expression of Interest needs to set out your proposal under five key headings:

- Introduction
- Market analysis
- Vision
- Methodology
- Commitment and capability.

To assist you with this, a template for your Expression of Interest is attached and provides further guidance under each of the five headings.

Ultimately, a successful Expression of Interest will be one that has something special to offer, proposes innovative models, adds value to the Apprenticeship network and provides value for money.

When

will the Learning and Skills Council make its decision?

The LSC expects the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme to commence early in 2009. This is an ambitious timetable and there is much to be achieved between now and then.

This Prospectus is an open invitation for Expressions of Interest from employers or groups of employers who are already delivering high-quality Apprenticeship programmes and who are keen to develop and trial an Apprenticeship Expansion Programme that adds value to their current Apprenticeship programmes and results in an increase in employer and learner participation. The details of how and where to submit your Expression of Interest are set out below.

Stage 1: Initial selection

The closing date for submission of Expressions of Interest is 16 January 2009. Expressions of Interest will be sifted by a panel comprising representatives from the DIUS and the LSC. The sift will consider the Expression of Interest against each of the key areas (market analysis, vision, methodology, and commitment and capability) and will be used to compile a short-list of strong proposals. We will then enter into negotiated dialogue.

Those who are not invited to proceed to the next stage will be notified and given written feedback.

Stage 2: Negotiated dialogue

By 21 January 2009 short-listed applicants will be given initial feedback on those points the LSC wants to negotiate and see developed further and they will be invited to work with their regional contact to develop the trial into a full working model.

Stage 3: Agreement

At the end of the negotiated dialogue phase, a final agreement will be made on the model to be trialled and a contract for services will be issued.

Once all three stages are successfully completed, we will enter into a contract for services.

Agreement of trials will be for an initial period of two years.

The trials will be subject to independent evaluation.

Date	Milestone
1 December 2008	Apprenticeship Expansion Programme Prospectus launched inviting Expressions of Interest
	Applicants must inform their appropriate LSC region/NES contact of their intention to submit an Expression of Interest
16 January 2009	Deadline for submission of Expression of Interest
17–21 January 2009	Expressions of Interest scored
21 January 2009	Successful and unsuccessful applicants notified. Successful applicants invited to enter into a negotiated dialogue with regional lead or NES
February 2009	Contracts issued

Next steps

You should make your region aware if you are proposing to submit an Expression of Interest. Please inform your LSC region/NES contact (where a direct contract is held with the NES) prior to completion of the Expression of Interest form. Names and contact details for each region can be found on page 12.

Expressions of Interest should be provided to the LSC by **5pm on 16 January 2009** using the structure set out in the attached template. Once completed they should be signed and submitted to:

Jennie Short
Senior Policy Manager, Pilots and Trials
Learning and Skills Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

The LSC will acknowledge receipt of your application as confirmation of your submission.

Queries regarding the Apprenticeship Expansion Programme, the Prospectus or the process for submitting Expressions of Interest should be directed to your LSC regional contact or NES contact in the first instance.

Contact details for the LSC regions

North West

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