



Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council Kent and Medway

“Neighbourhood Action for Communities”

**Prospectus for bidding under the Neighbourhood
Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (NLDCF)
2007/08**

Guidance for Applications

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Introductory Statement

1 The Learning and Skills Council is inviting new proposals for funding under the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund in Kent and Medway, which should be delivered initially over the period September 2007 to March 2008, with the aim of extending contract activity to end September 2008, when LSC budgets for that period have been confirmed. Applications are invited by 10 August 2007.

2 The Fund is aimed at organisations, especially those from the voluntary and community sector, which provide learning opportunities in the poorest neighbourhoods. Some of these organisations already do innovative work and are able to engage people whom more mainstream funding and educational providers find hard to reach.

3 As the main government funder for learning for people over 16, we have responsibilities which we believe the Fund will help us meet, including:

- widening participation – attracting ‘hard to reach’ learners;
- ensuring that learning provision addresses local needs;
- improving skills for employment;
- improving skills for regenerating communities;
- delivering numeracy and literacy in the broadest range of settings;
- equality and diversity
- helping to align local plans and funding for vulnerable adults.

4 Please continue reading this prospectus to see if your organisation and your project could be eligible for NLDCF funding. If you would like advice or help on becoming involved in a partnership to bid for funds, please contact the Directors of the Kent and Medway Learning Partnerships, whose remit includes encouraging provider collaboration and support for the voluntary and community sector in delivery of learning and skills:

Wendy Wilton, East Kent, Channel Corridor and West Kent, telephone 07970 642449; e mail: Wendy@kentlp.co.uk or

Helen Hume, Thames Gateway, telephone either 07740 590000 or 01634 311410 e mail: Helen.Hume@medway.gov.uk

For questions about the guidance and the specifications contact either Julie Humphreys on 01732 876824 e mail: Julie.Humphreys@lsc.gov.uk or Vivienne Foulds on 01732 876900 e mail: Vivienne.Foulds@lsc.gov.uk

Why the fund was set up

5 The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (NLDCF) has been set up to help local voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver and support learning opportunities for residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

6 It is part of a wider plan, (called the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal) launched by the government in 2001, to reduce worklessness and crime in the poorest neighbourhoods in the country, and to improve their health, housing and physical environment.

7 The Fund recognises that:

- for this to happen there need to be more opportunities for learning, accessible within these communities and relevant to the needs and concerns of local people;
- organisations in the voluntary and community sector should be supported to provide some of this learning, as they are so well placed to identify real need and have the credibility to involve people who may otherwise be disadvantaged or marginalized;
- many organisations in the voluntary and community sector have a track record of innovative and successful learning provision, and are also close to the social and economic issues which affect work, crime, health, housing and environment;
- some of these organisations could make a more significant and consistent contribution if they had resources to develop aspects of their provision;
- mainstream funding is not always well adapted to the needs of small organisations, and we need a more flexible, responsive funding regime for this type of work.
- To gain access to limited LSC mainstream funds, it is desirable for effective and long lasting partnerships to be established between LSC providers and the voluntary and community sector

What is the Budget available?

8 The total fund for England is divided into capital and recurrent (revenue) funding, which is distributed by local Learning and Skills Council Area Offices (LLSCs).

9 The total revenue allocation for Kent and Medway available for new activity from April 2007 to March 2008 is **£379, 037**.

10 A further allocation is expected to cover the period April 2008 to September 2008, but this has yet to be confirmed. An indicative budget of **£188,904** has therefore been assumed and providers are invited to include activity to cover this period, in the expectation that contracts will be extended once the budgets are confirmed. The Specifications and Application Form show

how you should bid for the period April to September 2008.

11 A capital budget of **£83,000** is available for new activity between September 2007 to March 2008 in addition to which there is an opportunity for the LSC Kent and Medway office to bid for additional funds from a regional budget, up to a maximum of £30,000. We are therefore inviting proposals for capital expenditure up to a value of **£113,702**, the amounts to be confirmed in negotiation with the successful providers.

How the Funds Will Be Allocated

12 The LSC Area Office has consulted a range of planning and funding partners on their priorities for use of the fund in their areas, covering priority areas of deprivation, priority target groups and examples of the types of activity they would like to see supported

13 This feedback has been reflected into separate specifications for funding by area. Partnerships between organisations in the voluntary and community sector and LSC funded providers are invited to submit bids against these specifications. The bidding areas and revenue allocations are:

Revenue Allocation

Area	Sept 07 – March 08	April 08 – Sept 08	Total
1. Thanet	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657
2. South Kent	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657
3. West Kent & Maidstone	£20,000	£10,000	£30,000
4. Swale	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657
5. Medway	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657
6. Canterbury	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657
7. Dartford & Gravesend	£59,840	£29,817	£89,657

14 The requirements for these are set out in separate specifications shown at Appendices 1 and 2 on pages 12-17. There is also a separate specification for capital expenditure which can be applied for in respect of any deprived area within Kent and Medway.

15 Projects of various sizes may be funded within the overall budget limit shown in each specification, but **the preference will be to fund one partnership project in each area.**

16 The Fund operates on an annual basis under allocations that are made for one academic year (1 August – 31 July) at a time. However spending must also take into account the financial year, which runs from April to March. Funds that

have not been spent by 31st March, will not be able to be transferred or carried forward beyond this period.

17 As we wish the budget to provide the maximum benefit for learners and communities, it is not expected that organisations applying for funding eg as lead bodies, will claim more than 15% in management overhead cost.

Capital and Revenue funding

18 We can allocate funds for both capital and revenue expenditure and your project proposal can either take advantage of both types of grant or, comprise mainly one or the other.

19 If you need to improve your premises to make them more suitable for learning or for your user group, or to buy equipment for teaching and learning – including computers – or to make other purchases to support learning, then you should make a **capital** application. Capital items are normally those which will still exist after the project is over, and as a guide we would not normally allocate capital funding for items costing less than £500. All assets with a value of £2,500 or more (including VAT) will be added to the LSC's Assets Register and agreement will be needed before they are sold or changed in use.

20 If you need funding for activities, staffing, and consumables (eg stationery, travel, childcare, room use etc) you should make a revenue funding application. Small pieces of equipment, costing less than £500, can also be included in revenue funding bids

Match funding

21 There is no requirement for you to have match funding for your project, but it will be helpful to show how the project fits in with your other activities, or the priorities of local strategic funding bodies. You may be able to use the Fund for match funding for income from other sources.

General funding criteria

22 There are some general criteria for the Fund. All funded projects *must*:

- **work in deprived communities.** See the map at Appendix 3. Projects will also be considered from areas outside of the areas of deprivation detailed, dependent on need, as we appreciate that there are pockets of deprivation in most wards.
- **involve local people.** The emphasis should be on working *with* people rather than providing *for* them, so the more the learners who benefit from

your project participate in planning and managing their learning the better. Learners may be from specific deprived localities or groups, or be volunteers, staff working in voluntary or community organisations, or community tutors or potential tutors;

- **deliver learning directly**, including informal learning which might not be eligible for mainstream funding; *or* facilitate direct delivery of learning, for example by outreach work, developing your organisation, or improvements to resources used for learning;
- **succeed in engaging people** who are disadvantaged or marginalized, for whom mainstream provision has not succeeded – we expect most learners to be people from these groups. Young people under 19 may be included in family learning projects, *but not otherwise*.
- **help participants plan and move on** to further learning, community activity or paid work in future.

Target Groups

23 For 2007/8, national guidance on use of NLDC funding requests that up to 75% of the fund be used to prepare workless adults from disadvantaged areas to enter sustainable employment to contribute to the LSC's Skills for jobs agenda.

24 The priority target group is low skilled adults aged 19 +, not currently in employment, but who want to work. Within this broad category, meeting the needs of local disadvantaged communities and individuals facing specific barriers and significant disadvantages are a priority. These barriers include being disabled, being from an ethnic minority, being over 50, being a lone parent.

Priorities for the use of NLDC

25 The LSC wishes to use the funds to maximum strategic effect. This will mean identifying projects for support, which are eligible for NLDC funding and which will, as far as possible, meet the requirements of the Specifications at Annex 1 and fulfil the following criteria:

- Make the greatest contribution to social and economic regeneration through development of the skills of adults in deprived communities in each specified District;
- Contribute to the LSC's regional Action for Communities strategy and the LSc Kent and Medway Annual Plan priorities, see [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/SouthEast/Kent Medway Annual Pla](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/SouthEast/Kent_Medway_Annual_Plan)

[n - Final Version.pdf](#) particularly in terms of enabling vulnerable learners to participate in learning and the progression of workless adults to higher skills and employment;

- Network with other local services and projects to improve pathways to employment and qualifications for vulnerable and hard to reach adults;
- Either have access to few alternative funding options or are able to attract other public private investment as a result of the NLDC funding which contributes significantly to the above priorities
- Offer maximum sustainability of activity – for example by:
 - a) improving the capacity to deliver activities in future through self generated income or easier access to “mainstream”¹ LSC or other sources of funds as a result of partnership with a funded provider
 - b) demonstrating a successful new approach that can be adopted in mainstream funding
 - c) providing a permanent addition to learning facilities in the area

What types of project will be funded?

26 The Specifications indicate what type of activity would be favoured in the areas concerned. However the fund can be used for a wide range of activities such as:

Revenue Funded Activities

- enabling VCS Consortia to deliver training and education opportunities in their communities with a particular focus on workless people wanting to improve their skills and return to work;
- offering pre-employment support and training to prepare adults for employment;
- encouraging innovative, accessible ‘first step’ learning in local communities (e.g. by extending successful outreach activities from neighbourhood, civil renewal and active citizenship skills, knowledge and behaviours);
- training or retraining local people to develop roles in community leadership or as “community champions”;
- building local expertise and supporting those individuals working or willing to work as community tutors in gaining a range of relevant qualifications, e.g. as teachers or assessors;

¹ Eg funds provided to Further Education Colleges, Adult Education and Work Based Learning providers

- supporting the development of voluntary and community sector training providers through a capacity building programme to enable them to meet the LSC provider assessment criteria (this includes providing volunteer staff training);
- providing staff development, including secondments to, for example, Learning Partnerships;
- developing new ways of delivering relevant curricula to attract excluded and under-represented groups into learning, including working with target groups to develop meaningful and engaging learner contexts; and
- mapping existing neighbourhood centres to ensure good coverage of local learning opportunities at appropriate venues – the mapping should use the template available from DfES in the document *Neighbourhood Learning in Disadvantaged Communities- Guidance for Practitioners*

Capital Funded Activities:

- assisting and supporting the direct delivery of learning, for example equipment to support training or teaching, *it should not be spent on learning delivery costs, i.e. staff;*
- refurbishing and enhancing existing premises, e.g. improving health and safety arrangements, minor works and adaptations to meet the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements;
- complementing other funds secured by applicant organisations or partnerships, i.e. in order to establish a new learning centre or VCS Learning and Skills Consortia in areas where none previously existed; and
- securing ICT provision e.g. PCs, licences, connectivity costs and for the development/purchase of MIS, software and data management systems for the NLDC fund.

27 *These are just suggestions and a broad outline of how the funds can be used. We are interested in projects which can complement or supplement, rather than duplicate, activities funded by the LSC and Job Centre Plus through FE College, Adult Education and work based learning providers.*

28 Proposals can include some areas, priority groups or relevant activities and outputs which are not listed under each specification but the main thrust of the project should be to work in the priority areas with the specified target groups and activities.

Organisations that can apply for funding

Types of organisation

29 The main types of organisation eligible to receive funding are:

- Voluntary and Community Organisations;

30 Other organisations that are eligible include:

- Local Education Authorities
- Further Education Colleges
- Learndirect Centres
- UK Online Centres
- Schools.

31 To be eligible, these other organisations *must* be working in this project to support voluntary and community sector partners.

32 Whatever type of organisation, you must be *either* directly delivering learning in deprived communities *or* working in partnership with others to deliver that learning, for example by outreach, or by hosting community learning.

Other criteria

33 We understand that smaller organisations may not have the capacity to meet complex bureaucratic requirements, and that the kind of work envisaged by the Fund contains some level of risk. For this reason, we are determined to keep the administrative burden to a minimum. On the other hand, we are responsible for public money and need to be able to show how activities contribute to equal opportunities. So, before a contract is signed, we will need to know that your organisation can answer 'yes' to the following three questions:

- Are you sufficiently established with enough resources and sound financial systems to ensure you remain viable and can run the project?² We will try to be flexible but you will probably not be granted funding if you are relying only on this Fund for your organisation's survival.
- Do you operate honest and fair systems that are open to public scrutiny?
- Can you meet your legal obligations, for example in relation to employment, health and safety and equal opportunities?

34 You may know about the LSC's normal requirements for organisations to receive mainstream funding, including the Adult Learning Inspectorate's

² The LLSC may require your organisation to undergo their standard financial viability check.

Common Inspection Framework. For the NLDC fund it is not essential for you to show that you meet these requirements in full, but you *will* need to demonstrate how you make sure that the learning you provide is of good quality. This might include, for example, monitoring, seeking learner feedback, and staff support and development. You may be using a quality system that supports these.

35 *If you are uncertain as to whether you can meet any of the criteria referred to in this paragraph, do not give up now! Within the specifications issued, the Fund can be used to help you develop your capacity to meet the more specific requirements.*

36 We hope that this will encourage new providers to put forward their proposals as partners or lead organisations, and will lead to there being a broader range of adult learning providers eligible for mainstream funding in future.

The next steps

37 First of all, read this guidance document carefully and check that your organisation and your project meet all the basic requirements. Remember, if you are not sure about any of the organisational requirements, or whether your proposed project fits the criteria, please contact the LSC contacts named on page 3. Then put together your proposal in collaboration with other organisations who will work with you to support a specific deprived community. Contact the Learning Partnerships if you would like help in facilitating this.

38 Once all the elements of the partnership project have been finalised then complete the NLDC proposal form available on the LSC or Learning Partnership websites: www.lsc.gov.uk/kentandmedway or

39 Following this assessment, each proposal will be reviewed against the following criteria by a Panel of LSC and Learning Partnership staff, to select those which will be requested to develop a full proposal for funding:

- Contribution to the NLDC specification criteria and quality of partnership developed
- Value for money
- Added Value and strategic impact
- Delivery capability
- Sustainability

40 Make sure you give yourself plenty of time to write out your proposal which, in some organisations, may require approval by a management committee before it can be submitted.

41 Should your proposal be successful, you will be asked to meet with an LSC Contracts Manager (with support as appropriate from one of the Learning Partnerships Directors) to discuss your project in further detail. In some cases, this may include suggestions on extending the range of partners, and/or linking with another project or activity for a more cost effective approach.

42 If you are a new provider, we shall need to assure ourselves that you have the financial strength, management capacity, health and safety and quality systems in place in order to manage the contract and this will involve the production of specific data and evidence. Lead bodies in a partnership will be expected to demonstrate sound systems for partnership working, including clear and fair partnership agreements or sub-contracts which reflect the contractual conditions of funding and arrangements for regular networking and steering groups.

43 A timetable outlining the planned timings for this NLDC commissioning and contracting process is attached at Appendix 1.

What will be required of successful projects?

44 Once we have allocated funding, our main aim is to ensure that projects are successful and make a real contribution to their neighbourhoods.

Payment Schedules

45 Once your application has been approved, an LSC Contracts Manager will be appointed and they will agree with you how you are to be paid. This will normally be through a profiled payments schedule that ensures you and partner organisations can meet cash-flow needs, for example to pay project staff salaries or cover specific set-up costs.

46 Your LSC Contracts Manager will meet with you regularly to review progress. He or she will require you to:

- keep records of all money spent and received;
- review how things are going on the project with all concerned – participants, staff, volunteers and partners. There is no set timetable for review, you will need to set up a process that suits the project and ensures you are fully aware of how it is going, producing interim and final reports, if asked to do so;
- consult the LSC Contract Manager before making any significant changes in direction or in the activities that will get you there. We understand that plans can change when a group gets under way, but you *must* talk this over with us first;

- record what people have been learning and/or how they have put their learning to use – this could be a written report or could include photographs, video, audio tapes, case studies or working files;
- record what you know about what people may have moved on to, including further learning, voluntary work, community work or paid work;
- be prepared to take part in any evaluation, including allowing access to evaluators.
- Promote and disseminate the results to others, including acknowledgement of the LSC's funding

Keeping on track

47 You will be expected to keep accounts of how the Fund has been spent. Because the Fund is interested in encouraging innovation, we understand that there is an element of risk and that a very small proportion of projects may fail to run as planned. Provided you have used the Fund as agreed, and kept good records of the expenditure, you will not be penalised if you unfortunately fail in this way. We *will* expect early notice from you that things are not going according to plan, and may be able to offer some support to help the project recover. We will also want to explore with you what has gone wrong, so that both you and we can learn to avoid the same thing happening again.

Appendix 1

TIMETABLE OF COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTING

