



Workforce North Co-Investment Fund

Stream 2: Workforce Innovation

Stream 3: Accelerator

August 2026



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1.Introduction

This guidance is specifically for Stream 2: Workforce Innovation and Stream 3: Workforce Accelerator. Applicants should also refer to the Workforce North Co-Investment Fund General Guidance available from the Workforce North Website <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning/workforce-north>

Applications must contribute to the development and piloting of delivery in the priority sectors/subject areas of:

- Net Zero
- Construction and Built Environment
- Digital and Data Skills
- STEM related subjects and progression opportunities

Applicants MUST engage their Local Authority whilst developing their application as the Local Authority will be asked for comments as part of the application assessment process. Local Authority contacts can be found within the General Guidance.

2. Stream 2: Workforce Innovation

Workforce Innovation Aims to develop and test new workforce delivery models in areas where uncertainty, barriers or unproven approaches exist. This includes piloting new apprenticeship pathways, technology -enabled delivery solutions, transition models for priority groups, and innovative training approaches that address industry -specific challenges. This stream is focused on generating scalable, evidence-based solutions that can improve system performance and inform longer-term workforce planning across the region.

What can be supported

Illustrative activity includes, but not limited to:

- Pilot or test new workforce delivery models where barriers or uncertainty exist
- Deliver innovative Foundation Apprenticeship/ Experiential Career Learning/apprenticeship delivery approaches
- Fast-track employability pilots for priority sectors or target cohorts
- Technology led / enabled or blended delivery delivery models
- Co-ordinated models linking attraction, assessment and training

Example employer journey

- An employer finds that their current approach to training is not meeting their skills needs
- They team up with local training provider to design and pilot a new model to address the skills gaps
- The fund supports their investment, giving them the space to test, learn, and improve without taking all the risk.

Eligible Costs – Workforce Innovation

- Eligible costs are costs which are necessary to deliver the Approved Project and are in addition to any costs – direct or indirect – incurred prior to the start of the Approved Project
- Eligible costs may include areas such as commissioned research; materials development, platform or technology development, technology/equipment hire; pilot participant travel costs

Please refer to General Guidance regarding ineligible expenditure.

3. Stream 3: Workforce Accelerator

Workforce Accelerator aims to support the expansion of proven training models to meet urgent or high-volume workforce needs. It is designed to scale up and roll out successful pilots from the Innovation stream and deliver rapid upskilling programmes in critical shortage areas. This stream ensures that effective workforce solutions can be deployed quickly and consistently across the region, strengthening the labour pipeline for employers and supporting immediate workforce requirements.

Illustrative activity includes, but not limited to:

- Sector – based rapid delivery academies aligned to priority industries or major projects
- Rapid delivery programmes designed around employer-defined job roles
- Scaled delivery of successful Stream 2 projects or other proven approaches including region wide rollout of successful pilot activity
- Example employer journey

Example employer journey

- The Stream 2 Workforce Innovation pilot was a success
- Other employers in different sectors and areas are asking how they can do the same
- Businesses and training providers come together to roll out the model at scale, through a shared programme or sector academy
- The fund backs the expansion through co-funding, delivering greater regional impact

Eligible Costs – Workforce Accelerator

- Eligible Costs are costs which are necessary to deliver the Workforce Accelerator Project and are in addition to any costs – direct or indirect – incurred prior to the start of the Workforce Accelerator Project.
- Include activity/services aligned to delivering workforce development such as Academy running costs; hire of equipment; trainer/staffing costs; technology development or usage costs; certification costs.

Please refer to General Guidance regarding ineligible expenditure.

4. General Information for Workforce Innovation AND Workforce Accelerator

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be located in the UK and operational in (i) the WFN Geographical Region and (ii) the geographical location and geography of the local authority contributing to the eligible costs of the funded activity applied for by the Applicant and must also be one of the following:

- SMEs (≤ 249 FTE)
- Employers with more than 250 FTE employees
- Sector partnerships
- Consortia involving multiple employers and training providers for example public, private, and education partners may collaborate under an employer-led bid
- A local authority “Arm’s Length External Organisation” (ALEO) that delivers “novel/peripheral areas/non-standard services” normally not delivered by a local authority.

Eligible Trainees

Trainees participating in the Workforce North funded Streams must have the right to live and work in the UK and one of the following applies:

- the funded trainee has only one place of residence which is within the WFN Geographical Region or, where the funded trainee has more than one place of residence, their main place of residence is within the WFN Geographical Region (meaning that they reside for more days of each UK tax year at their residence in the WFN Geographical Region, than in any other place of residence) OR
- where the funded trainee is employed by the applicant (i.e. is not self-employed) the applicant has a place of business within the WFN Geographical Region; OR
- where the funded trainee is unemployed, and does not live within the WFN Geographical Region, the applicant has a place of business within the WFN Geographical Region and has identified a job opportunity for the unemployed funded trainee to take up following the successful completion of the training

Training Providers

Training providers must be located in the UK and:

- be accredited from a recognised awarding body/industry to provide training services Or
- be established suppliers of same/similar services AND
- be distinct from the employer applicant i.e. the employer applicant is not entitled to deliver the training using its own internal training function or staff.

Funding

For Workforce Innovation & Workforce Accelerator, the WFN grant will fund 25% of eligible costs up to a maximum grant of £25,000. There is no limit as to the total application project cost.

Additional Information

Applicants must also read the Workforce North Co-Investment Fund General guidance. If applicants require further clarification, please email WFN@highland.gov.uk

Funding Stream	Maximum Work Force North Grant	Applicant Contribution
Workforce Innovation & Workforce Accelerator	25% of total project costs. The maximum core Funding grant would be £25,000.	Employers can seek additional funding, only if available, from their respective Local Authority however must contribute a minimum of 50% of the costs from their own resources or other obtained provate sector funding. Local Authoity contacts can be found within General Guidance.
	Example – An employer in partnership with a training provider develops an approach to support foundation apprenticeships within their sector leading to pathways into modern apprenticeships. The total cost of the project is £90,000. 25% Workforce North Grant (£22,500) and 75% (£67,500) from eligible applicant and Local Authority contribution. Private sector funding must contribute at least 50% of cost with the Local Authority contributing 25% only if available.	