



## LEP – Sub Committee

### LEP - Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

**Private and Confidential: NO**

**Date:** Thursday, 8 December 2022

### National Skills Fund: Skills Bootcamps

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#### Executive Summary

Digital Bootcamps were piloted in Lancashire and Greater Manchester through the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The model was driven by employers, with employer-provider collaborations developing Skills Bootcamp programmes, which provided intensive training to fast-track unemployed residents into hard to fill digital jobs.

The model was adopted and adapted by the Department for Education (DfE) under the National Skills Fund and rolled out nationally through a combination of national procurement and local allocations to Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). A total of £1.2m was allocated to Lancashire under Wave 3 for financial year 2022/23. An open procurement process was undertaken early in the financial year to allocate the funds, with service contracts awarded in July 2022.

Thirty nine percent of the forecast 350 learners for this financial year have been enrolled onto the Skills Bootcamps by the procured providers, with further Skills Bootcamps starting in the New Year. This is slightly less than the 50% forecast at this point, which is a concern, however providers are confident that they can recruit onto planned provision to hit the forecast 350 and deliver the Skills Bootcamps before the end of March 2023.

An opportunity arose to secure a further £100k from DfE from underspend elsewhere which has enabled the mobilisation of the next provider on the ranked list which resulted from the procurement process. As a result, a further two Skills Bootcamps will commence in January supporting an additional 30 learners.

DfE have requested proposals for funds for Wave 4 – financial year 2023/24 and have set a deadline of the end of November 2022 for proposals from MCAs and LEPs. Market engagement events have been undertaken by the Skills Hub to build



a pipeline of projects to inform the submission to DfE and to expand the technical areas aligned with demands in the local labour market. DfE have indicated that financial allocations will be agreed in January. Discussion has been undertaken with procurement to plan in a procurement process to allocate the funds.

### **Recommendation**

The LEP Skills and Employment Advisory Panel are asked to:

- (i) Note the progress in 2022/23 and the additional allocation of funds from the DfE in-year.
- (ii) Consider the opportunity to secure grant funds for further Skills Bootcamp delivery in Lancashire in 2023/24 and propose to the LEP Board that grant funds are accepted should the application to DfE be successful, with a delegation to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer to review and agree the grant funding offer and terms and conditions, give due consideration to any procurement considerations and agree and enter into any legal agreements required to protect the interests of the LEP.
- (iii) Should further grant funds be approved and accepted, support the extension to contracts for the Project Manager and Project Officer, subject to advice from HR with delegation to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer for approval.

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Digital Bootcamps were piloted in Lancashire and Greater Manchester through the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The model was driven by employers, with employer-provider collaborations developing 12 to 16 week bootcamp programmes. The Skills Bootcamps provided intensive training to fast-track unemployed residents into hard to fill digital jobs.
- 1.2 The model was adopted and adapted by the Department for Education (DfE) under the National Skills Fund, with pilots taking place locally and in several other areas across the country. The DfE model had an increased focus on guaranteed interviews and progression into employment or progression within the workplace.
- 1.3 The Skills Bootcamps are targeted at all adults 19+ and aim to address technical skills shortages typically at Level 3 and above, thereby complementing Sector Work Based Academies, which are typically shorter in length and targeted at lower skills levels. Skills Bootcamps typically support unemployed people into technical jobs or enable people to progress within the



workplace. In Lancashire there has been a focus on boosting diversity through the targeting of women and ethnic minorities.

- 1.4 The DfE has now rolled out Skills Bootcamps across the country through a balance of national procurement and allocations of funds to local areas via Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships through Section 14 grants. As per previous papers presented to the committee, £1.2m was allocated to Lancashire for financial year 2022/23. An open procurement process was undertaken early in the financial year to allocate the funds, with service contracts awarded in July 2022. It was hoped to initiate procurement earlier in the year, however there was a delay in DfE confirming funds, which impacted on timelines.
- 1.5 This paper provides an overview of progress against this year's allocation and outlines the opportunity to bid for further funds from the DfE for next financial year 2023/24.

## **2.0 Progress against the Wave 3 (2022/23) allocation**

- 2.1 As per 1.4, an open procurement process was undertaken from April to June 2022 to allocate the £1.2m initially confirmed by DfE for 2022/23. The process involved rank ordering proposals in accordance with the overall score against the criteria in the specification. Funds were then allocated against the rank ordered projects until all funds were used. Any projects that fell below a set threshold were rejected. Service contracts were awarded in July 2022 with providers then commencing recruitment. A number of Skills Bootcamps are in progress, with a number due to be delivered during the first quarter of next year.
- 2.2 DfE were keen that 50% of learners were recruited by this point. As the contracts were issued in July this created some challenges – with August being a poor time for recruitment activities targeting adults. However, 136 (39%) Lancashire residents are now enrolled onto Skills Bootcamps, with another 214 forecast from now through to the end of March for those contracted in July. To date 18 of the 136 candidates have completed the delivery stage and are moving onto the interview stage and the Skills Hub have been advised verbally that all 18 have been offered an interview.
- 2.3 A further £100k has been allocated by the DfE from underspends elsewhere to enable the mobilisation of the next provider on the list, for two Skills Bootcamps to be delivered in the last quarter of 2022/23 for 30 learners. A contract variation has been received from the DfE to enable contracting.
- 2.4 Initially Wave 3 delivery was to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, however the DfE recently introduced the opportunity for providers to start delivery of additional Skills Bootcamps in March 2023 with view to an initial payment being made from this financial year, and delivery to roll into 2023/24 and mid and final payments being made next financial year. Existing providers were consulted on this opportunity and two have expressed an interest – this would



require a further commitment of funds from the DfE for the milestone one payment and confirmation of funds for 2023/24. Feedback is awaited from DfE – it has been indicated that this will be confirmed late November / early December.

- 2.5 Data collected regarding the nature of the learners engaging in Skills Bootcamps, shown below, demonstrates how Skills Bootcamps are contributing to improving the employability and skills of unemployed and disadvantaged groups.
- 34% who are enrolled on Skills Bootcamps have declared themselves unemployed
  - 6% are self-employed
  - 37% are employed and are working towards gaining new skills, 19% of those are co-funded by their employers to re-skill or upskill
  - 65% have identified themselves as ethnic minority
  - 27% are women (pursuing digital roles)
- 2.6 Employer engagement is the golden thread running through Skills Bootcamps and currently 50 employers who recruit in Lancashire are engaged in either:
- Course development to meet the skills gaps needs and sector needs of local employers
  - Co-delivery and employability support during delivery
  - Guaranteed interviews for the 234 vacancies already identified in their businesses with graduates of the Skills Bootcamps
- 2.7 A Thematic Study was commissioned by the DfE from OFSTED focusing on the quality assurance practices nationally of Wave 2 Skills Bootcamps. It found elements of good practice, however made some recommendations which has led to Skills Bootcamps coming under OFSTED review from Wave 4. Current Wave 3 quality assurance practices are co-ordinated by the DfE and to date two Lancashire providers have been visited by the DfE and the Skills Bootcamp Project Manager, with another two planned later in November. Remaining providers will be visited in the New Year. To date there have been no areas of concern identified, and good practice has been evident throughout.

### **3.0 Wave 4 (2023/24) proposal for Skills Bootcamps**

- 3.1 The DfE have set a deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 for LEPs to submit high level proposals setting out plans for Skills Bootcamps for 2023/24. Evidence is required to substantiate the need including labour market intelligence, vacancy data and employers who would likely engage. The offer at present is for one financial year, however it is likely that the model will be rolled into future years – and indeed may form part of future devolution agreements.



- 3.2 This provides an opportunity for Lancashire to secure further funds for Skills Bootcamps to address local skills shortage areas, building on the success of the bootcamps to-date, and for residents to boost their employability and earning potential. Skills Bootcamps can help to address the technical skills needs resulting from industrial digitalisation and the drive to net zero, as well as address skills shortages in digital, advanced manufacturing, construction and other areas, aligning with the LEP's growth pillars and enablers.
- 3.3 Skills Bootcamps also provide opportunity to boost diversity and to drive social mobility in disadvantaged areas of Lancashire through the targeting of provision. For example, a priority of the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership is to increase the number of females in Lancashire's digital workforce.
- 3.4 In terms of timescales, based on feedback and learning from Wave 3, DfE have committed to confirm funds in January, to enable procurement processes to be undertaken locally so that recruitment and provision can commence from April 2023.
- 3.5 Market engagement events have been conducted by the Skills Hub with providers of existing digital bootcamps, the wider Lancashire provider network, employers and employer representative bodies to help build a pipeline of projects and inform the submission to DfE. The session also enabled connections to be made to enable conversations regarding collaborative approaches.
- 3.6 The consultation will support the formulation of the proposal. It was made clear that should grant funds be confirmed by DfE, that applications would need to be made via the local procurement process to secure funds.
- 3.7 If the DfE confirms grant funds to Lancashire, further market engagement events will be run in January to support procurement.
- 3.8 There are a number of areas of focus for Skills Bootcamps emerging – some of which build on the foundations built in Lancashire to-date and also some new areas. This is the list at the point of writing the paper – a further update will be provided at the committee meeting:

#### **Digital**

- Cyber
- Data Analysis
- Technical Support
- Digital Marketing
- Front End Web Development
- Software Development (including Back End Web Development)

#### **Technical**

- Additive Manufacturing



- Advanced Manufacturing
- Medical Engineering

### **Construction**

- Construction Supervision & Marketing
- Construction & Digital

### **Pathway to accelerated apprenticeship**

- Health and Social Care – accelerated route to apprenticeships

### **Logistics**

- Logistics – HGV

### **Other**

- Food & Agriculture
- Health and Social Care – Supervision & Management
- Creative Event Production

### **Green**

- Green Skills
- Green Power

3.9 DfE has suggested a minimum of £1m, it is intended that a programme be submitted for £4-5m worth of funds. To note the proposal for Wave 3 2022/23 was for double the amount, with all LEP areas receiving 50% of their original ask.

## **4.0 Key risks**

4.1 Lancashire has a track record of managing Skills Bootcamps, initially in partnership with GMCA and more recently independently, with investment made in a Project Manager and Project Officer in the Skills Hub team to manage the local 2022/23 programme. Both posts are fully funded through the management and administration costs embedded in the Skills Bootcamp funds from the DfE.

4.2 The posts are currently fixed term until 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2023. It is the intention that the posts would be extended for a further year, should a similar or higher level of funds be awarded by the DfE. If less funds than 2022/23 were awarded, consideration will be given to the level of staffing required. The extension will take the two posts to just under two years of employment, based on start dates, which would mean that there were no redundancy liabilities.

4.3 If the amount awarded is higher than this year, then additional staffing resource may be required, for example, an additional Project Officer. There was a very good response to the adverts for the two existing posts and thus it



is anticipated that it would be relatively straight forward to recruit additional posts, even though fixed term.

- 4.4 The procurement process undertaken for 2022/23 enables extension of contracts for a further two years, subject to performance. There is therefore opportunity to extend existing contracts to continue the digital Skills Bootcamps currently in delivery. The desire is to extend the range of Skills Bootcamps in-line with local technical skills needs, which would necessitate a further open procurement process. Discussions have been undertaken with procurement in Lancashire County Council to agree the approach for 2023/24 and are building the requirement to undertake further procurement into their timelines to ensure resource is available to support the process in early 2023, subject to confirmation of funds by the DfE.
- 4.5 The policy intent of the programme is to fast-track people into vacancies in the local economy or to upskill employees to progress within the workplace. DfE have set an expectation that 75% of participants will progress into employment or within the workplace. As Skills Bootcamps procured for 2022/23 are currently in delivery, data is not available in regard to performance for Wave 3. If guaranteed interviews and job outcomes are not forthcoming an element of the funding may be withheld. This is built into the back-to-back contracts but is a risk for providers.
- 4.6 There are no match requirements from the LEP or the Local Authorities. Where providers are delivering Skills Bootcamps that reskill or upskill employees, large companies are expected to contribute to 30% of the cost per learner and SMEs 10%. The providers are required to collect the funds and provide the evidence as part of the claims process. This requirement is built into the back-to-back contracts. Any financial contributions are deducted from the amounts paid to providers for the learners by the Skills Hub. The delivery programme will be tailored to the grant funding available with no match required from the LEP or the Local Authorities to support delivery.

## **5.0 Recommendation**

- 5.1 The committee are asked to note the progress in 2022/23 and the additional allocation of funds from the DfE in-year.
- 5.2 Consider the opportunity to secure grant funds for further Skills Bootcamp delivery in Lancashire in 2023/24 and propose to the LEP Board that grant funds are accepted should the application to DfE be successful, with a delegation to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer to review and agree the grant funding offer and terms and conditions, give due consideration to any procurement considerations and agree and enter into any legal agreements required to protect the interests of the LEP.



- 5.3 Should further grant funds be approved and accepted, support the extension to contracts for the Project Manager and Project Officer, subject to advice from HR with delegation to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer for approval.

### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A