

## PROGRAMME CRITERIA, GRANT APPLICATION

### GUIDANCE NOTES AND PROCESSES

## PROGRAMME CRITERIA

### BACKGROUND

The Supplier Skills Programme (SSP) is open to small to medium sized businesses fulfilling the criteria below which are based within, or locating to, More Developed Areas of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). The grant is part funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and administered by Birmingham City Council (BCC). It offers grants of between £500 - £18000.

The SSP grant is available to companies seeking to upskill new and existing employees, leading to full qualifications, units or a unit of qualification at basic, level 2 and below and at level 3+, including higher level management and leadership skills. The Training must be accredited by the Ofqual framework or recognised industry or professional accrediting bodies.

It will target priority growth sectors within these areas including Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Digital and Creative Industries, Life and Health Sciences, Low Carbon and Environmental Technologies and Services, Business and Professional and Financial Services.

Additionally, working with sectors where there is significant job replacement demand or are key to the GBSLEP's business needs. These include HS2, Health and Social Care (particularly adult care), Transport and Logistics, Retail, Hospitality and Tourism, Construction and Infrastructure, Digital and Technology, Food and Drink, Emerging Technologies.

**Note: Funding is subject to availability.**

### CRITERIA

In order to apply for ESF funding from the SSP, your business **must** meet the following criteria:

- i) The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. If the business is owned by another company or combination of other companies, please refer to "[User Guide to the SME Definition](#)".
- ii) Your business activity must be eligible. Excluded activities include those of a political or religious persuasion, activities involving pornography or clairvoyance and any business activity that is illegal or deemed as unsuitable for public support by Birmingham City Council.
- iii) Your business must have been actively trading for 6 months or more
- iv) Your business must be profit-seeking **NOT** be a Charity or a Not-for-Profit
- v) The State Aid measures under which SSP operates are De Minimis. Your business must have received less than the Sterling equivalent of €200,000 State Aid assistance over a 3-year period (De Minimis State Aid for the current and previous 2 financial years). De Minimis State Aid intervention rates are up to 50%.

- vi) Your business must pay or be going to pay business rates if relocating; to one of the local authorities within the areas covered by this programme and those payments must not be in arrears.
- vii) Your Business must be based within the local authorities: Birmingham City Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

## **A. ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE**

- i) The assistance from the SSP programme is in the form of a grant contribution of between £500 - £18000.
- ii) A list of Eligible and Ineligible Project Costs that can be included as part of the grant is available at ([WWW.Birmingham.gov.uk/SSP](http://WWW.Birmingham.gov.uk/SSP)). Local partners are also available to discuss your project and advise on project costs before you make an application.
- iii) Eligible applicants must be able to financially complete their projects within four (4) months\* from the date of acceptance of the Skills Funding Agreement including spend, defrayal and claiming the grant. (*\* For complex projects, project timescales are subject to negotiation.*)
- iv) The grant must be match funded by the applicant business. This is the difference between the grant you are seeking and the remaining cost of your project. The source of the match funding cannot be from other Public Funds. Loans, overdrafts, savings or company funds are considered to be eligible cash match funding, and these must be secured and in place prior to approval of the SSP grant.

## **B. DATA PROTECTION**

- i) Birmingham City Council will retain all the project information to ensure compliance with EU Regulations. BCC will store the information you provide electronically for secure record keeping. The information you provide is confidential and subject to the requirements of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and The Data Protection Act 2018. This personal data will be held and processed by BCC (local authority registered with the ICO, Regulation number Z4594350) in order to provide and share data amongst the organisations involved in Birmingham City Council's Suppliers Skills Programme (SSP).
- ii) The personal details you provide may also be shared with third parties (involved in Birmingham City Council's SSP) for the purposes of the provision of this support on the basis that they treat the information as confidential as well or as part of any statutory duties requiring such disclosure and to protect the public funds it collects and administers. Any data may be used to prevent fraud or the misuse of resources. For further information of our privacy notice, visit [www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/privacy).
- iii) Each Participant Business and Strategic Partner must ensure that data protection legislation is adhered to throughout the programme. Under the Data Protection Act 1998, an individual has the right to request access to any personal information held about him or her in a manual or computerised based file. This means that a Beneficiary may submit a request to a Participant Business or Strategic Partner in respect to access to any file containing data about him/her. Individuals who present a valid written request must be given copies of the relevant data in permanent form within 40 calendar days.

## **C. STATE AID ASSISTANCE**

State Aid refers to financial support from a public or publicly funded body given to organisations which has the potential to distort competition and affect trade between member states of the European Union (EU).

State Aid is generally prohibited by EU rules. However, there are exceptions to this, and some financial aid is allowed under the 'de minimis' rules if the total amount of funding received by an organisation does not exceed a prescribed limit.

De minimis State Aid Regulations (under EC regulation number 1407/2013). This allows an individual applicant business/organisation to receive a maximum of €200,000 of funding (cash grant equivalent)

over a 3-year period (the current and previous two financial years). The sterling equivalent is calculated using the Commission exchange rate applicable on the written date of offer of the de minimis funding.

This ceiling takes into account all public assistance given as de minimis funding for the current and previous two financial years which can take various forms (grants, loans, subsidised contracts, etc). Aid given under an approved scheme does not have to be cumulated with de minimis aid, provided any such de minimis aid is not awarded towards the same eligible costs as those supported via that approved scheme.

### **Exclusions:**

- De minimis aid cannot be given for export related activities (except attendance at trade fairs) or aid favouring domestic goods over imports.
- For undertakings active in the road freight transport sector, the de minimis ceiling is €100k.
- De minimis aid cannot be awarded for the acquisition of road freight transport vehicles.
- De minimis aid cannot be used to top up awards made under approved State aid schemes, resulting in a circumvention of the aid intensities set out in the rules attached to such schemes. In these cases, it can only be awarded towards separate eligible costs.

To confirm that you are able to receive assistance from the SSP, you must declare the full amount of aid, from any public source, and in any format, you have already received over the last 3 financial years. You must declare whether or not it was de minimis aid. All aid received whether de minimis aid or exempted aid must be declared. You must be explicit in your explanation of what the aid you received has been used for.

The following is not a comprehensive list of the possible forms of aid. However, it should give an indication of the most common forms of aid which you may have been given over the past three financial years. Potentially, any assistance from a public body might be an aid:

- Grants from public bodies
- Loans from public bodies at favourable rates
- Loan guarantees from public bodies
- Differential tax benefits
- Grants from an investment trust (including charities) which may themselves have received the funds from a public body
- Grants from a part publicly funded venture capital fund
- Publicly administered funds, even if the funds were originally not public, such as the national lottery
- Landfill tax
- Waiving or deferral of fees or interest normally due to a public body.
- Monopoly licences or guarantees of market share
- Advertising via a public channel such as a tourist board or state-owned television
- Consultancy advice provided either free or at a reduced rate
- Training provided either free or at a reduced rate
- Aid for investment in environmental projects
- Provision of a free or reduced rate feasibility study for research and development or other assistance with research and development
- Purchase of public land or property at a less than market rate
- Benefiting from the provision of infrastructure where your business was pre-identified as a beneficiary.

These types of aid may have been provided under de minimis (as de minimis aid) or under another State Aid regulation. If you are in any doubt whether aid received was de minimis aid or about its value, contact your local partner.

Any de minimis aid awarded to you under the SSP will have to be declared if you apply, or have applied, for any other public funding. Therefore, if successful, the offer letter must be retained and shown to any other public body to which you apply for funding for the three years following the offer.

False declarations will lead to the recovery of the value of the assistance provided plus interest.

**Note** that where a business is part of a group, the €200,000 limit applies to the group as a whole for public sector support within the United Kingdom.

#### **D. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM**

- i) Applicant businesses should contact the SSP on hotline number **0121 464 6456** or partner organisations to discuss their eligibility for the SSP (please refer to [www.birmingham.gov.uk/ssp](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/ssp) for eligibility check). If eligible, the SSP grant application form can be downloaded from the BCC website (as above).
- ii) The application form must be completed using Microsoft Word and is best compatible with Microsoft Office 2007 onwards using a Microsoft Windows Operating system. Note when using an Apple Mac device, you may experience difficulty completing radio button/dropdown menu questions. In this case leave these blank on the word version and mark clearly by hand on the signed scanned application. If you need assistance with this, contact your local partner. This assistance is free, and it is therefore not necessary to incur costs from consultants/business advisers. **\*\* Handwritten applications will not be accepted and will be returned.**
- iii) The use of consultants or third parties to complete the application form is an **ineligible** cost. Applicants are encouraged to use partner organisations and their Growth Hubs for any additional support at no cost.
- iv) However, if you choose to use a consultant or third parties, you must provide their details including: name, contact details, payment terms and role relating to this project.
- v) All light grey shaded fields must be completed. Incomplete forms will be rejected. Illustrations and graphics cannot be included in the Application Form.
- vi) Some of the questions have answers which can be selected from drop down boxes indicated by a black arrow in the corner of the box. For these questions, click on the arrow and select your answer from the list provided.
- vii) Once the application form is completed, it must be saved as word format .doc or .docx.
- viii) The application form must be signed by a person legally responsible for the business identified as the 'Applicant' in Section 1 of the application form.
- ix) Your signed application and all supporting documentation requested in Section 11 Checklist (listed below) should be submitted in electronic format only to [ssp@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:ssp@birmingham.gov.uk).
- x) When submitting your application, only include documentation which has been requested in Section 11 of the application form. Documentation submitted which has not been requested will not be considered as part of your application.

#### **Checklist**

1. Scanned and fully completed application form in Microsoft Word version
2. A Detailed Proposed Skills Development plan
3. Beneficiary Registration Forms for all employee participating in the project
4. Most recent end of year full financial accounts (micro/abbreviated accounts are not acceptable)
5. Where the applicant is part of a group of companies, consolidated group accounts should be submitted.
6. Current Management accounts up to present day and for the period not detailed in the accounts provided (only if most recent account are more than 6 months old)
7. Evidence of match funding
8. Three (3) quotes for each item of expenditure over £1,000
9. Copy of a current, up to date business bank statement showing bank name, business name and

## GRANT APPLICATION FORM GUIDANCE NOTES

Note the following guidance when completing the application form:

The application form is macro-enabled. All light grey shaded fields must be completed. Incomplete forms will be rejected. Once the application form is completed, it must be saved as word format: .doc or .docx. Illustrations and graphics cannot be included in the Application Form.

1. Business Details	
Field	Guidance
Business name Company Registration Number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter the full registered name for the Applicant and the company number if applicable (as provided by Companies House).</li> </ul>
VAT Number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VAT is <b>not</b> claimable on grants and all item costs should be entered <b>excluding</b> VAT</li> </ul>
Applicant contact details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter the full name, position (must be Owner, Managing Director/ Chief Executive), postcode, e-mail address and telephone number of the main point of contact.</li> <li>There will only be direct communication between SSP Programme Management Team and the named applicant</li> </ul>
Match Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The grant must be match funded by the applicant.</li> <li>The source of the match funding cannot be from other Public Funds. Loans, overdrafts, savings or company funds are eligible cash match funding, and these must be secured and in place prior to approval of an SSP grant.</li> </ul>
Total project cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This field will auto update from the values inputted in <b>Section 5. Project Costs</b></li> </ul>
Grant request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This field will auto update from the value inputted in <b>Section 5. Project Costs</b></li> <li>Enter the amount of aid requested using the guidance below to calculate.</li> <li>Up to 50% intervention rate area calculated using the location where project activity will be undertaken, if unsure see guidance on project costs below.</li> </ul>
Project start date Project end date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please state the anticipated start and end date for the project.</li> <li>The start date <b>cannot</b> be before the submission and a decision is made; this can take up to <b>six (6)</b> weeks therefore the start date should be a minimum of <b>four (4)</b> weeks after the submission.</li> <li><b>Note:</b> Approved businesses must: financially complete their projects within <b>four (4)</b> months from the date of acceptance of the Skills Funding Agreement including spend, defrayal and claiming the grant</li> <li>(* For complex projects, project timescales are subject to negotiation).</li> </ul>

2. Eligibility Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the "User Guide to the SME Definition" available at <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/state-aid/sme/smedefinitionguide_en.pdf">https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/state-aid/sme/smedefinitionguide_en.pdf</a></li> </ul>

3. Business Background	
Question	Guidance
i) Provide a brief history of the business since it started and the work you undertake ( <b>maximum 250 words</b> ).	Provide brief history of your company including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date Established</li> <li>• Ownership</li> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Business Activity</li> <li>• Current number of employees</li> <li>• Current turnover and profit.</li> <li>• Product and services supplied</li> </ul>

4. Skills Development Proposal	
Question	Guidance

**Describe the proposed project. Provide detail of the proposed project by answering all the following:**

i) Summarise your proposed Skills plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify key skills issues e.g. skills shortages, skills mismatch etc.</li> <li>- Provide key elements of the proposed training plan, time scale and cost.</li> </ul>
ii) What training do you propose to undertake?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- List the training courses, accrediting body and levels.</li> </ul>
iii) Why do you need grant funding to deliver this training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>For example:</b> will speed up growth, not able to fully finance project on internal funds, will upskill current employees and free up vacancies for new employees to enter the job market etc.</li> </ul>
iv) What impact will this training have on the growth of your business?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>For example:</b> increase skill levels, employment growth, increased turnover, profit, new products and market opportunities, potential new contracts etc.</li> </ul>
v) Who within your business will be responsible for the management and delivery of the project and what is their position in the business?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name and position of Project Lead within the Applicant Business.</li> </ul>

5. Project Costs	
Question	Guidance
i) Provide a detailed breakdown of training costs	<p>Provide evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- List each Training Type and your preferred quotes Training provider</li> <li>- Name and give a brief reason for your selection in each case.</li> <li>- You are not required to provide Comparative Quotes if you are applying via the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Partners: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creative Alliance</li> <li>- Kaplan</li> <li>- Skills Training UK</li> <li>- Birmingham Adult Education Service</li> <li>- Make UK (formerly known as EEF)</li> <li>- SMMT Industry Forum</li> <li>- Open Study College</li> <li>- Midland Group Training Services</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>- Alternatively, the names of the Comparative Quotes Provider are required.</li> <li>- The supporting proposals, tender documentation (when the project cost is above £25,000) or three</li> </ul>

5. Project Costs																	
Question	Guidance																
	<p>quotes for each item* above £1,000 relating to expenditure as listed in the project costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These files need to be named in accordance to the different expenditure listed in the table under the <b>Training Type</b> fields.</li> <li>- This will assist in determining if the procurement requirements have been met.</li> </ul> <p>If the project cost exceeds £25,000, please visit:</p> <p><a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/825719/ESIF-GN-1-001_ESIF_National_Procurement_Requirements_v6.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/825719/ESIF-GN-1-001_ESIF_National_Procurement_Requirements_v6.pdf</a></p> <p>This document explains the national guidelines that need to be met.</p> <p>*one item or the sum of many items from one supplier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the project has more expenditure items than the rows in the tables below, consolidate items on to one row.</li> </ul>																
<p>Amount of grant requested (50% of project costs, maximum £18,000)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESF grant intervention rates will vary to a maximum of 50%:</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="735 958 1481 1099"> <thead> <tr> <th>LEP Area</th> <th>Intervention Rate</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Greater Birmingham &amp; Solihull (More Developed Areas only)</td> <td>Maximum 50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm which LEP area the business falls within, contact your growth hub or refer to:</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP</a></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="746 1305 1492 1720"> <thead> <tr> <th>Local Authority</th> <th>Category of Region – Intervention Rate</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Birmingham City Council</td> <td>More Developed - Maximum 50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bromsgrove District Council</td> <td>More Developed - Maximum 50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redditch Borough Council</td> <td>More Developed - Maximum 50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council</td> <td>More Developed - Maximum 50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wyre Forest District Council</td> <td>More Developed - Maximum 50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	LEP Area	Intervention Rate	Greater Birmingham & Solihull (More Developed Areas only)	Maximum 50%	Local Authority	Category of Region – Intervention Rate	Birmingham City Council	More Developed - Maximum 50%	Bromsgrove District Council	More Developed - Maximum 50%	Redditch Borough Council	More Developed - Maximum 50%	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	More Developed - Maximum 50%	Wyre Forest District Council	More Developed - Maximum 50%
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<p>Confirm the source of match funding (ie owner's investment, company funds, bank loan, other grant funding).</p>	<p>How much private sector match funding will the project attract? The source of the match funding cannot be from other Public Funds, Hire Purchase and similar products that involve payment by instalment.</p> <p>Provide evidence of confirmation of the level of private sector match funding to deliver the proposed project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal company resources</li> <li>• Directors loans</li> <li>• Bank loans and overdraft</li> <li>• Other funding including (equity and non-bank finance).</li> </ul>																

<b>6. State Aid Assistance</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
Detail the amount of aid received from public sources in this financial year and the two previous financial years (if part of a group of companies), this needs to include all funding across all businesses within the group).	<p>Provide confirmation of the following: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declare the amount of public sector funding the amount of aid received from public sources in this financial year and the two previous financial years.</li> <li>• If no public sector funding has been received, leave the table as blank.</li> </ul>

<b>7. Declaration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declaration must be signed by the by a person legally responsible for the business, the owner, Managing Director or Chief Executive</li> </ul>

<b>8. Strategic Partner</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select the partner who assisted you with completing the application form from the list.</li> </ul>

<b>9. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Overview</b>
As stated in the Application Form.

<b>10. Marketing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select where you heard about the SSP from the list of options.</li> </ul>

<b>11. Checklist</b>	
<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
Microsoft word version (unsigned) and scanned signed application form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit completed unsigned Application Form in Microsoft word format (.doc or .docx file)</li> <li>• Submit signed scanned Application Form.</li> </ul>
Detailed Proposed Skills plan	<p>The plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current skill levels</li> <li>• Determine Staff Skill needs</li> <li>• Outline training and needs analysis</li> <li>• Identifying the training to be undertaken i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Type of training</li> <li>○ Mode of training i.e. distance or learning or face to face</li> <li>○ Qualification level of the training</li> <li>○ The accreditation of the training (Internal or external training etc)</li> <li>○ Duration of the training</li> <li>○ Cost of the training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify number of Staff to be trained</li> <li>• Impact of proposed training on the business</li> </ul>
Forms and the corresponding evidence for all the outputs	<p>Completed and sign a Beneficiaries Registration Forms for all the beneficiaries who will take up training under this project.</p> <p>The outputs are evidenced through self-declaration selecting the relevant option, completing and signing the form.</p>



	<p>However, the applicant organisation will have to retain any of the following copies of Identification (ID) documents: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth certificate</li> <li>• Driving licence</li> <li>• Full passport,</li> <li>• National Identity Card-EU, Etc)</li> <li>• Any other document supplied as part of eligibility confirmation.</li> </ul> <p>The evidence will support the declarations made in the Beneficiaries Registration Forms. This evidence may be required, in the event of an audit by ESF, which could take place over a ten (10) year period from the end of the SSP.</p>
Most recent end of year full Annual Accounts	Most recent end of year Annual Accounts. There is no requirement for the accounts to be audited. <b>N.B. micro/abbreviated accounts are not acceptable.</b>
Where the applicant is part of a group, consolidated group accounts	If the applicant business is part of a group must provide consolidated group accounts or if these have not been produced, provide the most recent full accounts for all companies in the group.
Management Accounts up to present day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Existing businesses <b>only</b> if most recent Accounts are more than 6 months old:</li> <li>• Up to date Management Accounts starting from the date of the last annual accounts.</li> </ul>
Evidence of match funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of match funding to deliver the project:</li> <li>• Internal resource (e.g. bank statements, existing loan and overdraft facility).</li> <li>• External finance (e.g. new loans, overdraft facility, equity investment, evidence of funds from directors or shareholders).</li> <li>• Funding from one company to another <b>is only allowable</b> within a group structure (as defined by the Companies Act).</li> <li>• Hire Purchase or similar financial products involving a financial arrangement whereby the purchase of equipment is paid in instalments, which does not provide evidence of defrayed expenditure for the full amount) are ineligible.</li> <li>• Loans, overdrafts, savings or company funds are considered to be eligible cash match funding, and these must be secured and in place prior to approval of an SSP grant.</li> </ul>
A minimum of three (3) written quotations are secured for each item* above £1,000 listed in Section 5 and provided with your application. *one item or the sum of many items from one supplier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of three (3) written quotations are secured for each item* above £1,000.</li> <li>• If under £1,000 the quote for the chosen supplier.</li> </ul> <p>*one item or the sum of many items from one supplier</p> <p>If you are applying via our Strategic Partners, you are <b>not</b> required to provide Comparative Quotes.</p>
Evidence of existing staff numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printout of payroll or HR records.</li> </ul>
Current, up to date business bank statement.	<p>A Full current bank statement from the last three (3) months showing: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank name</li> <li>• Business name and address</li> <li>• Account name</li> <li>• Account number and sort code</li> </ul>

## Submission of your Application

- When your application form has been completed, before submitting it to BCC, ensure that you have answered all questions fully and have completed all boxes.
- Print it out, sign it and scan it so that the signed version can be e-mailed together with all documentation requested in **Section 11 (Check list)**.

Submit your signed application and all supporting documentation requested in **Section 11** to Birmingham City Council in electronic format only to [ssp@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:ssp@birmingham.gov.uk).

**\*\*Incomplete or incorrectly completed applications will be returned.**

## PROCESSES

### E. APPLICATION PROCESS

- i) Once your application has been received by BCC, you will receive an e-mail notifying you of its receipt. It will then be checked to ensure that all documentation required has been submitted with the application form.  
At this pre-validation stage, you will be notified if additional information or documents are required or to be resubmitted
  - ii) Upon the submission of all the correct documentation, the application will be allocated to a Project Officer (PO). You may be contacted at this stage if anything needs clarifying.
  - iii) Following the assessments, the project will be considered at an Approval Panel, for a decision.
- i) Approval is not guaranteed, and the **Approval Panel** will make one of three decisions:
    1. Application recommended for approval.
    2. Application deferred. Additional information will be requested before the decision can be finalised.
    3. Application declined. A letter outlining the reasons for the decline will be sent to unsuccessful applicants.

Note, an application can be declined or withdrawn at any point in the process, on sufficient grounds identified.

### F. APPROVED APPLICATIONS

- i) When an application has been approved, a Skills Funding Agreement stating the amount of grant offered and the terms and conditions will be sent to the Participant Business.

Included with the SME Skills Funding Agreement will be the following:

- New Vendor Form
- New Vendor request form Guidance Notes.

The New Vendor Form should be completed and returned to BCC with the original signed Skills Funding Agreement. An email acknowledging receipt of the form will be sent by the BCC project officer.

- ii) Payments will be made against project expenditure defrayed **after** the date the Skills Funding Agreement is signed (Annex 1 of the agreement). Do not commence your project until you have signed and returned the agreement.  
**\*\* Note** that you have **ten (10)** working days from the date of the agreement to complete and return it to BCC.
- i) Your allocated Project Officer will then arrange a visit with you to discuss the contents and requirements for the following programme documentation:

- SME Skills Funding Agreement
- SME claim summary form
- Beneficiaries Outcome forms

The SME guide to making grant claims and submitting the monitoring evidence will be sent to you following your acceptance of the SME Skills Funding Agreement.

## **G. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

- i) The publicity requirements are very important and must be followed by every organisation involved in delivering the SSP project.

All materials and documents must: -

- acknowledge and reference the funding received from the European Social Fund (ESF)
- have a correct and visible ESF logo in line with ESF requirements
- contain the BCC and SSP logos.

- ii) The material must follow the ESIF Branding and Publicity Requirements. The Marketing Compliance Checklist gives an indication of what needs to be addressed to ensure that the marketing and communication material is compliant to the ESIF requirements. Note, this is an indicative guide only and it is recommended that to ensure full compliance, to read the ESIF requirements which provide full guidance on logo size, colour, positioning, clearance zone, etc

[www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/20199/business\\_growth\\_programme](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/20199/business_growth_programme)

[ESIF Branding and Publicity Requirements - Gov.uk](#)

iii) All project related Marketing and Communication including press releases, advertisements, articles etc must be supplied to BCC for compliance checks prior to use. Copies of these items should be sent to the e-mail address listed in the Marketing Compliance Checklist. Sample press release templates can also be provided.

iv) Non- conformance to the SSP Marketing and Communications requirements can result in the grant funding being withdrawn or if it has already been paid, it may be reclaimed.

### **The Logo**

Your Project Officer will supply you with the relevant logos you need to display and will provide the logos in either .jpg, .tif or .eps format.



The logos above are the correct, accepted logo for any marketing and publicity materials for the SSP project.

## **GRANT PAYMENTS**

- i) Approved participant businesses will have to financially complete their projects within four (4) months from the date of acceptance and signing of the Skills Funding Agreement including spend,

defrayal and claiming the grant. For complex projects, project timescales are subject to negotiation.

- ii) Participant Business expenditure is only eligible for grant funding if all mandatory information has been collected, checked and retained.
- iii) BCC will be checking records & evidence throughout to ensure risks are being managed.
- iv) Payments may be withheld from a business if evidence is incomplete, inaccurate or unclear.
- v) Grant funding may also be recovered from a partner if errors are discovered in past evidence that has already been reported to the BCC.
- vi) All expenditure undertaken as part of the financial assistance for the grant project MUST be paid for by cheque or bank transfer so that a clear evidence trail can be demonstrated. Any payments made in cash will not be reimbursed against.
- vii) BCC will only reimburse against invoices for eligible expenditure dated after the date when the Skills Funding Agreement was accepted and signed.
- viii) Grant payments are issued as a reimbursement of eligible expenditure (i.e. paid in arrears) incurred by the Participant Business and will be paid on production of relevant evidence, i.e. copies of invoices for approved eligible costs, receipts, and bank statements to evidence the payments. All documents required to make a claim should be sent by e-mail to your Project Officer.
- ix) All documents listed above submitted as part of a grant claim should clearly state 'Certified as a true copy of the original' and be signed and dated. Any documents submitted without this will be returned and reimbursement will be delayed.
- x) Grants can be claimed either at the completion of your project or by instalments if project costs are in excess of £5,000.
- xi) Grant claims should not include VAT.
- xii) Grant payments will be reimbursed at the percentage rate listed on page 1 of the Skills Funding Agreement for eligible expenditure submitted until the approved grant amount has been reached. (Refer to **Section 5 Project costs** above, ii) Business area location and grant intervention rates.
- xiii) Grant payments will be made directly to your business's bank account using details supplied on the new vendor form. Grant payments will not be made to third parties.

## **MONITORING**

Monitoring and regular reporting on performance, is essential for ensuring that the SSP programme's aims, and objectives are being achieved. Strategic Partners and Participant businesses are required to report back on a regular basis with detailed monitoring data and information collated during the programme delivery.

There are a number of monitoring and reporting mechanisms that have been put in place to meet the monitoring and reporting requirements as follows: -

- i) A condition of this grant is that the assisted businesses must upskill new and existing employees, leading to accredited training.
- ii) The training must commence after the date of the acceptance of the Skills Funding Agreement. These will need to be completed within the agreed timeframe detailed in the application form and generally completed within four (4) months from the date of acceptance.

- iii) Participant Businesses will be sent a Beneficiaries outcome form for completion. The forms should be e-mailed to the PO together with the evidence of the accredited training i.e. copies of the full qualifications, units or a unit of qualification.
  - iv) Failure to complete this form or complete the agreed accredited training may result in grant monies paid being reclaimed by Birmingham City Council.
  - v) On submission of the last claim, where applicable, the PO will arrange a verification visit.
  - vi) Participant Businesses will be provided with a SME publicity poster stating how the grant was used and this must be displayed and be visible in the reception area of the business for **twelve (12)** months.
- BCC will monitor the delivery of the programme and the impact of the training delivered through a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) made up of overall programme results and outputs.
  - The Beneficiary Outputs information collected by the Participant Business will link directly to outputs and results as agreed with BCC and detailed in each individual Skills Funding Agreement.

## **Results**

Results identify the achievement by a beneficiary after participating on the programme. All Beneficiaries are required to achieve any of the SSP programme's results targets, which are detailed in the Skills Funding Agreement.

We would expect every beneficiary to gain a qualification in order for the Participant Business to claim the grant funding and expenditure for the beneficiary.

There is a requirement for at least one of the qualifications to be achieved:

- Beneficiaries gaining a Qualification in Basic skills in English and/or Numeracy
- Beneficiaries gaining Level 2 or below or a unit of a Level 2 or below qualification (excluding Basic skills)
- Beneficiaries gaining a Level 3 and above or a unit of a Level 3 and above qualification
- Females gaining an improved labour market status

## **Outputs**

The overall programme output is the number of Beneficiaries engaged in training to upgrade and improve work skills, the volume of which has been agreed between each Participant Business and the BCC and is stated in the individual Skills Funding Agreements.

Of the agreed number of Beneficiaries engaged in training they also need to be classified into the following categories: -

- Female
- Ethnic Minorities (BAME)
- Living in a single adult household with dependent children
- Below 50 years of age
- Above 50 years of age
- Beneficiaries with disabilities
- Total number of Beneficiaries

N.B. a Beneficiary can be counted against more than one output.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- i) It may take up to **six (6) weeks** from a complete submission of the application to BCC before a decision is received.

- ii) Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis and as such, awards will vary depending on the evidence provided, viability of your business and the project to be undertaken.
- iii) This is a discretionary fund and all decisions are subject to a project, business, financial appraisal and will be assessed on the basis of subject to availability of funds and on first come, first served, principle.