

Skills Bootcamps Application Guidance Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington 2025/26

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Guidance

Overview

This guidance sets out the basis on which Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) will deal with any grant application received from course providers and the factors to be considered when assessing applications.

The Department for Education (DfE) is supporting the development of Skills Bootcamps across the country as part of their Skills for Life Programme.

Skills Bootcamps will support Cheshire and Warrington's social and economic objectives of delivering a sustainable, healthy, inclusive, and growing economy. They will enable:

- our employers to fill vacancies and reduce skills gaps and shortages in their workforce
- unemployed individuals to develop the digital and technical skills needed to move into work
- employed individuals to develop the changing skills needed by employers
- self-employed individuals to develop changing skills needed to expand their opportunities/contracts

Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington have published this grant application guidance for the financial year 2025/26 for any training provider, or employer who has an interest in delivering a Skills Bootcamp within the sub-region.

The application guidance has been designed to:

- maximise innovation from providers
- maximise flexibility and build on good practice
- provide clarity around deadlines for the remaining year
- maintain the requirement for the Skills Bootcamps to be local employer-led and backed by the local data and labour market information.

ECW therefore are open to receive applications of any potential scale throughout the financial year and will make allocation decisions based on the content of this document and available funds.

Alignment with Department for Education Policy

To be eligible for consideration, all Skills Bootcamps must meet the following principles:

- Minimum 60 guided learning hours. (Digital Skills Bootcamps are now 100 guided learning hours)
- Training to be delivered over a maximum of 16 weeks.
- Meet one of the Department for Education (DfE) acceptable category themes
 - One of the acceptable DfE category themes is "Other," ECW will therefore consider pilot proposals for alternative themes not currently specified, however the available pilot allocation within Cheshire and Warrington is limited to approximately 50% of ECW's available grant and therefore pilot proposals should be scaled appropriately and must have strong evidence of employer demand. Other categories include Health & Social Care, life sciences, financial sector, business growth and administration.
 - All pilot proposals should align with the IfATE Occupational Routes, and proposals must evidence the following:

- Where the Skills Bootcamp fits on the occupational route and pathway.
- The occupation(s) that learners from the Skills Bootcamp will move into on completion.
- While alignment of Skills Bootcamps with occupational maps is expected at route and pathway, we do not require full alignment at knowledge, skill and behaviour level unless they are designed to lead onto an apprenticeship via the existing Pathway to Accelerated Apprenticeship model. However, providers should outline how much alignment they intend to deliver.

DfE Skills Areas

Category	Core Subject Areas	Suggested Possible Skills Bootcamp Subject
Digital Core	Cloud	Cloud computing, cloud engineering, cloud services
	Computer aided design	3D, electrical, diagnostics
	Cyber	Security, intrusion analysis, technology, readiness, engineering
	Data	Analytics, engineering, database, design, science, technology
	DevOps	DevOps
	Digital marketing	Social media, design, analytics
	Games	Design, technology, UI, UX
	Network	Engineering, technology, infrastructure
	Software development	Programming, agile computing, coding
	Software engineering	Software engineering
	Support	Specialist, IT solutions
	Web	Full stack development, engineering, production
Digital Bespoke	Digital Skills Bootcamps not falling within the above nominated core subject areas	
Technical Core	Advanced Manufacturing	Engineering
	Design	Construction, marine
	Electronics & electrotechnical	Manufacturing, engineering
	Engineering	Civil, engineering construction, marine
	Welding	Coded, MIG, TIG
Technical Bespoke	Technical Skills Bootcamps not falling within the above nominated core subject areas	

Construction	Construction management	Site supervision, project co-ordination
	Construction trades	Bricklaying, plumbing, gas, dry lining, joinery
Pathway to accelerated apprenticeships	Apprenticeships Paths	Any of the sector skills specified in all other categories that map to a recognised apprenticeship
Green Skills	Green Power	Renewables, Nuclear Power, Grid Infrastructure, Energy Storage and Smart Systems Technology
	Green Construction & Buildings	Retrofit, energy-efficiency installation, insulation installation, smart devices and controls, low carbon / net zero heat networks, heat pump installation, hydrogen boiler installation, electric vehicle charge point installation
	Green Transport	Electric vehicle manufacture, maintenance and recycling, low / net zero carbon public transport including rail, sustainable aviation fuel manufacture
	Green Protection of Natural Resources	Nature restoration, woodland management, arboriculture, decarbonising agriculture, waste management and recycling
	Green Business & Industry	Hydrogen production and industrial use, carbon capture, utilisation & storage and industrial decarbonisation
Logistics	HGV Driving	Novice to Cat C Notice to Cat C and Cat C+E Novice to Cat C or Cat C and Cat C+E + employer specific elements Cat C to Cat C+E Additional Qualifications in ADR packages Additional Qualifications in ADR packages and ADR Tankers Additional Qualification in ADR Tankers + PDP Back to the Wheels Refresher to existing category Back to the Wheels Refresher Cat C to Cat C+E
Other	ECW can pilot a different Skills Bootcamp area, providing sufficient local data and labour market information, as well as evidence of strong employer demand, support the pilot.	

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

The providers who are awarded this funding must deliver the following 4 objectives

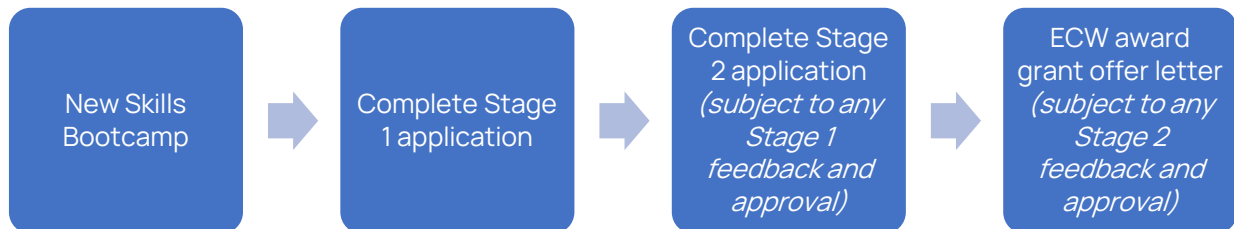
Objective 1	Performance Indicators
Participating employers to commit to interviewing for their skills shortage vacancies (SSV) from the pool of trained individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% guaranteed interview (job, new role, or apprenticeship), or access to new opportunities in the case of the self-employed for each learner completing a Skills Bootcamp. At least 75% of individuals to move into a new job or role within 6 months of completing of training. 100% referral to alternative opportunities for learners who are unsuccessful at post completion interview
Objective 2	Performance Indicators
Successful providers to work with groups of employers to design and deliver appropriate courses to suit their vacancies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of Skills Bootcamps should be able to evidence employer engagement throughout the course (design/delivery/outcome) 100% of courses designed to meet employer requirements to address their SSV. Co-funding committed and achieved by employers. 100% of learners who successfully complete a Skills Bootcamp will have acquired new skills within the scope of the Skills Bootcamp programme
Objective 3	Performance Indicators
Recruit individuals using open and impartial methods to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity to local residents and protected groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers applying Numbers starting Numbers completing (> /=80%) Data on dropouts (< /=20%) Success rates Interview tracking Diversity information
Objective 4	Performance Indicators
Collect/ensure all relevant data is provided to allow DfE to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives and the delivery model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection will be monitored monthly and will need to meet the minimum reporting requirements of DfE.

Grant recipients will therefore need to demonstrate an active local network to ensure success at both maximising local employer engagement and maximising learner recruitment and engagement.

Grant Application Process Stage Definitions

- Stage 1:
 - A background of the training provider and delivery experience, with specific learning themes highlighted
 - Outcome: An invitation to complete a Stage 2 application form

- Stage 2:
 - Submission of a detailed Skills Bootcamp proposal
 - Outcome: funding decision, with a grant offer letter subject to approval



Timescales

ECW does not advertise a deadline within the financial year for submissions, all grant applications will be accepted and reviewed in the order they are received and on a “first come first served basis”. However, grant funds will only be allocated if there is sufficient funding capacity within the programme as at the date a stage 2 application is received and applications are always subject to approval. Please do note that even if you are acceptable at Stage 1, we cannot guarantee you will be allocated a grant, as this will be subject to the Stage 2 assessment criteria and the available funds.

For each specific Skills Bootcamp Wave, there are timescales set out by DfE that need to be adhered to. For example, for Wave 5, the DfE require that 30% of learners start their Skills Bootcamp by 30th of July and in total 50% of learners have started their training by the 30th of September.

In addition, it is expected that a bootcamp must start within 3 months of grant award offer (milestone 1) and learners must finish the bootcamp within 3 months of starting, thus achieving milestone 2. Skills Bootcamp providers have until 6 months after the financial year end to submit evidence for Milestone 3 – successful outcomes for the learners. See payment terms for milestone definitions.

Grant Award Criteria

Assessment Criteria	
Failure to respond or irrelevant information which fails to meet the requirement.	0
Response is inadequate, significantly failing to meet the requirements.	1
Response is unsatisfactory partially meets the requirement.	2
Response is acceptable and meets the minimum requirement.	3
Response is good - better than merely acceptable.	4
Response is excellent, exceeds the requirement and gives added value.	5

Stage 1 Assessment Criteria and weighting	
Meets DfE policy	Pass/Fail
Value for Money	Pass/Fail

Experience of Skills Bootcamp & Local Delivery	25%
Employer Engagement	20%
Learner Engagement	20%
Data & Quality	15%
Alignment to Local Data & Labour Market Intelligence (LMI)	20%
<i>Applicants will need a minimum weighted score of 3 to progress to stage 2</i>	

Stage 2 Assessment Criteria and Weighting	
Design & delivery of Skills Bootcamp	30%
Employer Evidence	25%
Capacity	15%
Mobilisation & Marketing	30%
<i>Applicants will need a minimum weighted score of 3 to be able to be put forward for approval</i>	

ECW are committed to providing a variety of learning opportunities to the residents of Cheshire and Warrington and may reject any application for a Skills Bootcamp whereby it is felt that the curriculum and content is already offered and is meeting the needs of the that specific sector.

The level of any grant awarded remains in the sole discretion of ECW. There is no guarantee that the amount of grant awarded by ECW will be the total amount claimed by an applicant, even if the applicant's application is successful at stage 2.

Where the current financial year's programme funding is fully allocated, any applicant with an application that meets the Skills Bootcamp criteria will be put onto a reserve list, until such time that funding may become available within the current financial year. This may include capacity becoming available in the current financial year or additional funding awards from the DfE within the current financial year. The reserve list will close at the end of the current financial year and anyone on the reserve list at the end of the current financial year will have to make a new application to apply for funding in future financial years.

Pilot Skills Bootcamps

ECW may consider a pilot Skills Bootcamp funding award in the following situations:

- Where a provider has limited delivery experience in the Cheshire and Warrington area
- The Skills bootcamp theme and curriculum is innovative, novel and has not been delivered before in the Cheshire and Warrington area

A pilot award may consist of one cohort, that will be required to meet the standard DfE and ECW criteria for successful delivery. The Skills Bootcamp programme team at ECW will provide support and ensure regular dialogue with the training provider before a feedback session is held, whereby any future funding allocations would be discussed. Any further funding would be dependent on successful delivery, employer demand and the funds being available. Any additional funding request following the provisions of a successful pilot Skills Bootcamp would have to be applied for and such an application for funding would be considered in accordance with the content of this document.

Key Features of Skills Bootcamps

The key features of the Skills Bootcamps must include a focus on achieving the social and economic benefits of the Skills Bootcamp, as well as the following:

1. Level of training

Training to be pitched at level 3 (or equivalent) and above. The Department for Education are not providing funding for entry level Skills Bootcamps. Skills Bootcamps in Construction, Green Skills and HGV Driving may be delivered at Level 2. The training may be delivered virtually, face to face or a combination of the two (hybrid).

2. Employer Involvement

Employers can apply to be either a provider of training directly or must be actively and strategically engaged with training providers. Letters evidencing employer engagement and commitment are required at Stage 2. This does not stop recruiting additional employers once the grant has been awarded.

Employers must be involved in determining the training on offer, and it must deliver the skills they need to be able to recruit and/or fill skills gaps. Employer engagement can include:

- defining skills / certification requirements
- the development and delivery of Skills Bootcamps
- clearly identified guaranteed interviews for job vacancies for specific roles
- involvement in screening potential learners
- coaching and mentoring
- offering work experience

Preference will be given to employers who have a base in Cheshire & Warrington and the funding must look to support training for jobs and vacancies in this geography.

Skills Bootcamps will be co-funded by the employer where the employer is training their own existing employees (defined as someone directly employed by the employer, not a sub-contractor, or freelancer). If the employer is a large business, they will contribute 30% and this is reduced to 10% where the employer is a small or medium enterprise (SME) (defined as an employer with fewer than 250 employees).

Courses are fully funded for unemployed individuals or those not being co-funded by their employer, and for the self-employed.

3. Target learners

Learners on the Skills Bootcamp must be aged 19 or over on 31 August of the financial year 2025/26. They can be employed (full-time or part-time), self-employed or unemployed within the last 12 months. Where Jobcentre work coaches or equivalent sponsors identify individuals who have been unemployed for longer than 12 months, there is discretion to make a recommendation for attending a Skills Bootcamp, to be considered on a case-by-case basis. We would expect training providers to liaise regularly with relevant Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre colleagues to identify potential applicants.

Serving prisoners due to be released within 6 months of completion of a Skills Bootcamp and those on temporary release are also eligible.

We want to ensure that the training is accessible to all eligible adults within the community. Recruitment for learners who are unemployed or self-employed and screening for learners who are employed must use a fair and open process. Skills Bootcamps should be designed to encourage the participation of under-represented groups, such as those with protected characteristics and those who might face barriers to employment (e.g., veterans, refugees) and aim to reflect the diversity of the local area. An adult must have the right to work in the UK, this right can be checked on [Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/right-to-work-checks-an-employer-s-guide). An adult may only undertake one Skills Bootcamp per funding year. Providers have an obligation to ask prospective learners whether they have already undertaken a Skills Bootcamp in that funding year.

No prior attainment is required unless specifically prescribed by an employer and/or specifically related to the job and sector within which the vacancies or development opportunities are offered. When recruiting learners, providers must have robust screening processes to ensure learners have the baseline skills, attitudes, and competencies to successfully complete the course. If possible, employers should be involved in the initial screening process.

Charging learners in any form, including consumable and devices required for the duration of the Skills Bootcamp is not permitted. This includes any proposals that involve asking learners to pay the funding back afterwards.

It is essential that learners either live, work or plan to work in Cheshire and Warrington. As previously referenced the funding must look to support training for jobs in this geography.

Data & Quality assurance

The grant recipient must submit data via the DfE Data Submission Sheet. A version of the Data Submission Sheet will be provided at the induction meeting, following approval of a new Skills Bootcamp. This data collection is mandatory and must be submitted monthly via the spreadsheet template supplied by ECW and will be used for audit, assurance, and evaluation purposes. This data sheet must be password protected when submitted to ECW.

Suppliers will be required to engage with the Skills Bootcamps programme team, who are responsible for exploring opportunities to continuously improve policy and delivery.

Skills Bootcamps will be within the remit of Ofsted from Wave 4 onwards (i.e., from April 2023), following the recommendations and publication of the Ofsted thematic survey from Wave 2¹. ECW will provide support and share best practice where Ofsted is concerned, however it is the responsibility of the grant recipients to ensure that their organisation is prepared for any visits or assessments.

¹ [Skills Bootcamps will help plug skills gaps, but improvements are needed - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/skills-bootcamps-will-help-plug-skills-gaps-but-improvements-are-needed)

Evaluation of the programme

All employers and grant recipients must agree to work with ECW to fully evaluate the success of the Skills Bootcamps, including:

- Names/Details of employers involved
- Levels and details of employer co-funding achieved
- Numbers of and personal details/demographic data for all applicants wishing to become learners on the Skills Bootcamp
- Data on individual levels of training engagement and achievement (e.g., how many hours engage with the course, number of completions)
- Details of job interviews by employers and the success rate
- Track learners who complete the Skills Bootcamp, up to 6 months after completing the Skills Bootcamp to determine their outcome
- Participate in qualitative interviews to reflect on implementation and identify lessons learned for future roll-out
- Completion of an audit exercise for the Skills Bootcamp, including a spot-check review of the outcome of a minimum of 10% of the learners who complete the Skills Bootcamp

Payment Terms

Payments are made through the achievement of 3 key milestones for each learner, as detailed below.

First Payment – Milestone 1	Second Payment – Milestone 2	Third Payment – Milestone 3
40% - Attended Day 1; 14 qualifying days; 10 Guided Learning Hours	30% - course completion AND offer of an interview*	30% - successful outcome**

Payments will be made in monthly arrears, subject to submission of accurate monthly data and claim returns. (A claims template will be provided once the Skills Bootcamp has been approved)

*“Offer of an interview” refers to:

- Offer of an interview on completion, for a job that matches the new skills acquired, where the learner is fully funded
- An offer of a new role and/or responsibilities that matches the new skills acquired, where the learner is co-funded
- Written confirmation/plan from the learner of how the new learning has been/will be applied to acquire new opportunities/contracts, where the learner is self-employed

**“Successful outcome” relates to the utilisation of the skills acquired, being deployed within 6 months of completing the Skills Bootcamp, and the learner achieving:

- Offer of a new job and continuous employment for at least 12 weeks
- Apprenticeship
- New role or additional/change in responsibilities with an existing employer
- New contracts or new opportunities for the self-employed

Terms and conditions of submissions

Through applying, the applicant is committing to meet and abide by the following terms and conditions:

- Confidentiality and disclaimer
- Material misrepresentation
- Collusive Bidding
- Bribery
- TUPE
- Data Protection Act compliance
- Social value

Contact Details

Questions and submissions to be sent to: grants@cheshireandwarrington.com

*Please note this guidance is subject to regular review with the sponsoring department's policies and best practice measures.

Version Control

Version number	Purpose/Changes	Author	Date
1.0	Update of branding and wording from CWLEP to ECW	Lara Smith	30/04/2024
1.1	Independent Assurance review	Greenwoods	22/05/2024