**Rother Skills Capital Fund**

**Guidance for applicants**

**Background**

Under the previous Government, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded funding to Rother District Council. This funding is to be used in Rother for capital projects for:

* Improving access to health and wellbeing services and supporting the voluntary sector
* Improving transport infrastructure
* Promoting economic growth and skills development

The Skills Capital Fund forms part of this funding allocation.

**Objectives of the fund**

The Rother Skills Capital Fund – is a sum of £500,000 ringfenced for spend on capital projects that can support employability and skills provision in Rother. This part of the funding is being overseen by the Employment and Skills Team at ESCC, who has strategic oversight of employment and skills activity in the county.

The Fund is aimed at projects that that will improve employability and skills provision that:

* Aligns with [Skills East Sussex Priorities and Priority Sectors](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/employment-skills-training/skills-east-sussex).
* Meets identified need and demand in Rother [Rother District Council](https://www.rother.gov.uk/)

It is envisioned that the fund will make:

* Three grants of up to £133,300
* Four grants of up to £25,000

An identical scheme is running simultaneously in Hastings. Applicants can submit a proposal to both geographies for different or identical/the same proposal. They will be asked to declare this intention on their application forms.

**Exclusions**

**No part of this funding can used for revenue spend** – including project oversight, staff costs or for the delivery of services. The project will need to be delivered at the expense of the applicant, and all of the grant received must be spent on capital (kit or works).

Retrospective funding for capital items or work that have already been paid for.

Where the applicant is VAT registered and/or exempt, VAT should be recovered directly by the applicant from HMRC and cannot be included or claimed as part of project costs.

**Applicants**

In order to be eligible to apply for this programme, applicants must be:

* Registered VCSE organisation with training objectives identified in constitution/articles. We accept applications from charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), not-for-profit company limited by guarantee - you must be a registered charity **or** have a not-for-profit 'asset lock' clause in your articles of association and community interest companies (CIC). (If you are a CIC, please also supply your CIC 34 report).
* Or a Registered Education/Training Provider (such as a school, local authority training centre, FE College or Independent Training Provider) with an OFSTED Good or Outstanding rating
* Have premises in/be committed to delivering in Rother District beyond the lifetime of the grant. If works are taking place to a leased property, a signed lease for a period of five years will be required.
* Be financially viable (**Past year of accounts to be provided, with evidence of reserves and/or a financial plan for 2025/26**).

The applicant is responsible for submitting the application, ensuring that their organisation meets the eligibility criteria, that there is no duplication or conflict with other local training provision and for ensuring that all information provided on the application form is accurate and complete.

The named applicant will be the primary contact for ESCC until Grant Funding Agreements are in place.

Applicants may submit more than one proposal as long as each is for a distinct project. Applicants may submit the same proposal to the Rother Skills Capital Fund and the Hastings Skills Capital Fund as long as local priorities are met in each area.

**Assessment criteria**

**MHCLG Skills Capital Funding will be awarded to eligible organisations who can demonstrate that:**

* there is a clear need for their Capital Expenditure proposal
* the proposal aligns with the objectives of Skills East Sussex and supports key local economic priorities

Details about Skills East Sussex can be found here: [Skills East Sussex (SES) | East Sussex County Council](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/support/employment-skills-training/skills-east-sussex)

Information about Rother can be found here: [Rother District Council](https://www.rother.gov.uk/)

Additionally, information and data about skills and employment can be found here: [Future Skills Sussex](https://www.futureskillssussex.co.uk/) and [Welcome to ESiF (eastsussexinfigures.org.uk)](https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/webview/welcome.html)

* that the project will improve the quality of provision and enable equality of opportunity
* there is no duplication of existing/like resource in the geography
* value for money is ensured
* they have sufficient revenue to be able to fully utilise the capital expenditure for a period beyond the lifetime of the grant programme in the geography for which the project is intended
* they have strong project management capacity and are able to demonstrate clear accountability
* the project is carefully planned and can be fully delivered by 31st March 2025

**Assessment process**

All application forms must be sent to SkillsEastSussex@eastsussex.gov.uk by **midday on** Friday 6th **September 2024.**

Any questions must be received by **9am on Tuesday, 13th August 2024.**

Eligibility checks will be undertaken by ESCC Finance in line with our financial appraisal process.

An assessment panel, composed of ESCC representatives, a representative from the Local Skills Improvement Partnership and a representative from Rother District Council will review the applications in September firstly for eligibility and then, against scoring criteria as follows.

**Scoring criteria are as follows:**

**0 = No or irrelevant response**

**1 = Poor response**

**5 = Average response**

**8 = Good response**

**10 = Excellent response**

**Scores will be weighted as follows:**

**2.1 Project aims 15%**

**2.2 Rationale for the project 30%**

**2.3 Effective use of funding, Value for Money, and sustainability 10%**

**2.4 Who will the beneficiaries of this spend be? 10%**

**2.5 Quality 10%**

**2.6 Governance 10%**

**2.7 Risk management 5%**

**2.8 Costs & 2.9 Procurement – not scored – checked against eligible expenditure (table below):**

**2.10 Timeframe 10%**

|  |
| --- |
| **Eligible Expenditure** |
| **CAPITAL EQUIPMENT COSTS**  |
| IT equipment (hardware)  |
| IT equipment (software, where a capital expense)  |
| Software licences (where a capital expense)  |
| Capital equipment for training provision  |
| Mobile learning facilities (no running costs permitted)  |
| Fixtures and fittings (e.g., tables, chairs, or other furniture)  |
| **CAPITAL WORKS COSTS**  |
| **External Works / Sub-structure**  |
| Site works  |
| Drainage  |
| External Services  |
| Upper floors  |
| Roof  |
| Stairs  |
| External walls  |
| Windows and external doors  |
| Internal walls and partitions  |
| Internal doors  |
| **Internal Works Finishes**  |
| Walls  |
| Floors  |
| Ceiling  |
| **Services**  |
| Sanitary applications  |
| Disposal installation  |
| Mechanical installation  |
| Electrical installation (including network cabling for IT equipment)  |
| Lift and conveyor installation  |
| Builders' work in connection  |

We will aim to notify applicants of the outcome of their application in September 2024 and aim to issue Grant Funding Agreements by the end of **September 2024**.

**All projects must be completed by 31st March 2025.**

**Performance review**

The applicant will be required to complete a monitoring report by 31 December 2024 and a final project closure report by 20 March 2025. Templates will be provided in the Grant Funding Agreement.

Additionally, the applicant will be required to have an online meeting with the ESCC programme manager in October 2024, January 2025, and an in person meeting with the Project Manager in February/March 2025 where the project manager will inspect the facilities/equipment purchased using the capital grant.

**Payments and reconciliation**

Funding will be issued as follows:

* 60% on project start, on receipt of signed Grant Funding Agreement and quotes for equipment/works
* Balance (up to 40%) paid on receipt of evidence of spend and a project conclusion report. Actual spend will be paid and any underspend will be retained by ESCC for redistribution or return to funder. Overspend will be at the applicants’ expense.
* If less than 60% of funds are spent by the applicant, the applicant will be required to return unspent funds to ESCC.

**UK subsidy controls**

All expenditure of the Grant must be in accordance with all applicable legal requirements, including state aid and public procurement law, and in accordance with the Grant Conditions.

**Publicity**

Successful applicants will be provided with MHCLG publicity guidelines to which they must adhere.