



# Union Learning Fund

## Prospectus: Round 18

### 2017/2018



## The Union Learning Fund

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was established in 1998 to promote activity by trade unions in support of the objective of creating a learning society. Its primary aim was to develop the capacity of trade unions and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take up of learning in the workplace. The scope of the ULF has gradually developed over the last 18 years as union capacity has grown and government strategic objectives have changed and unions have been encouraged to work on new priorities especially improving access to work, work in the community, supporting high quality apprenticeships and supporting unions to maximise the impact of the Apprenticeship Levy.

The ULF is managed and administered by unionlearn, the TUC's Learning and Skills Organisation under an agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) which directs the level and type of learning activity that should be supported by the Fund.

Each year unionlearn bids for funding based on the programme of work that it is offering. A key part of this funding is the ULF and unions are invited to put in bids that will then go through a selection process based on what unionlearn and DfE have agreed are the priorities and the types of activity that will achieve the outcomes and outputs that should be funded through public funding. **There is no commitment on funding from DfE at this point in time and issuing of the Prospectus does not guarantee that funding will be available.**

### **Unionlearn's main functions are to support unions to:**

- Become effective learning organisations and broker learning opportunities for their members.
- Improve union engagement with and influence on learning and skills policy.
- Engage effectively with employers, employees and providers to help support the most disadvantaged learners in the labour market; focusing on supporting maths and English learners and the take-up of high quality apprenticeships and traineeships that will contribute to the Government's commitment to support the delivery of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020, as well as promoting the Apprenticeship Levy and new employer-led apprenticeship standards.
- Engage with employers to support them in developing new apprenticeship standards to replace frameworks.
- Provide support and advice to apprentices and trainees and help resolve any issues.
- Engage effectively with employers and other stakeholders to support the learning and skills developments required to tackle poverty and disadvantage and promote employment and the growth of the economy.
- Engage effectively with employers to develop learning and skills strategies that address both organisational and individual skills needs.
- Evaluate and provide an evidence base for the unique contribution that unions make to improving economic and social mobility through learning and skills.

## **And to effectively manage and administer the Union Learning Fund to:**

- Build union capacity to sustain work on learning and skills and embed it in union strategy and structure.
- Maximise the union contribution to the development and delivery of the Government's strategy to improve the skills of the workforce focusing on supporting maths and English learners and helping the creation of high quality apprenticeships including by promoting the Apprenticeship Levy.
- Support union representatives, officers and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in raising demand for learning, especially among workers with low skill levels and with disadvantaged groups in the workplace.
- Support unions and ULRs to stimulate the take up of learning, apprenticeships and traineeships, to provide high quality support to learners, trainees and apprentices, to promote and support learner progression and track their learners.
- Support unions to offer a growing range of learning opportunities to a wide range of learners and assist them to engage with new forms of learning (on-line/distance learning) and establish union-led learning centres and union learning centres and support the network of centres already established.
- Assist unions to work in partnership with employers to develop sustainable arrangements based on formal learning agreements and which tackle both organisational and individual skills needs.
- Support unions in establishing effective partnerships with learning providers which ensure learning opportunities are customised, quality assured, relevant and delivered effectively with appropriate support given to learners.
- Develop union capacity to engage in effective partnership working at regional and national level to help meet the skills needs of both the current and future workforce.
- Support unions in developing projects and activities that help deliver the skills needs of both the current and future workforce and in managing their projects.
- Guide unions on the requirements of public funding and the evidence and reporting requirements that they will need to meet.

## Key themes and priorities for ULF projects in 2017-18

The government's policy approach on learning and skills is prioritising a number of key areas, including: helping more young people and adults to have the opportunity to access high quality technical routes into sustainable employment, especially through apprenticeships enabling many more people, especially the most disadvantaged, to attain the minimum standards in maths, English and digital skills that are required in the modern labour market; supporting progression by young people and adults to higher level skills, and, planning for a stronger local dimension to FE and skills funding and provision as part of its strategy to devolve more powers to cities and local authorities, including building a Northern Powerhouse.

Apprenticeships are at the heart of government skills policy with an ambitious commitment of 3 million starts during the current Parliament and legislation requiring the government to report annually on progress against meeting this target. There are also specific targets for public sector organisations that will have a major impact on recruitment and development of apprenticeships across our public services. Supporting young people who are not ready to start an apprenticeship, including through participation in high quality traineeships, will also continue to be a key policy priority.



However, the most significant policy measure is the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 which will have to be paid through PAYE by all those employers with an annual paybill in excess of £3 million. All these employers will be able to recoup their levy payments (and an additional 10% top-up) if they recruit enough apprentices. This policy measure will transform the skills world as it will require employers to invest up to £3 billion per annum for apprenticeship provision whilst also empowering them to have a much greater say in setting standards and funding levels. A new body – the Institute for Apprenticeships - will play a major role in giving employers a stronger voice in influencing the design and delivery of apprenticeships.

The combined impact of the levy and other measures (e.g. the public sector targets) will be a significant challenge to employers and unions in larger organisations and unions will be key to engaging constructively with employers new to apprenticeship recruitment and also with those looking to increase apprenticeship recruitment significantly. Some large unions will also be paying the levy in their own right as employers and there is an opportunity for levy-paying unions to devise strategic collaborative approaches to maximise their “spending power” with training providers in this new funding environment.

There also continues to be a strong policy focus on tackling the UK's poor performance in equipping all citizens, both young people and adults, with the level of maths, English and digital skills necessary to support sustainable employment and career progression. While there remains a preference for all young people to pursue a GCSE in maths and English where at all possible, the government also remains committed to the important role of Functional Skills qualifications in the workplace and for those individuals – especially adults - for whom the GCSE route is not appropriate.

Supporting people to progress to higher level skills is another recurring theme of government policy and ongoing reforms to vocational qualifications for young people and adults are being taken forward with this aim in mind. The government is committed to expanding the number of University Technical Colleges (UTCs) for young people and implementing the recommendations of the panel led by Lord Sainsbury to improve technical education. The government is establishing new institutions to lead the design and delivery of technical skills training (e.g. the new national colleges covering priority areas such as high speed rail and the nuclear industry). The overall aim is to increase very significantly the number of opportunities for young people and adults to access higher level technical education.

To support the strategy for raising skill levels we have agreed the following key themes and priorities for ULF projects supported in 2016-17 to focus on:

## Key themes and priorities for ULF projects in 2017-18

### ***1. Improving Equality and Engaging Those Most Disadvantaged in the Labour Market:***

- Engaging those most disadvantaged in the labour market and developing formal and informal routes to learning, employment and progression that assist them.
- Tackling areas of inequality within workplaces, sectors or employment areas (for example where women, migrant or BME groups are under-represented or where people with a disability or mental health problem are not supported).
- Supporting the government commitment to increase the number of BME students in higher education by 20% by 2020 and the proportion of apprenticeship starts by people from BME backgrounds by 20% by 2020.
- Tackling areas of inequality where people (especially older workers and those who have been away from work for long periods with caring responsibilities or illness) are disadvantaged by their lack of access to qualifications, training, skills and support and face change/redundancy or seek development to adapt to the future.
- Developing and strengthening training and support for workplace representatives, Officers and ULRs to enable them to reach out and support disadvantaged learners needs but also those with health related disadvantage, in both the workplace and the local community.
- Developing and supporting access to on-line learning and opening union and workplace Learning Centres to the wider community to assist those disadvantaged by their lack of maths, English and digital skills.
- Engaging disadvantaged learners through flexible delivery of learning, supported by ULRs, leading to progression pathways.
- Supporting the re-engagement in learning and enhanced well-being of disadvantaged and hard-to-reach learners by raising the profile and take up of learning in the workplace and community, using it to motivate, build confidence and promote progress into further learning.
- Developing and enhancing existing equality and diversity policies and practices to fully support all learners.
- Utilising learner data to prioritise and target hard-to-reach cohorts of learners, to track the progress of disadvantaged learners and measure the impact of the learning undertaken.
- Addressing the equality and diversity knowledge and skills of project teams, ULRs, employers, partners and learners.



## ***2. Growing High Quality Apprenticeships and Traineeships:***

- Working with employers and unions to increase the number of high quality Apprenticeship places available; in particular focussing on those employers not yet involved in training apprentices and on promoting apprenticeships to disadvantaged groups which have the potential to benefit.
- Engaging directly with levy-paying employers and unions to influence the recruitment of the full quota of apprenticeships that can be paid from their levy payments and the 10% top-up contribution.
- Working with employers and unions covered by the public sector targets to increase the number of high quality apprenticeships for young people to enter the labour market and also for existing employees to progress to higher-skilled employment opportunities.
- Working with employers to increase the number of high quality Traineeship work experience places available; in particular ensuring that Trainees are supported and that their experience provides them with skills and routes to apprenticeship, employment or further learning.
- Working with employers to develop new and tailored traineeships and apprenticeships that meet the needs of the economy (local and national) and develop the skills base of the workforce.
- Engage with employers to support them in developing new apprenticeship standards to replace frameworks.
- Working with unions, employers and providers to develop and use standards that ensure a high quality learning experience for apprentices and trainees and to enable ULRs and union representatives to give improved help and support to trainees and apprentices in the workplace through mentoring, buddying, advice and other forms of engagement and representation.
- Working with the TUC Young Workers Project in developing partnership approaches to increase the opportunities for young people to prepare to enter work and to support the needs of young workers entering the labour market and make them aware of the benefits of traineeship and apprenticeship.



### ***3. Supporting English and math learners:***

- Supporting learners who need to improve their maths and English qualifications, working towards GCSEs or Functional Skills qualifications at Level 2, depending on what will support the learner's development and career aspirations.
- Engaging with union members, workforces and individual employees to assess the level of maths and English needs through initial assessment and diagnosis.
- Supporting learners with maths and English (including ESOL) to identify their needs and engage with programmes to improve their maths and English skills.
- Working with employers and providers to develop tailored approaches to the delivery and development of maths and English skills for the many different contexts and levels within which these skills are used at work.
- Developing the ULR role in supporting learners and individuals with maths and English (including ESOL) needs in the workplace to develop and progress.
- Tracking the progression of learners and measuring impact; building evidence of personal and organisational benefit from the acquisition of maths and English skills.

### ***4. Developing the Learning Infrastructure, Improving Workforce Development and Skills Progression by:***

- Engaging with employers to promote and recognise lifetime learning, co-investment in skills, the use of professional and national standards, more effective skills utilisation, improved leadership and management and greater employee involvement and commitment in the workplace.
- Engaging with employers and providers to increase access to learning opportunities and to ensure high quality learning provision and underpinning this with agreements and structures to help define and monitor arrangements.
- Working with employers and employer representative bodies to identify and tackle skills deficits, maximising the use of workforce skills, improving attendance and adopting new techniques and technologies that improve the productivity of the workforce. In particular ensuring that digital skills that support access to and progression in employment are promoted and obtained.
- Working with employers, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Combined and Local Authorities and other stakeholders to target union activity in support of areas of economic growth and future skills needs.
- Developing the role of union representatives and ULRs in supporting learners and helping individuals in the workplace to develop and progress, access good careers advice and guidance and Advanced Learners Loans.
- Providing advice and support to enable and encourage progression through workforce development opportunities including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) via the union route and improved access to Further and Higher Education (HE).
- Developing strategies and tailored approaches to support workers faced with redundancy or those likely to need support and retraining as change requires them to acquire new skills or career.



## ***5. Demonstrating Sustainability, Value for Money and Mainstreaming of Union Learning Activity by:***

- Briefing and working with union officials and other union representatives to incorporate learning and skills within wider union roles, union branches and regions.
- Mainstreaming the role of the ULR within the union and incorporating learning and skills within the union's core activities.
- Devoting core union staffing to the promotion of learning to support the role of ULRs and union work on learning and skills.
- Consolidating the work and approaches developed in previous ULF projects, for example:
  - Methods and materials developed by one region of the union being rolled out to the rest of the union.
  - Sharing and disseminating experience with other unions and unionlearn.
  - Adapting and embedding the approach and methods piloted by other unions.
  - Developing sector or employer approaches involving one or more unions and building on earlier ULF work.
- Tracking learners and using this data to demonstrate the impact of the work undertaken, for example:
  - Demonstrating the progression achieved by individuals and groups of learners.
  - Surveying learners to identify the impact of learning on them.
  - Surveying employers to identify the impact of learning on the workplace.
- Demonstrating that projects represent value for money and illustrating this by for example:
  - Showing the added value of funding the project. Are funds levered in? Is the employer contributing towards the costs? What is the union contributing towards the costs?
  - Identifying who the project will be targeted at and what the impact of the project will be on them/their employer/the community? Is this project adding value to existing support for these learners?
  - Showing that the management and governance of the project is cost effective and ensures delivery.

# Bidding to the Union Learning Fund

## 1. Eligibility

- Any trade union based in England, or any national organisation representing trade unions based in England, whether or not it is affiliated to the TUC.
- Any trade union or organisation working in partnership with trade unions, including those that have not yet applied to the ULF.

## 2. Project Aims and Content

- Projects should address themselves to the priorities and themes described above.
- Projects should aim to address all of the priorities in order to achieve the highest possible score. Where a project is not addressing all priorities it will be scored in line with the bidding criteria but at as a minimum a project will need to address at least 2 of priorities 1 to 4.
- **ALL BIDS must address Priority 5: "Demonstrating Sustainability, Value for Money and Mainstreaming of Union Learning Activity".**

## 3. Responsibilities and Requirements

- You should be sure that you fully understand your financial and reporting responsibilities in receiving ULF funding and are prepared to accept them prior to signing the contract. Each project's progress will be regularly monitored and audited and will require you to:
  - Keep detailed financial records and report monthly
  - Record who your learners are and track their progress
  - Collect quantitative and qualitative impact evidence and quality assure the work of the project.
- Successful projects are monitored on a monthly basis and projects that are not achieving their projected outcomes are reviewed and their outcome profiles and budgets adjusted following discussions with the **ULF Team**.
- The review process is geared to helping projects restructure and establish a supported action plan to achieve the targets that have been agreed **but bidders need to be aware that projects achieving less their target outcomes will receive a reduction in their funding. Further guidance on this will be published.** For further details of these requirements please contact the national office.

## 4. Support

- Each project will be allocated a unionlearn support worker and will have support from unionlearn at both national and regional levels.
- Project managers will be supplied with detailed information on reporting requirements and an event is held at the start of all new contract years to provide further details. All project managers will be required to attend this and other specified ULF project seminars.

# What can be funded and for how long

## ***5. Project duration***

- There is no commitment on funding from DfE at this point in time but funding, if available, will be for only for the financial year 2017-2018 commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, any funding for future years will be subject to further approval by the DfE.

## ***6. Project size***

- There is no maximum amount for bids, but unions must scope activity and objectives rigorously before identifying funding requirements.
- The amount requested in the bid should reflect a realistic level of activity and outcomes, and represent value for money.

## ***7. Salaries***

- The ULF will support the payment of salaries to project staff responsible for running the project.
- There will be **no** ongoing commitment to funding salaries.
- Funding will **not** be given to cover the salary costs of existing union posts.
- Funding will **not** be given to cover employer costs of releasing union members to attend training/learning activities or to train as ULRs.

## ***8. Employer-funded training***

- It is not intended that ULF should be used to replace employer-funded training, for instance by funding purely job-specific courses for employees, which should be the responsibility of employers.

## ***9. European Social Fund***

- ULF monies can be used to match fund a European Social Fund (ESF) project in certain circumstances. Any proposals to do this must be cleared with the unionlearn delivery team.

## ***10. Double funding***

- Double funding is not permissible and applications will be checked to ensure that they avoid any possible double funding. Where unionlearn are operating a regional fund or specific project, unions will need to demonstrate additionality between activities funded under each funding stream in order to ensure value for money.

# The Application process and deadlines

## ***11. How to submit an application form***

- A final application form which must be submitted by **12pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016**.
- Application forms should be submitted on the ULF database. Please contact the national office on **0151 482 2711** for details.
- There is a requirement to send a letter signed by the union's authorising officer to confirm that the bid has the support of the union nationally by **12pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016**.
- Unionlearn will review and comment on draft applications submitted between the launch of the prospectus and up until **5pm on Friday September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016**.

Please send to:

FAO Julia Jones  
Union Learning Fund Team  
Unite Office Liverpool  
Jack Jones House  
1 Islington  
Liverpool, L3 8EG

The ULF team will assist projects with the process. For further information telephone the national office **0151 482 2711**

## ***12. What are the key deadlines?***

- Draft application form before **5pm on Friday September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016**.
- ULF Application Form and supporting letter by **12pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016**.

Submissions received after these date will not be considered.

## ***13. What happens next?***

- You will receive feedback on any draft application within one week of submission. The feedback will set out any issues or points that need to be addressed for the project to move to final bid.
- Bid support will be available from the Prospectus launch in July with support from the unionlearn delivery team for submission in September.
- The ULF Assessment Panel will meet in November 2016 and make a recommendation to DfE.
- Contracts will be issued as soon as possible after final negotiations are completed, for projects to commence **1<sup>st</sup> April 2017**.

#### ***14. Who decides whether my bid is successful or not?***

The ULF Assessment Panel, which is independently chaired and made up of representatives from unionlearn, DfE, and affiliated trade unions will score bids in line with the scoring system and make recommendations to DfE and the Unionlearn Board.

DfE and the Unionlearn Board will review the recommendations and make final decisions on whether bids are successful. DfE have the final decision on the funding of projects.

#### ***15. How will Projects be assessed?***

The panel will use a scoring system to evaluate bids and discuss which should be approved and make recommendations on any amendments or developments that would be required before projects can be approved.

The scoring system is designed to ensure projects meet the strategic and operational requirements that have been agreed between DfE and unionlearn.

Further information can be obtained from the bidding guidance. Unionlearn will also hold workshops and offer support to those wishing to make bids or find out more about the application and scoring process.