



Union Learning Fund Prospectus: Round 19 2018/2019



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 initial 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 rationale for union involvement in skills is in addressing market failures and this recognises the unique role of unions at the workplace that enables them to engage with workers and employers to advocate for learning and build structures at the workplace (ULRs, learning agreements, learning centres) and partnerships with providers that helps turn engagement into participation.

The scope of the ULF has gradually developed over the last 19 years as union capacity has grown and government strategic objectives have changed and unions have been encouraged to work on new priorities especially tackling disadvantage and promoting equality, increasing social mobility, improving basic skills, (English, maths and Digital), helping people access work and adapt to change at work and the lengthening of working life, supporting high quality apprenticeships and supporting unions to maximise the impact of the apprenticeship levy. The ULF also aims to assist unions to develop innovative solutions to skills issues and to contribute to developing the skills required by key infrastructure developments (such as HS2, Hinkley Point and Heathrow) and regional and sector skills plans.

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.

■ Training more ULRs



2006–07
18,000



2015–16
35,411

unionlearn
with the TUC

Source: Evaluation of ULF, Universities of Leeds and Exeter, 2016

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.
- Understand, engage with and influence learning and skills policy.
- Engage effectively with employers to develop learning and skills strategies that address both organisational and individual skills needs.
- 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.
- Evaluate and provide an evidence base for the unique contribution that unions make to improving learning and skills.



Unionlearn will 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
- 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.

- Maximise the union contribution to the development and delivery of the Government's strategy to improve the skills of the workforce and the performance of the economy and to increase engagement in learning.
- Improve English, maths and digital skills.
- Grow engagement with apprenticeship increasing the number of high quality apprenticeships and ensuring effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy.
- Support unions and ULRs to stimulate the take up of learning, to provide high quality support to learners (information, advice and guidance), to promote and support learner progression and track their learners
- Support unions to develop new and innovative solutions to skills issues, improve access to learning and offer a growing range of learning opportunities to a wide range of learners and assist them to engage with new forms of learning (e.g. on-line/distance learning and mobile as well as static learning facilities).
- Work with unions to identify ways of tackling inequality and disadvantage through learning in particular by improving participation of disadvantaged groups in apprenticeship and improving access in areas where they are poorly represented.
- 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 and that learner data is collected and shared with the union.
- Develop union capacity to engage in effective partnership working with key infrastructure projects at regional and national level and with devolved administrations 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.
- Support unions in collecting learner information, tracking learners and in developing their capacity to demonstrate the impact of union learning.
- 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 2018-19

The government's policy approach on learning and skills is prioritising a number of key areas, including: helping more young people to have the opportunity to access high quality vocational pathways into sustainable employment, especially through apprenticeships; enabling many more adults, especially the most disadvantaged, to attain the minimum standards in English, maths and digital skills that are required in the modern labour market; supporting progression by young people and adults to higher level skills, including through further reform of technical and professional education; 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.

Supporting social mobility is a key feature of the government's policy approach on education and skills with a specific focus on widening opportunity for disadvantaged young people and adults. Since its inception the ULF has prioritised the aim of boosting social mobility by reaching out to young people and adults who have been failed by the formal education system. Current ULF priorities include supporting more disadvantaged young people to access high quality traineeships and apprenticeships and empowering more adult employees with few formal qualifications to embark on a learning pathway that boosts their job prospects and personal development.

Apprenticeships are at the heart of government skills policy with an ambitious target of 3 million starts between 2015 and 2020. 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 rollout of the Apprenticeship Levy which is now paid through PAYE by all those employers with an annual pay bill in excess of £3 million. All these employers can recoup their levy payments (and an additional 10% top-up) if they recruit enough apprenticeships. 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) is a significant challenge to unions and employers 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.

Traineeships are an education and training programme that was introduced in 2013 to support those aged 16-24 to progress into apprenticeship or employment. Consisting of work

experience, work preparation training and English and maths training a traineeship is designed for those who will be ready to enter the labour market within 6 months. There is a continued focus on growing the traineeship programme to support more young people into the labour market via high quality programmes which support a range of wider government priorities.

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 English and maths skills necessary to support sustainable employment and career progression. Whilst there remains a preference for all young people to pursue a GCSE grade in English and maths 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. In addition, the government announced last year that it will be introducing a new entitlement to “make training in basic digital skills free for adults lacking relevant qualifications”. In principle this should put digital skills on a similar footing to the English and maths level 2 entitlements.

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. As set out in its Post-16 Skills Plan, the government is taking forward the recommendations of the Sainsbury Panel to develop a comprehensive new technical education system and has committed to increase funding for this by £0.5B per annum when the new T level qualifications are fully available. The government is also extending vocational specialisation in colleges and establishing new institutions (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 more young people and adults to access higher level vocational education.

To support the strategy for raising skill levels we have agreed the following key themes and priorities for ULF projects supported in 2018/19 to focus on:

1. Improving equality and tackling disadvantage
2. Improving English, maths and digital skills
3. Growing high quality apprenticeships and traineeships
4. Improving support for infrastructure projects, workforce development and skills progression
5. Demonstrating sustainability, value for money and mainstreaming of union learning activity

All applications will need to address priorities 1 and 5 and at least two of the three other priority areas.

Applicants will devise their own projects to meet these priorities and in the sections below we provide some guidance on the type of work that might be undertaken.

1. Improving equality and tackling disadvantage

What is the evidence of need (area of disadvantage, lack of diversity or inequality)? What is the strategy to address this need? Why is the union well placed to deliver this project?

Examples of activity:

- Engaging those from disadvantaged backgrounds 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).
- 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.
- Supporting those in insecure or temporary employment to develop skills and progression plans that improve their employment opportunities.
- Developing and strengthening training and support for workplace representatives, Officers and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) to enable them to reach out and support disadvantaged learners, particularly those with maths, English, digital and ESOL needs but also those with health related disadvantage (e.g. mental health or disability related issues), in both the workplace and the local community.
- Engaging disadvantaged learners through flexible delivery of learning, supported by ULRs, leading to progression pathways.
- Developing and supporting access to on-line learning and opening union and workplace Learning opportunities and facilities to the wider community and to help tackle the Digital Divide and its impact on the most disadvantaged groups in workplaces and local communities.
- Working with employers to develop and enhance 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. Improving English, maths and digital skills

What is the evidence of need? How does the project support individuals to identify their skills gaps? Why is the union well placed to deliver this project?

Examples of activity:

- Supporting union members, workforces and individual employees to identify skills gaps and learning needs and assess the level of maths, English and digital skills through initial assessment and diagnosis.
- Supporting learners to access programmes to improve their English, maths and digital Skills.
- Working with employers and learning providers to build on existing curricula, develop tailored approaches to the delivery and development of English, maths and digital 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 English, maths and digital needs in the workplace to develop and progress,
- Tracking the progression of learners to measure the impact of participation in English, maths and digital learning; collating and disseminating evidence of personal and organisational benefit from the acquisition of these core skills

DID YOU KNOW?



We have a great track record of engaging disadvantaged workers:

10%

of ULF learners do not have English as their first language

11%

are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities

12%

have no prior qualifications

Source: Evaluation of ULF, Universities of Leeds and Exeter, 2016

3. Growing high quality apprenticeships and traineeships

What is the project strategy to engage with employers and learning providers to increase apprenticeship/traineeship opportunities? How will it support apprentices/trainees and how will it ensure quality provision?

Examples of activity:

- Working with employers and unions to increase the number of high quality apprenticeship places available; in particular focussing on employers with potential to expand their apprenticeships and those employers not yet involved in apprenticeships and on promoting apprenticeships to disadvantaged and under-represented groups.
- Engaging directly with levy-paying employers and unions to support them in using the levy effectively. Working with employers and unions in the scope of the public sector

target to increase the number of high quality apprenticeships and use their levy effectively.

- Working with employers and providers to develop work entry and experience programmes and to increase the number of high quality Traineeship 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 and providers to develop new and tailored traineeships and apprenticeships that meet the needs of the business and develop the skills base of the workforce.
- Enabling ULRs and union representatives to give improved help and support to trainees/apprentices in the workplace through mentoring, buddying, advice and other forms of engagement and representation.
- Work 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.



4. Improving support for infrastructure projects, workforce development and skills progression

What is the skills issue that the project seeks to address? How will the project engage with employers, LEPs etc.? How will co-investment and lifelong learning be promoted?

Examples of activity:

- Working with employers to promote learning and career progression, co-investment in skills, the use of professional and occupational 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, to promote the uptake of learning and to ensure high quality learning provision. This would be underpinned with agreements and structures to help define and monitor arrangements.
- Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Combined Authorities, employers and employer representative bodies to identify skills requirements, tackle skills deficits and meet future skills needs.
- Maximising the use of current workforce skills, improving attendance and workforce wellbeing and adopting new techniques and technologies or suitable training that improves the productivity of the workforce.
- 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 including through the National Careers Service and Advanced Learner Loans and raising awareness of potential training opportunities.
- Providing advice and support to enable and encourage progression through workforce development opportunities including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) via the union route and the ability to re-skill or up-skill through 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 including careers advice or guidance on appropriate training opportunities.

5. Demonstrating sustainability, value for money and mainstreaming of union learning activity

How will the project improve union capacity to support learners? How will the project activity be sustained when funding ends? How will funding from other sources (union/employer/individuals) be levered into the project?

Examples of activity:

- 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 of 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



Union learning helps generate more money for the Treasury through:

- increased Income Tax on higher individual earnings
- higher National Insurance contributions on increased individual earnings
- increased VAT receipts on consumption resulting from raised incomes
- higher employer National Insurance contributions on employee wages.

Taking into account the delivery costs of ULF, the estimated return to the Exchequer is £3.57 for each £1 spent.

BENEFIT TO THE EXCHEQUER:

£3.57 for each **£1** spent on ULF

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 led partnership 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.
- **ALL BIDS** must address Priority 1 and 5 and at least two of priorities 2 to 4.
- Projects do not have to address all of the priorities **BUT** to ensure maximum scoring projects should address as many as possible.

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 project engages and 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 all projects will be subject to the Underperformance Scheme agreed between unionlearn and the DfE.
- The underperformance 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:**
 - Any project that is achieving less than 20% of its profiled outputs at the end of Quarter 2 will be terminated or significantly reduced unless there are extenuating circumstances. In such cases a business case demonstrating project viability will be required which will be agreed with the DfE Account Manager.
 - Any project achieving less than 40% of profiled outcomes at Quarter 2 will be put under review for the proceeding months and managed in line with the ULF underperformance policy with a view to reducing its funding to no more than 70% of its bid funding.
 - If a project has achieved less than half (50%) of its outputs by the end of Quarter 3 its funding will be frozen (up to a maximum of 70% of project budget) for Quarter 4 until it achieved over 50% of its outputs.

For further details of the requirements for tracking and the payment by outcomes process 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.

5. Project duration

- There is no commitment from DfE at this point but funding, if available, will only be for the financial year 2018-2019 commencing 1st April 2018 up to 31st March 2019, any funding for future years will be subject to approval by Parliament. Projects can be designed to deliver over a longer period but the outcomes achieved in the year 2018-9 must be able to justify the level of spending required.

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 project activity is funded by other public funding sources unions will need to demonstrate additionality between activities funded under each funding stream in order to ensure value for money.

11. The application process

How to submit an application.

- A final application form which must be submitted by **12pm on Friday 6th October 2017**. Application forms should be submitted through the ULF database. If you do not have access to the database, please contact **Marj Wainwright** on mwainright@tuc.org.uk or **0151 482 2718**.
- 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 6th October 2017**.
- Unionlearn will review and comment on draft applications submitted between the launch of the prospectus and up until **5pm on Friday September 29th 2017**.

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 29th 2017** if comment/support is required.
- ULF Application Form and supporting letter by **12pm on Friday 6th October 2017**.

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 and for those submitted at the final deadline of September 29th by October 3rd. 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 with support from the unionlearn delivery team for submission in October.
- The ULF Assessment Panel will meet in November 2017 and make a recommendation to DfE.
- Contracts will be issued as soon as possible after final negotiations are completed, for projects to commence **1st April 2018**.

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 make final recommendations on all applications to the Unionlearn Board and DfE Unionlearn Sponsorship Team. Both the Unionlearn Board and DfE have a final decision on the 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.