



Flexible Learning Fund Proposal

Let's get Ahead!

**Flexible Learning for Inclusive
Growth**

Community Learning West Consortium

January 31st 2018

Section 1 – Summary information

Lead organisation	Bristol City Council, on behalf of the West of England Community Learning Consortium
Authorised contact for lead organisation	Jane Taylor, Head of Service (Employment, Skills and Learning)
Authorised contact details (email, telephone & postal address)	jane.taylor@bristol.gov.uk 07810506586
If your proposed project only includes one organisation, please confirm you are on the ESFA register of training organisations with a current AEB allocation and/or loans facility agreement. Please also include your UKPRN.	
Title of proposal	Let's get Ahead! – flexible learning for inclusive growth
Total funding requested	£633,640
Summary of timescales (overall period of your proposal including when pilot delivery will commence)	<p>We anticipate that this project will start in April 2018 and complete in July 2019. The summary project stages will include:</p> <p>May 2018 – Product Development September 2018 - Pilot Delivery July 2019 – Project Close (following Evaluation and Dissemination) August 2019 onwards - Final Model Rollout and Embedding into Mainstream Delivery</p>

<p>Additional information</p>	<p>Community Learning West has successfully delivered a blended and online learning pilot for adult learners in 16/17, funded through the ETF. This pilot focused on supporting the delivery of embedded IT, Maths, English and Fundamental British values into existing courses delivered in community venues. The learners on these courses lacked basic L2 skills and were at venues that lacked infrastructure to support typical digital delivery. Details here</p> <p>As a significant provider of Adult and Community Learning we have a strong track record of success in delivering courses to adults with few or no formal qualifications across the West of England. Awarded a strong 'Good' grade 2 at our last Ofsted inspection (May 2016), we have a strong record in the delivery of Maths and English as well as Digital Literacy and embedded Employability Skills. We have recently focused on providing specific additional training to adults to improve their core IT skills to facilitate the roll-out of Universal Credit. The Consortium has built up a bank of mobile digital 'kit' which is made available to expert tutors who work in hundreds of community-based learning sites across the West of England.</p> <p>Our Consortium has a unique leadership role in the local area, for example we facilitate a West of England AEB Partnership involving key providers and stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated approach to local provision planning. Due to the scale of our operation, and our close joint working with hundreds of partner organisations and employers, we are able to reach a large number of target users.</p> <p>Bristol City Council and partner local authorities are also large employers. Each council is utilising online learning for employees – e.g. Bristol City Council utilises Learning Pool to support skills development. Through this project, we will explore how we can embed our pilot flexible learning programmes as part of the Learning Pool menu.</p> <p>We are in a unique position to use Flexible Learning Funding to test out innovative approaches to learning that could be mainstreamed through more flexible commissioning arrangements going forward.</p>
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Section 2 – Partner organisations

If applicable, please list all other organisations involved in your proposal and indicate their roles & responsibilities.

Digital Skills Partners

- **Boomsatsuma:** member of the project steering group, facilitating flexible learning space and digital equipment across the West of England, contributing to the development and design of both online and classroom based learning, including tutor training
- **Digital profile:** member of the project steering group, contributing to the development and design of both online and classroom based learning, including tutor training, and also On Line Portfolio for progression and career planning and matching with jobs and learning opportunities.

FE Colleges

- Our Consortium works in close partnership with our local FE Colleges, including: City of Bristol College; City of Bath College; Weston College; South Gloucestershire and Stroud College. Three colleges have signed up to support the project, with potential for one or more college to take part in pilot delivery. At least one college will join our project steering group.

Employers

- **Local Employers:** a number of local employers have agreed to support the development and delivery of flexible learning programmes that can be piloted with employees and potential employees. These businesses will work with us to ensure that our new learning programmes meet employer needs. At least one employer will join our project steering group.

Strategic Partners

- **The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership:** has agreed to support the Consortium with employer engagement, helping to promote the new flexible learning approach, pilot and roll out.
- **The Department for Work & Pensions:** has agreed to support the Consortium with employer engagement and by continuing to link up local employment interventions referral pathways.

Letters of support have been provided from all named partners – see attached Appendix 1

<p>Please confirm which of these organisations will be responsible for delivering provision, and please confirm they are on the ESFA register of training organisations with a current AEB allocation and/or loans facility agreement. Please also include their UKPRN</p>	<p>Community Learning West Consortium, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bristol City Council (UKPRN 10000896) • South Gloucestershire Council (UKPRN1005982) • North Somerset Council (UKPRN1004711) <p>Local FE Colleges, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Bristol College (UKPRN 10001467) • South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (UKPRN 10036143) • Weston College (UKPRN 10007459) <p>All these organisations are on the ESFA register of training organisations and have a current AEB allocation</p> <p>South Gloucestershire Council and North Somerset Council are subcontracted by Bristol City Council</p> <p>FE College partners have expressed interest in supporting this work and any direct delivery of the pilot programme would be subject to further negotiation and agreement</p>
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Flexible Learning & Digital Skills

Boomsatsuma: is one of the leading post 16 education and training providers in the Bristol area. Its niche area of specialism is digital media and it is an expert in the field. It is seen as an innovator in creating flexible training models that bring together high quality practice, workplace relevance and employability skills. Boomsatsuma has a teaching space at the heart of Bristol's high tech and digital hub with over 50 imacs and a further 4 satellite spaces in South Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire with 70 imacs. Boomsatsuma is working on the development of a remote learning model and the learning can be used to continually inform the development of this programme.

Digital Profile: their expertise lies within the field of skills and careers. Through the use of their innovative platform, users can develop their skills to progress in their career. Digital Profile facilitate this using matching algorithms, to ensure that an individual can be matched with training providers and career opportunities based not only on their current skills, but on their personality, interests and career goals. Digital Profile is currently working with Cardiff Council to assist learners attending schools in the area gain the skills they need to succeed. Using the Digital Profile platform from the age of 13, students are being supported to find work experience and other career related opportunities.

FE Colleges

West of England FE Colleges involved in this project have extensive experience of developing online and flexible learning products which are used by adult learners. For example, the City of Bristol College supports learners with online Individual Learning Plans, units and assessment grades (ProPortal). Adult learners also benefit from a Virtual Learning Environment where learners can access course materials and activities, and also access a wide range of e-books, articles, other electronic resources as well as information on study skills and facilities. WAMedu is a private social network – where learners can connect, communicate and collaborate with other learners and tutors. Community Learning West will be able to draw on this expertise in developing new online resources that can work across our systems and platforms.

Section 3 – Details of the provision to be delivered through flexible methods

Please list the provision you will deliver as part of your proposal, including the awarding organisation(s), the level and full title of the provision and the qualification accreditation number (QAN)

Community Learning West wants to use the Flexible Learning Fund to develop and deliver an innovative approach to the delivery of functional skills, adapting our delivery of OCR English and Mathematics modules so that they support increased digital skills development and skills to support career progression and action planning to increase earning potential.

The full title and level of the provision is:

Maths, English Functional Skills levels Entry 3 to Level 2

The qualification accreditation numbers are:

- Entry level 3 English – 500/9197/9
- Level 1 English - 500/9111/6
- Level 2 English - 500/8963/8
- Entry level 3 Maths – 500/8498/7
- Level 1 Maths – 500/8910/9
- Level 2 Maths - 500/8908/0

As a result of this work, we will have designed and developed modular Functional Skills training materials from Entry level to Level 2 which can be delivered in any combination in a blended learning model or entirely through online learning. This delivery would include the following completed packages:

- Open sourced modules to teach English, Maths and IT across all Functional Skills levels. These modules could be delivered in a classroom or delivered online to support extension activities or fully online learning.
- Open source sample papers for all modules which provide extensive feedback to learners. These could be delivered online or used to enhance existing classroom delivery.
- All modules and papers would include a thematic representation of entrepreneurial skills to develop financial and digital media capacity for all learners using the project materials.
- Virtual classroom opportunities for distance learning – providing opportunities for learners to experience the inspiration of face to face group learning with expert tutors and speakers through digital technology

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital ILP and online portfolio – providing learners with a confidential space to log their learning and their online ‘CV’, and with an innovative platform that provides easy access links to recruiting employers and further training and development opportunities • Training the trainer package – providing a scalable model which combines flexible online learning materials with hard copy training materials that can be utilised with tutors and trainers in a range of adult learning and development settings <p>The Consortium intends to use Flexible Learning Funding to design open source resources that can be deployed by other providers. We are committed to sharing all new products, for example, making resources freely available on a national basis via Digital Profile. For resources that we cannot provide to other providers due to legal or logistic issues (use of our VLE, direct support from private companies such as digital profile) we would provide training materials on their setup and contact details to establish partnerships where possible.</p>
<p>Please confirm that the relevant awarding organisation(s) has approved your intention to submit a proposal to the Fund using their provision (you may attach evidence of this to the email when submitting the proposal).</p>	<p>OCR are fully supportive of our intention to submit this proposal to the Fund using their provision (please see attached letter of support)</p>
<p>Where you wish to use provision which is not eligible for funding through the AEB or through loans, please include full details of this provision (title, level it corresponds to and a description of the provision).</p>	<p>The OCR functional skills provision we intend to adapt and deliver through this Flexible Learning Fund proposal will be 100% eligible for funding through national AEB funding rules.</p>
<p>If applicable, what is the rationale for using this provision, rather than some other provision that is available for AEB or Loans funding? Please also explain how this provision is quality-assured.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

Section 4 – Target group

Please describe the target group(s) of adults that your project will focus on. This should fit within one of the broad target groups laid out in the specification, but can be a more specific sub-group within that. Please also indicate how many learners you estimate will be involved in the delivery phase of the project, and explain how you have arrived at this estimate.

We are focusing our project on adults living in the West of England aged 19+ who do not have a full level 3 qualification and who have:

- i) low skills in English and Maths
- ii) low digital skills
- iii) restricted access to adult learning provision, employment support and/or career progression support
- iv) are either in work or aiming to return to work

In relation to our proposal, we believe there is a market failure where people find it difficult to return to the labour market after an absence or they have become entrenched on low skilled low paid employment, and government funded interventions have not currently helped them to move on from these circumstances.

For our target group this entrenchment arises from:

- A lack of self-belief and/or motivation to take action and invest in skills development which would increase their employability and which could then lead to higher earnings;
- The higher incidence of barriers which occur in low income families and neighbourhoods which can diminish employability and incur additional costs for government, such as: lack of adequate housing supply; health inequalities, including higher levels of long term illness and disability; lower educational attainment and qualifications, including lower levels of literacy, numeracy and IT skills;
- Lack of access to services due to geographical barriers and lack of accessible transport.
- Imperfect information about and access to adult learning and other service, entitlements, and support which they could receive or purchase which will help them access employment or to move out of low income insecure employment;
- Employer practices and behaviour which do not sufficiently encourage flexible working and/or staff training and development and/or where individuals are in employment which is less likely to benefit from progression support, such as zero hours contracts, temporary contracts, and self-employment.

For the initial pilot, we will target resources and provision on two specific sub-groups that face specific barriers to adult learning provision, including people in these groups who are both in work and returning to work, including:

1. Social housing tenants and people eligible for social housing

Through this proposal, we aim to engage with 450 housing tenants or those adults who are eligible for social housing. We have arrived at this estimate based on the number of tenants we are already engaging with through our established partnership work with housing teams and housing associations in the West of England. For example, as the lead delivery agent for the DWP Innovation Fund Pilot, one of the largest national in-work progression projects, we have detailed plans and resources in place to engage with 3000 social housing tenants in low paid work across the West of England between April 2018 and March 2020.

2. Parents/carers looking to return to the labour market following an absence

Through our flexible learning fund proposal we intend to engage with 300 parent/carers wanting to return to work after an absence. We have arrived at this estimate based on the number of parents/carers who are registered with our established partners such as local children's centres, schools and front line family support teams. For example, in Bristol alone, the Early Help Team have detailed plans and Key Worker resources in place to engage with 350 parents/carers between August 2018 and July 2019.

Please also explain how the project will effectively target and cater to this particular group of adults.

We will effectively target these two sub groups in the following ways:

- Through our long standing joint working partnerships and arrangements with key partners who have direct contact with our target groups (e.g. housing teams; housing associations; parent/carer facing service providers such as children's centres and schools; DWP and National Careers Service Advisors; Trade Unions)
- By using our existing engagement resources that are already in place on the ground that can help us achieve successful engagement with eligible adults e.g. Navigators (with Personalised Budgets) to engage tenants in work; Community Learning Development Workers linking with children's centres and family support teams in target neighbourhoods etc.
- Utilising our established professional networks to build effective referral routes for eligible adults e.g. Ways2Work Network; Housing Association Network; Employer Networks; Parent/Carer Support Networks etc.
- Working closely with our partner employers who are committed to engaging members of their existing workforce to support their skills development through this pilot
- Through a range of dynamic and innovative engagement and marketing activities e.g. using our Local Learning Ambassadors (ex-learners who have been trained to engage other learners in their local community, acting as positive role models); using local media including social media and local newsletters.

We will cater for these particular group of adults in the following ways:

- We will provide accessible and attractive online learning programmes, virtual classroom experiences, and virtual learning materials, combined with some intensive classroom based sessions, that will enable learners to develop their skills and gain a recognised qualification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will draw on expert suppliers to find new and different ways to meet their learning needs – for example, Career Profile will use their platform to target learners, utilising their matching algorithm to suggest courses to users based on gaps in their skill set, and their desired career roles. This will enable users to have a wider understanding of the skills they need to get from where they are to where they want to be. In turn this will support the users engagement in their learning as they will have a visual representation of how to progress towards their goals.• We will utilise a combination of public, private and third sector resource and expertise to both engage and support learners to achieve their goals – for example, Career Profile have already secured over 400 businesses to sign up to their platform in the Cardiff area – through this project they will bring this experience from working with these businesses to this project to improve the engagement between learners and businesses.• We will organise all classroom based sessions in accessible venues, at convenient times (including outside the conventional working day), with childcare, transport and other access support for those that need it.• For all social housing tenants in low paid work who meet both the Flexible Learning Fund and Innovation Fund criteria, we will be able supplement AEB resources so that all learner course and certification costs are covered. This will provide an additional incentive for reluctant learners to engage.
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Section 5 – Categories of interest

Please indicate which category/categories your proposal aligns to (delete as appropriate), and briefly explain how it aligns.

1. Delivery on a more flexible or convenient timetable

We will develop and deliver modular learning blocks that will allow learning to be delivered via virtual learning environments (VLE) and/or enable learners to work at different rates. We will also deliver classroom based learning through more intensive bite sized learning activities in accessible locations at convenient times for people in work

2. Making online or blended learning work for adults

We will build on our current Functional Skills delivery model by extending our online and blended learning opportunities for adults

3. Delivery outside the classroom

We will develop and provide new virtual learning environments and materials, including modules that can be accessed in different environments, including home based learning; employer based learning; potential use of a mobile learning facility

4. Delivery methods that allow for caring responsibilities and for returning to the labour market

We will develop new delivery methods that can support adult learners with caring responsibilities and those returning to the labour market, for example, by providing home based learning provision and provision with childcare support facilities

Section 6 – Proposal outline

Please attach an outline plan for your proposed project. (Maximum 8 pages.)

Please see outline plan (attached Appendix 3) which includes:

- description of each phase of the project
- timeframes
- key milestones
- key activities involved
- how each will be delivered
- what role each organisation will play

Please explain the concept the project will develop and test – the specific learning delivery method. Please include a rationale for how it will meet the specific needs of the selected target group.

The concept of the project is to use a thematic approach to functional skills delivery to enable learners to gain an accredited qualification in English and or Mathematics, whilst developing their digital literacy and soft/transferable employability skills. Alongside the skill development the project will also deliver career progression planning (either into work or within work) through the development of an interface with an existing online portfolio and career matching website.

Learning will be delivered in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the learner. There will be the opportunity to attend taught sessions in a variety of community and employer friendly locations across the West of England, including Libraries, Job Centres, Community Centres, Business Hubs (e.g. Engine Shed), Schools and Children's Centres and where necessary will include crèche facilities. A choice of days and times will also be available. In addition, learners will have access to online learning modules that will provide:

- initial and diagnostic assessment
- resources required for learners to develop, practise and consolidate the skills, knowledge and concepts required
- activities for ongoing assessment
- practice tests

Learners will be able to combine both online and classroom teaching to suit their needs.

- Our target group of learners have a variety of barriers to learning, for example they may have:
- carer responsibilities (children or other family members)
- access needs including difficulties in getting to venues that are not close by or using public transport
- work issues that could affect regular attendance such as shift work, variable hour, or zero hour contracts
- financial barriers that mean they cannot afford to travel to venues, turn down work or use childcare
- the need to fulfil a certain number of job seeking hours per week which prevents them from attending a regular course for the number of hours required.
- Our flexible delivery model allows for these barriers to be overcome, whilst still providing the support of a tutor for motivation and encouragement.

<p>Please explain how this delivery method is scalable to wide range of learners and providers, rather than being only narrowly applicable to a niche group of learners or organisations.</p>	<p>We believe that our delivery method is scalable from our initial pilot across the West of England by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Focusing on core functional and digital skills that are applicable to support inclusive growth across all employment sectors and low/intermediate job roles – providing open source materials linked to OCR accreditation and training the trainer resources that can be used by adult learning providers and also employers of all sizes ii) During our pilot we will have had an opportunity to test new learning products and methodology across different training sectors, including FE college, local authority, independent training providers, employers – this will ensure that our provider training and guidance notes will be adapted to work across a range of organisational settings iii) Supporting in work and returning to work progression through the provision of an innovative online platform through Career Profile that will enable potential employees and employers to connect more easily – the roll out of this unique service (free to individuals and employers) can be supported through our project and help to support inclusive growth across the UK
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Section 7 – Employer support

Please provide any applicable evidence that the proposed project has the backing of employers. The evidence must include at least one of the examples referred to in the minimum standard criteria of the specification. Please describe each piece of evidence in the space provided, and attach any documents to the submission as needed.

The LEP has made a strong commitment to tackling local skills gaps and is backing the Community Learning West Consortium and this proposal to help fulfil this ambition.

According to the latest LEP Employer Survey (January 2017), 47% of employers who responded reported on-going difficulties with recruiting skilled staff into hard to fill vacancies; 64% of employers identified 'low number of applicants with the required skills' as the main reason for their hard to fill vacancies. 24% identified the low number of applicants with the required attitude, motivation or personality for their particular vacancies

To help us tackle these skills gap issues, the LEP will assist the Consortium to engage local employers in this initiative, including:

- Logging vacancies onto Career Profile – enabling people to access information about job opportunities and link with local training providers to help develop new skills and achieve career progression
- Helping to recruit eligible employees who can benefit from the Flexible Learning Fund pilot programme
- Supporting the future roll out of the Let's get Ahead programme by introducing a new kite mark for all employers that want to make the programme available to their workforce.

Community Learning West and our delivery partners work closely with employers, large and small, to support local people to benefit from local employment opportunities and secure in work progression.

In support of this project, an initial group of six local employers across a range of key sectors have provided a letter to demonstrate their commitment and support for this proposal. All these employers will work with us to inform our new delivery methods and to help pilot the materials with eligible employees.

These employers include: Alliance Homes; Alun Griffiths; Human Support Group; New Directions (Social Care); Universities Bristol NHS Foundation Trust; Milestones Trust; Wilko.

Section 8 – Monitoring and costing plans

Please attach your plan for monitoring the project – including what data you will gather and by what means. Please also attach a full costings plan for the project. (Maximum 3 pages each.)

Monitoring Plan (attached Appendix 4)

Project Costings Plan (attached Appendix 5)

Section 9 – Risks and mitigations

Please give details of what you identify as the key risks in undertaking the project that might affect whether or not it is successful, and explain the actions you plan to take to mitigate those risks. You may use the space provided, or attach a separate document (for example a risk register) if you wish.

Risk Assessment – (attached Appendix 6)

Section 10 – Additional information

Please include any other relevant information you believe would support your proposal and/or help us understand it.

To meet Government challenges outlined in the Industrial Strategy, our Consortium is working with the West of England Combined Authority and LEP to ensure that under-represented groups can realise their full potential and, as technological change transforms the jobs and the skills that our businesses require, we are making sure that people have the opportunity to learn and train throughout their working lives.

The Resolution Foundation local area profile for the West of England (December 2016) presents a picture of 'high employment, sluggish jobs growth'. This increases the urgency for establishing and embedding successful skills and progression support, since those in uncertain or low wage work are less likely to be able to access jobs outside the region.

In the West of England, our main problem is not unemployment caused by technology, it is low earning power caused by, among other reasons, a failure to use technology. With support from the Flexible Learning Fund, we can ensure that we have both the skills to take advantage of new technologies and the means to help those who are affected by technological change.

Based on the current take up of AEB provision across the West of England, there is strong evidence that we need to find new ways to improve the current functional skills, employability and digital/media skills offer for adults – particularly those in work on low pay, and those parents/carers who want to return to work after an absence.

Community Learning West has a history of successfully reaching these learners facing multiple barriers. Currently there is no funding to carry out the intensive development work required to build and pilot a new model of delivery. Through the Flexible Learning Fund we have a unique opportunity to support inclusive growth by assisting all providers across the West of England area and beyond to improve their offer. By investing in flexible and improved delivery materials we can enhance current provision and add additional learning which focuses on building the core skills needed to develop the economy.

The Community Learning West Consortium is a well-established partnership of three Local Authorities who work with a wide range of other partners including third sector, FE, Training Provider, statutory sectors and businesses to support their local communities. The Consortium operates within the West of England Combined Authority area and works closely the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership and new Combined Authority.

This strategic positioning of the partnership and the way in which all the partners work together, ensures a strategic coherence to developments across the West of England. For example local, regional and national programmes have been brought together to ensure residents have access to a coherent offer; The Big Lottery Funded West of England Works – Building Better Opportunities Programme is focused on those furthest from work. The DWP Work and Health Programme lead by PLUSS is focused on supporting those who have health related issues as a barrier to work, while the DWP Employment Support Innovation Pilot is focused on supporting Career Progression for those in-work and in social housing. Other programmes supporting NEET Young People 16-24 years olds, Young People with SEND are planned within the next year.

All of these programmes, alongside apprenticeship and work based learning programmes are seeking, at one level or another, to support career/personal development, and individual's literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Feedback from a number of programmes confirms that increasing the flexibility in learning processes will have a significant impact on the outcomes for learners. The West of England is a unique area, the three local authorities of the Consortium alongside Bath and North East Somerset cover coastal, rural and urban and city areas. For many learners, providers and employers the ability to access learning flexibly means that barriers are removed and outcomes are improved.