

Post-16 Strategic Development Fund – successful bids

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Reference: Medr/2026/03

To:
Heads of higher education institutions
Principals of further education institutions
Directors of Education of Local Authorities
Apprenticeship commissioned contract holders

Respond by: **Interim report (Annex A):** 01 May 2026
Final report (Annex B): 01 November 2026

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Summary

This publication outlines the successful bids from the Post-16 Strategic Development Fund.

£4.75 million is available for the academic year (AY) 2025/26 and we received 48 bids totalling in excess of £14 million.

Introduction

1. This publication outlines the successful bids from the Post-16 Strategic Development Fund.
2. £4.75m is available for the academic year (AY) 2025/26 and we received 48 bids totalling in excess of £14m.
3. The successful bids total £4.92m and works on the assumption that there will be an underspend from the 12 successful bids. Medr Board have approved carrying a risk of £177k.

Background

4. The purpose of this funding is to encourage more collaboration within the tertiary sector. The bidding process has allowed Medr to gather further intelligence around the need for strategic investment across the sector.
5. The fund was seeking bids which address the following:
 - Collaboration – projects which illustrate collaboration across the tertiary education sector of at least two organisations.
 - New – project activity which is new and no part of the project had already started.
 - Strategic – the project is linked to the strategic ambitions of Medr.

Bids received

6. It was noted in the original publication that the lead partner submitting the bid must be a university, further education institution (FEI), local authority (LA) or apprenticeship provider who is funded directly by Medr. Other organisations working within the tertiary education sector in Wales may be included as collaborative partners. Of the 48 bids, we received lead partner bids from all parts of the tertiary education sector and there were a wide range of organisations as partners, such as employers, trade unions and regional skills partnerships.
7. A Medr panel was convened to score the bids. The scoring system considered how projects addressed the following elements:
 - i) Collaboration between providers,
 - ii) Breaking new ground,
 - iii) Medr's strategic aims,
 - iv) Governance structures,
 - v) Evidence of need,
 - vi) Planned timescales,
 - vii) Involvement of learners and trade unions,
 - viii) Planned costs,

- ix) Outcomes and deliverables,
- x) Sustainability.

Successful bids

8. The successful bids are as follows:

Lead organisation	Partners	Project	Bid amount
Coleg Cambria	Wrexham University	North East Wales Skills Partnership (NEWSP) Advanced Skills Hub - The Advanced Skills Hub will be designed to deliver an integrated skills pipeline of short course provision ranging from Level 2 vocational training up to Level 7 postgraduate qualifications, focusing specifically on addressing critical regional skills shortages in areas such as Digital, Green Skills, and Emerging Technologies as well as Advanced Manufacturing alongside Public Sector and wider industry skills demands.	£257,100
NPTC Group of Colleges	Coleg Sir Gar, Gower College Swansea, Pembrokeshire College, WBL and industry partners	Celtic Freeport Partnership: A Regional Curriculum Transformation for Clean Energy - This bid proposes a collaborative curriculum transformation project involving four further education (FE) colleges, coordinated by the Freeport Skills Director.	£550,000
Cardiff Council	Cardiff and Vale College, St David's Catholic Sixth Form College and Vale of Glamorgan Council	Unlocking Post-16 Potential: Delivering Equitable Access Through Collaborative Provision Across Cardiff and the Vale - This project will develop a unified post-16 education offer through collaborative delivery across multiple partners in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.	£566,000

Lead organisation	Partners	Project	Bid amount
Cardiff Metropolitan University	Bridgend College and ALS training	<p>Flexible Tertiary Pathways for Upskilling and Reskilling Learners in Wales - This project establishes a tertiary consortium led by Cardiff Metropolitan University partnering with Bridgend College and ALS</p> <p>Training to pilot the delivery of stackable level 4 and level 5 micro-credentials for the FinTech and Creative Industries in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR). It seeks to strengthen the tertiary education system's capacity to respond flexibly to industry and learner demand, ensuring learners of all ages can access relevant, high-quality skills development utilising existing degree apprenticeship and standalone modules.</p>	£151,572
University of South Wales	Bridgend College, Cardiff and Vale, Coleg Y Cymoedd, Coleg Gwent, Merthyr College and Screen Alliance Wales	<p>Future Skills: Addressing Skills Gaps and Labour Shortages in key employment areas - The Future Skills project, a new collaboration across six institutions and multiple agencies, proposes a cohesive, integrated approach to engage potential learners in shortage subjects and employment areas aligned and underpinned research and innovation priorities.</p>	£595,000
Wrexham University	Bangor University, Coleg Cambria and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	<p>Llwybrau Llwyddiant / Pathways to Success - This new project offers scalability, improving learner participation rates and progression rates through FE to HE by promoting careers and educational opportunities to learners.</p>	£803,511

Lead organisation	Partners	Project	Bid amount
St David's Catholic College	Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia and Catholic Education Service (CES)	<p>The National Catholic College (operational name) - The proposed project will formalise the National College structure as a collaborative network of Catholic post-16 providers, led by St David's, and widen access to non-Catholic and rural institutions, particularly those with limited A-level choice or capacity. It will strengthen quality assurance across Catholic post-16 provision through shared professional learning, peer review, and collaborative curriculum planning. This will include creating an overarching quality assurance framework focused on academic standards and aligning this strategic approach to equity, equality, diversity, inclusion and environmental sustainability. The project will develop a distinctive online pedagogy that supports teachers to deliver high-quality digital learning.</p>	£225,000
Gower College Swansea	Pembrokeshire College, Coleg Gwent, Stable and Microsoft	<p>National Centre for Digital Skills - The project will involve 15 teaching staff across partners being trained to deliver industry recognised digital technology qualifications. The intention is for three curriculum areas to embed new Microsoft Certified modules by July 2026. A live digital collaboration hub will be developed and hosted by the National Centre for Digital Skills. This will support improved teaching skills set and curriculum delivery to meet demand within technology-enabled roles and industry requirement and facilitate stronger employer partnerships across Welsh industries.</p>	£310,324

Lead organisation	Partners	Project	Bid amount
The Open University in Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OU in Wales • The Learning and Work Institute • Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council • Trivallis Housing Association • Adult Learning Wales • ALS Training Ltd • University of South Wales • TUC Cymru 	<p>PATHWAYS - Utilising a model by the Learning and Work Institute, this project will focus on co-designing a widening participation pathway that is learner centred and aims to demonstrate the efficacy of a scalable learner-centred assessment and referral model.</p>	£359,850
Coleg Gwent	Open University	<p>Gain4Growth Wales: Empowering Learners, Elevating Outcomes - The project builds on a successful Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) innovative best practice project and seeks funding to enhance and pilot a collaborative, pan-Wales programme to strengthen educational gain, academic support, and skills development for students enrolled on undergraduate programmes delivered within college-based Higher Education environments (CBHE). It will create coordinated support systems, shared resources, and cross-provider learning opportunities that go beyond standard provision, ensuring CBHE learners receive equitable access to academic enrichment, career readiness support, and personal development pathways.</p>	£201,600

Lead organisation	Partners	Project	Bid amount
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Several Welsh Schools	Cyfleoedd+, Strategic Leadership for Welsh-Medium Post-16 Education across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr County Borough Councils - The project will enhance strategic leadership of Welsh-medium post-16 provision and greatly enhance learner choice and experience. It will build capacity and sustainability through the strategic dissemination and collaborative delivery of effective and efficient practice and targeted professional learning. The project will develop scalable, high-quality post-16 hybrid curriculum models responsive to learner demand and choice, and strengthen progression routes, aligning school, FE, HE, and industry.	£375,000
Bid 12 has been approved pending final checks.			£530,000
			£4,924,957

9. The successful bids total £4.92m.

Monitoring

- Projects will be required to complete an interim project report at the midpoint of the project and a final project report at the end of the project using the templates in **Annexes A and B**.
- As a condition of funding, it is an expectation that projects share their learnings from the project. From the monitoring noted in **Annexes A and B**, we will identify learning and share across the network. In addition, we would welcome project bids to include within the bids how you would expect to disseminate your learning.

Timetable

12. Timetable for the projects:

Payment	60%: 20 February 2026 40%: 20 April 2026
All funds committed	31 August 2026
Part-way evaluation form	01 May 2026
Final evaluation form	01 November 2026

Further information

13. For further information, contact InvestmentAndMonitoring@medr.cymru.

Medr

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