

Apprenticeship Programme in Wales Grant Application: Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Applicant Eligibility and Delivery Models

1.1. How will continuing learners be managed where a subcontractor becomes a direct grant recipient?

Prioritising continuity of learning and minimising disruption to learners and employers is paramount to the implementation of the new Apprenticeship Programme from August 2027.

Medr's primary responsibility is to learners and ensure that the transition is managed lawfully, transparently and consistently, with appropriate regard to continuity of support, learner choice, equality impacts and the need to minimise disruption.

Therefore, Medr programme level policy is by default for a learner to continue with the provider currently delivering the support where the provider remains part of the delivery network. Continuity of delivery is key, under which learners ordinarily continue with the provider currently delivering support, while allowing learners to request transfer to another provider where appropriate and operationally feasible. Grant recipients must cooperate with learner transition, information transfer and mobilisation arrangements. Medr is unable to mandate particular delivery chains or recreate previous contractual models.

Medr's responsibility to an existing prime contractor is to manage the expiry of the existing contractual relationship in accordance with the contract and Exit Plan. Existing prime providers should cooperate with exit, handover, learner communication and information transfer arrangements. We will be writing to all prime providers shortly setting out the Programme's run down contract arrangements. Information on managing displaced learners is at Annex B of the Programme Guidance, sections 7.35 – 7.38.

1.2. Can Medr provide further clarity on how it will define and assess different provider types within the new grant model, including existing providers, new providers, subcontractors, collaborative partnerships and consortia?

All applications from all applicants will be assessed transparently, equally and consistently against the evidence contained within their application form, as outlined in Annex E Grant Assessment Framework and Scoring.

1.3. If a current subcontractor applies independently, how will it be classified and which funding thresholds will apply?

Any organisation that meets the eligibility criteria, regardless of status within the current commissioned programme, can make an application.

For Strand 1, for planning and assurance purposes, Medr expects applicants to be able to demonstrate capacity to manage a grant value of up to £5m per year, including new starts and continuing learners. This is a capability benchmark and does not guarantee an allocation of that amount. Actual annual grant allocations will be determined in accordance with the allocation methodology as outlined in paragraphs 6.10 – 6.12 and may be less than £5m. For new providers without continuing learners, Medr anticipates

that the minimum grant value in the first year will be £1.5m, subject to the allocation methodology, programme conditions and budget availability.

1.4. Are employers excluded from submitting a grant application?

No organisation is excluded from applying for a grant, providing they meet the eligibility criteria. All applicants will be assessed lawfully, equally, transparently and consistently.

2. Application Process, Requirements and Evidence

2.1. How will the 1000-word count be managed?

You will only be assessed on your response contained within the application up to the maximum word count of 1,000 words per question. Any response over 1,001 will not be taken into account.

2.2. Is there a word limit for the "Delivery Model" response per sector?

While there is no word limit, responses should be focused, relevant, and expressed clearly and succinctly.

2.3. Can you outline the process used to review and evaluate applications?

Stage 2 applications will be assessed against the published assessment criteria using the 0-5 scoring methodology. Assessment will consider the overall quality and strength of the evidence provided in response to each question. Individual programmes or pathways are not scored separately within a question. Instead, assessors will evaluate the response as a whole against the published criteria.

Question scores are combined into section scores, and section scores are weighted to produce an overall assessment score. Applicants should ensure their response provides sufficient and proportionate evidence to demonstrate their capability and approach across all proposed programmes and pathways included within the application.

2.4. What evidence will applicants be required to provide at Stages 1 and 2 of the application process? Will some sections be assessed on a declaratory basis?

Annex A the Apprenticeship Programme Grant Application outlines examples of evidence that will be assessed. There is a mix of narrative and declaratory information required.

2.5. What evidence will be required to demonstrate quality, apprenticeship delivery experience, geographical reach, employer engagement and sector expertise?

It is for applicants to consider appropriate evidence to support their application. Questions 5 and 6 of the Apprenticeship Programme Grant Application at Annex A

outlines examples of evidence that will be assessed. Annex E Grant Assessment Framework also provides additional guidance on the assessment framework and scoring.

2.6. Given that applications need to be submitted in a short period of time, if an organisation is not ready within the initial timeframe, when is the next window for application?

There will be a formal review of the programme at the four-year point which may lead to more major changes; it will also be an opportunity for further providers to apply to receive grant funding under the programme, subject to programme conditions and budget availability.

2.7. Do you have to complete all elements of the applications, regardless of whether they are scored or not.

All sections of the application form must be completed regardless of scoring as this provides key information about the provider, delivery arrangements and sector delivery.

2.8. Is there a minimum threshold quality score that bidders need to achieve either in total or for individual questions?

For Stage 1 is a pass or fail. There is no published minimum Stage 2 quality threshold score, overall pass mark or minimum score for individual questions. Stage 2 applications are then assessed using the published criteria at Annex E.

2.9. Will links contained within the grant application response count towards the evaluation scoring?

You can include links within your answer to provide evidence on its contents. However, this should not be used instead of answering the question. The links will not be considered as part of the assessment scoring.

2.10. How will you check the validity of evidence stated by providers who are not currently prime providers?

All applicants, including organisations that are not currently prime providers, will be subject to the same Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessment requirements. Medr may request supporting evidence to validate statements made within applications and may seek clarification where necessary.

2.11. Will new providers be expected to have completed the assessments required within the regulatory framework conditions as part of the application process or when awarded?

The first stage establishes whether an applicant is eligible to receive public funding by confirming that it satisfies Medr's Conditions of Funding. All key information about the applicant and their ability to meet Medr's Conditions of Funding must be answered as part of the application process.

3. Collaborative Delivery, Partnerships and Subcontracting

3.1. Will the new grant model operate in a similar way to current arrangements, allowing collaborative delivery through subcontracting, partnerships or consortia? If so, what requirements apply regarding legal structure, accountability and the presentation of these arrangements within the application?

Yes. Medr encourages collaborative delivery arrangements, including subcontracting, partnerships, consortia and other collaborative models across all programme strands. These arrangements are intended to support delivery at sufficient scale across Wales, ensuring coverage across sectors and regions while maintaining high-quality apprenticeship provision. This may include working with specialist employer-led organisations where such partnerships support employer engagement, learner progression and high-quality apprenticeship delivery.

Medr has not prescribed or defined specific legal structures for these arrangements. It is the responsibility of applicants to determine and describe their proposed delivery model and governance arrangements within their application.

The organisation that receives the Grant Award funding, as the prime provider, holds overall accountability and contractual responsibility for delivery. This includes responsibility for managing governance, performance, quality assurance and relationships with any subcontractors or partner organisations.

Where delivery is undertaken through subcontractors or partners, it is the responsibility of the prime contractor to determine the appropriate arrangements and undertake any necessary due diligence checks. The prime contractor remains accountable for the quality, management and oversight of all provision funded through the grant award

3.2. Is it possible for a university and training provider to apply with the university as prime, with a view to then delivering a full pathway, level 2 to 6?

Medr encourages collaborative arrangements, including consortium or partner organisation models, including sub-contracting models for providers applying to deliver each strand of the programme.

3.3. How should existing collaborative arrangements be presented within the application process?

This is outlined in section 2 in Annex A of the grant application pack.

3.4. How will Medr distinguish between subcontractor performance and the quality assurance and support provided by prime contract holders?

It will be the responsibility of the Grant Award Holder to monitor and assure the quality of all subcontracted delivery, and to have appropriate arrangements in place to enable them to do this. Where a Grant Award Holder identifies issues with individual subcontractors

that impacts on the overall programme performance, Medr will take these factors into consideration, subject to provision of information as to how these issues will be addressed under the new arrangements. Providers should include this information within the application and any action they took to improve outcomes/performance.

3.5. If an applicant was operating as a sub-contractor how would you assess their past performance?

We recognise that, under the current subcontracting model, learner outcomes and wider performance measures may have been achieved within a framework of support, oversight and quality assurance provided by a directly funded prime provider and outcomes impacted by performance of a range of delivery agents. As such, we do not assume that an applicant's historical performance data alone demonstrates its ability to operate successfully as a directly funded provider.

3.6. Will Medr encourage prime providers to work with specialist employer-led organisations to create progression routes from pre-employment programmes into apprenticeships, particularly where those organisations already have relationships with employers and deliver occupational competence qualifications?

Yes. Medr encourages collaborative arrangements, including consortium, partner organisation and subcontracting models.

3.7. Do all partners/collaborators need to be confirmed at stage 1, and can changes be made to delivery models and regions (and partners) at stage 2?

Applicants are asked at Stage 1 to include their proposed delivery model (e.g. consortium arrangement or prime provider with subcontracting) and to provide details of proposed subcontractors or consortium members, together with details of the due diligence undertaken on those organisations. However, we understand these may change and can be updated with regions and sector delivery as part of the stage 2 application process.

3.8. Can a delivery partner be named in more than one application? And employers who are co-delivery partners with different training providers.

The prime contractor is responsible for determining its subcontracting arrangements and for carrying out appropriate due diligence checks to ensure that subcontractors meet the required standards and obligations.

3.9. Can a prime provider apply to add additional or new collaborative partners during the 4 year period.

Yes

3.10. What must be agreed with partners at each application stage?

- 3.10.1. Which governance agreements, due diligence and commitments must be completed at Stage 1, Stage 2 and before delivery begins?**
- 3.10.2. Can applicants use different delivery models across sectors, pathways and regions? For example, can provision be delivered directly in one region, and through subcontractors or consortium partners elsewhere?**
- 3.10.3. What partnership and subcontracting limits will apply? Are there restrictions on the proportion or value subcontracted, management fees, overlapping consortium memberships or an organisation holding both prime and subcontractor roles?**

1) At Stage 1, applicants must identify their proposed delivery model, provide details of proposed subcontractors or consortium members, and describe the due diligence undertaken on those organisations. Applicants are also required to provide information on intended regions, sectors and programme strands. The documentation does not set out any additional governance agreements, partnership agreements or formal commitments that must be completed at Stage 2, nor does it specify which agreements must be in place prior to delivery commencing.

2) The application documentation recognises a range of delivery models, including prime provider, subcontracting and consortium arrangements, and asks applicants to describe their proposed delivery model. The programme also encourages collaborative arrangements, including consortium, partner organisation and subcontracting models. However, the annexes do not specify whether different delivery models may be used across different sectors, pathways or regions within a single application.

3) The annexes do not specify any limits relating to subcontracting volumes or values, management fees, overlapping consortium memberships, or whether an organisation may participate in one application as a prime provider and another as a subcontractor or partner. The application process requires applicants to declare their proposed delivery arrangements and partners, but no specific restrictions of this nature are set out within the published application and assessment documentation."

3.11. Will Medr publish the names and proposed sector and regional coverage of successful prime applicants, so specialist organisations can approach them about subcontracting or partnership opportunities before allocations are finalised?

Yes the successful grant applicants will be published.

4. Conditions of Funding

4.1. We are an FE Institution who has received approval from Medr and is on the Higher Education Register. Does being on the HE Register exempt us from the entire Section 3, or only parts of this section?

Institutions that are already subject to Medr's Conditions of Funding should proceed directly to Section 4 and are not required to complete the questions within section 3.

4.2. If we are already an HEI receiving Medr funding for apprenticeship delivery, does this mean we will have already signed up to Medr conditions of funding?

Institutions that are already subject to Medr's Conditions of Funding should proceed directly to Section 4 and are not required to complete the questions within section 3.

4.3. For consolidated groups, and where the provision being applied for is only one area of the provider activity. Do you want the financials for the whole consolidated group or the organisation that is delivering apprenticeships in Wales.

On tab provider info, we ask for the whole group position in order to assess overall group sustainability (row 17) together with sufficient supplemental information to understand the relevant subsidiary / department (row 18)

4.4. Are these commercial learners? Are they to include Consolidated?

This is a catch all for any other learners. If wider consolidated is separate, then these are not included. Relates to the provider (as long as we have sufficient information to separately identify the provider performance)

4.5. Will a standard Cyber Essentials certification be accepted as evidence of compliance with the information security requirements, or is Cyber Essentials Plus required?

A standard Cyber Essentials (CE) certification on its own is not sufficient, as it is based primarily on self-assessment and does not provide the independent technical assurance required.

However, applicants may use an alternative route by submitting:

- A current Cyber Essentials certificate; and
- A recent IT Health Check (ITHC) or penetration test report completed within the last 12 months.

The additional assessment must:

- Cover the systems and infrastructure supporting the apprenticeship programme.
- Be carried out by an independent CREST-approved provider.
- Demonstrate that all Critical vulnerabilities, and any relevant High vulnerabilities, have been remediated or formally risk accepted with appropriate mitigations.

Applicants using this approach should provide the assessment executive summary together with evidence of remediation actions. Medr may request further information as part of its assurance review.

5. Degree Apprenticeships

5.1. **We are an FE Institution who has received approval from Medr and is on the Higher Education Register. Page 6 of the guidance states that Further Education Institutions can only apply for Strand 1 and 3. As we are on this register, would we be eligible to apply for Strand 2?**

Strand 2 covers provision which leads to a bachelor's degree at Level 6 on the CQFW, awarded by an organisation with degree awarding powers. The degree awarding body is ultimately responsible for the quality and academic standards of the provision and the application must therefore be led by the provider which holds this responsibility. We encourage universities, as degree awarding bodies, to work in partnership with further education colleges and independent training providers in the delivery of degree apprenticeships, to support wider access to degree level provision. We also encourage universities to consider where there may be progression routes from higher apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5 (and other vocational qualifications) into degree apprenticeships, in line with our principle of taking into account recognised prior learning wherever possible.

Inclusion on the Register of Higher Education Providers enables access to student finance for higher education provision, and eligibility for Medr's higher education and research and innovation funding under sections 88, 89 and 105 of TER(W). Apprenticeship provision at all levels is funded through section 104, and therefore is not related to inclusion on the Register. Inclusion on the Register does not confer degree awarding powers, for which a separate process is required.

6. Funding and Grant Allocations

6.1. **When can providers expect grant allocations to be confirmed?**

Grant allocation is outlined in paragraphs 6.10-6.13 in Annex B of the grant application Pack.

6.2. **Has Medr assessed the potential impact on provider allocations, learner volumes and overall sustainability if the number of grant recipients increases without a corresponding increase in the apprenticeship budget?**

Allocations will ensure the grant provides coverage across all sectors and regions in Wales and supports high-quality delivery of the apprenticeship provision, including priority to continuing learners.

The grant minimum allocations are outlined in paragraph 17 in the publication.

6.3. **How will growth opportunities, allocation adjustments and in-year changes be managed during the four-year grant period?**

All allocations are dependent on budget allocations, therefore, there is not a guaranteed budget entitlement for any applicant. In year growth opportunities or in year changes will be made on a number of decisions, these will include the capacity of providers to

increase delivery, performance of providers, regional priorities and sector priorities. Once the applications have been assessed and the grant award letters have been issued to the successful providers, Medr will issue the grant allocations. This is planned to take place in April 2027.

6.4. Why do the minimum and maximum grant value thresholds not appear to apply consistently across all apprenticeship strands?

Each strand has been assessed individually, and the corresponding minimum and maximum thresholds have been determined based on that assessment.

For example, we would not be able to apply a minimum threshold of £5m to the degree apprenticeships strand as the current budget is £9,930,967. This would reduce the number of providers being able to deliver degree apprenticeships across Wales.

6.5. What is the total value of Grant available for all 3 strands and has Medr allocated a financial value to each strand

All allocations are dependent on budget allocations, therefore, there is not a guaranteed budget entitlement for any applicant. In year growth opportunities or in year changes will be made on a number of decisions, these will include the capacity of providers to increase delivery, performance of providers, regional priorities, and sector priorities.

6.6. When will providers receive grant award letters with grant value?

Grant allocations will be made following the grant award letter. Allocations are forecasted to be issued in April 2027.

6.7. How much has been allocated to the Additional Costs Budget and would this part of the Apprenticeship Grant Award or an additional value?

Grant allocation methodology is outlined in paragraphs 6.10-6.13 in Annex B of the grant application Pack.

6.8. What is the allocation process for Strand 1?

The allocation process for strand 1 is outlined on Section 6.10-6.13 of Annex B (Programme Guidance) of the application pack.

Medr will provide a baseline grant allocation to providers meeting the programme conditions to enable them to plan resources and provision for the future and support financial viability. The grant allocation will be subject to Medr's budget allocation from Welsh Government.

The grant allocation will be based on:

- Indicative baseline allocation assumptions, including the capacity benchmark referred to in paragraph 1.4 of Annex B and the anticipated first-year allocation for new recipients, subject to the allocation methodology, programme conditions and budget availability.

- Number of continuing learners.
- Number of displaced learners (if any).
- New learner starts.
- Skills priorities as set out by Welsh Government.
- Regional economic needs.
- Additional costs budget allocation.

Providers will be able to manage their investment allocation flexibly to enable them to meet the expectations set out in the programme guidance.

6.9. Will existing providers receive the same level of funding as the current procured contracts?

To be considered for a grant award under strand A, applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity, either individually or through appropriate collaborative arrangements, to manage grant funding at sufficient scale to support the objectives of the programme, including being able to respond to changing priorities. For planning and assurance purposes, Medr expects applicants to be able to demonstrate capacity to manage a grant value of up to £5m per year, including new starts and continuing learners. This is a capability benchmark and does not guarantee an allocation of that amount. These figures are used to assess financial sustainability, delivery capacity and programme risk, and do not create any guarantee of, or entitlement to funding.

The allocations for all providers will be considered fairly (as outlined in Section 6.10-6.13 of Annex B), following the assessment of Stage 1 and Stage 2 and their subsequent outcomes. Allocations will be determined taking into account available funding, strategic priorities and programme objectives. Therefore, no existing provider is guaranteed a grant allocation at the same value as their current procured contract. The allocations will be determined after the assessment process has been completed.

7. General

7.1. Does the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) apply in respect of staff currently employed by providers under the procured contracts?

Whether TUPE may apply depends on the specific circumstances relating to the potential transfer. Recipients will be responsible for undertaking their own due diligence and obtaining their own independent legal advice, to determine the application, or otherwise, of TUPE to their circumstances.

8. Performance and Learner Outcomes

8.1. What performance measures and minimum expectations will apply under the new grant arrangements, particularly regarding timely completions, achievement rates, progression to employment and sustained outcomes?

Providers are required to comply with the Medr Condition: Quality and Continuous Improvement

It is expected that the individualised approach to programme duration will improve the timely progression rates.

The current achievement target will remain at 75%, although this will be kept under review and Medr may take appropriate action where thresholds are not met.

We will continue to work with providers and employers to support continuous improvement, strengthening progression opportunities and improving sustained outcomes for learners. Annex B 4.7 – 4.10 Learner outcomes

9. Programme Delivery and Qualifications

9.1. How will the new apprenticeship model support flexibility and responsiveness to employer and learner need?

See Annex A Apprenticeship Programme Grant Application Form Stage 2 and Annex B Section 3 Roles and Responsibilities.

As part of the application process, we are seeking information from applicants on how they would support employers and respond to economic needs flexibly.

9.2. What role will micro-credentials, Career Skills Units and other non-regulated learning play within future apprenticeship delivery?

Information on micro credentials is outlined in paragraphs 4.23-4.25 in Annex B of the grant application Pack.

Careers Skills and other non-regulated qualification will form part of the Apprenticeship framework.

Medr supports both the use of qualifications recognised through the CQFW and higher education qualifications that fall outside Qualification Wales regulation as long as the qualifications meet legislative requirements. This will continue to be strengthened through the implementation of the grant.

9.3. Can Medr clarify the distinction between Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Prior Achievement (RPA)?

Prior achievement is successful completion of a full recognised qualification.

Prior learning may refer to partial completion or unaccredited learning.

We will only take RPA into account for funding purposes at this stage but would expect providers to take into account any RPL for the individual learning programme in terms of delivery. This is subject to change throughout the life of the grant

9.4. How will learner eligibility rules be future proofed against wider UK Government employment, welfare or skills initiatives?

If any eligibility rules change as a result of UK or WG skills programmes, providers will be informed and the Programme Guidance will be updated as appropriate.

10. Provider Network, Learner Transition and Programme Review

10.1. The guidance refers to a formal review at the four-year point. How will this be managed?

Initial grant awards will be for a period of four years. Minor changes may be made to the programme guidance during the first four years to respond to changing circumstances. If providers continue to meet the programme's grant conditions and continue to be compliant with the requirements of Medr's regulatory framework, they will continue to receive investment following the initial award.

There will be a formal review of the programme at the four-year point which may lead to more major changes; it will also be an opportunity for further providers to apply to receive grant funding under the programme, subject to programme conditions and budget availability.

11. Sectors, Regions and Delivery Arrangements

11.1. For the *Frameworks and Regions for Proposed Delivery* section of Annex A (pages 11-12), should the questions listed on page 11 be answered within the table for each proposed sector/framework? Additionally, how should delivery be recorded where training and assessment take place at employer premises rather than provider facilities?

Responses may be combined where appropriate across sectors and/or regions, provided the information remains clear and demonstrates the applicant's capability to deliver the proposed provision. Applicants may also include any additional information they consider relevant.

11.2. The guidance states that no more than 50% of a provider's funded activity should be concentrated within a single sector. Is this an expectation or a mandatory requirement?

The programme must be able to respond to and meet regional economic and Welsh Government skills priorities, including responding to changing technologies and the need for green skills.

Providers must be able to demonstrate that they will use the grant funding to deliver the provision across a range of key sector areas, and that they are able to respond to changing priorities. Therefore, this is a requirement for the grant funding. Paragraphs 2.12-2.13 of Annex B provide further information. Annex B 2.12-2.13.

12. Shared Apprenticeships

12.1. In shared apprenticeship models, can the apprenticeship provider act as the lead organisation and employer of the apprentice?

Yes

12.2. What responsibilities are providers expected to fulfil in relation to employment matters such as salary, holiday entitlement, sickness absence, disciplinary processes and other contractual employment arrangements?

Annex D Roles and Responsibilities. Further guidance will be provided on the shared apprenticeships, working in partnership with providers.