

Learning Environment Improvement Grant Guidance

Academic Year 2025/26

Context and Offer

Launched in May 2019, the Skills and Education Group Foundation champions social mobility in the further education and skills sector, highlighting the role providers play in transforming people's lives and combating the likelihood of persistent poverty and social exclusion.

We are committed to making positive changes to the learning environments of our members and deliver material improvements to the fabric of the FE Sector as a whole.

To this end, we are offering grants of £2,500 to applicants from members who have identified a material problem that is negatively effecting the experience of their learners or the ability of their colleagues to deliver high quality teaching.

These Learning Environment Improvement Grants can be used to fund time-limited projects, with clear physical outcomes. This might include, but not be limited to;

- The creation of a garden space (covering tool and material purchase costs, exclusive of labour costs)
- The painting of a mural onsite (covering tool and material purchase costs, exclusive of labour costs)

They can also be used to renew or improve learning equipment at your organisation. This might include, but not be limited to;

- The purchasing of new catering equipment and utensils
- The purchasing of new sports equipment or team kits
- The purchasing of new construction tools or materials

These grants should be considered as independent, standalone funding opportunities. They are to help provide a clear and sustainable impact for learners and staff that is not contingent on ongoing funding or future budgeting. As such, grants will not be made available to pay for

- Contracts for ongoing services or third-party works (estates maintenance, cleaning etc..)
- Contracts for the rental of equipment (whether short or long term)
- The partial funding of temporary or fixed-term roles
- The partial funding of permanent roles
- The fractional investment towards larger capital projects

The grant process will run throughout the year. The submission date for each wave of applications is given below, with notification of application approval and funding dispersal to follow two weeks thereafter.

- Friday November 28th 2025
- Friday February 13th 2026

A web-based application form will have been linked alongside these guidance notes and will also be available on our Foundation webpage

Please complete the form and submit applications by Friday 13th February to meet the Wave 2 deadline.

Below, we offer up some details on what each section of that form should cover. Hopefully, these pointers are useful to you but if you have any questions or follow up comments, please feel free to get in touch with the Skills and Education Group Foundation and External Affairs Manager, Joe McLoughlin at joem@skillsedugroup.co.uk or on Twitter @SEG_JoeM

Background & Problem (500 words)

In this section, applicants are invited to outline the context that they are working in. They might pay particular attention to

- the socio-economic make up of their area,
- the demographics of their learners
- the relationship that their department or organisation has established with local or national businesses.

They can then go on to outline what learning environment is in need of improvement in their department or at their organisation more widely. How has the low-quality or lack in the area negatively impacted the experiences and outcomes of staff and learners and what effect has this had on the wider community?

To answer this question as best they can, applicants are advised to contribute quantitative and qualitative evidence in their response, as is most appropriate.

This could include, but not be limited to,

- Attendance rates of learner cohorts on the course or that use the space in question
- Pass or progression rates of learner cohorts on the course or that use the space in question
- Number and range of extracurricular activities or engagement with wider community groups or stakeholders

Alternatively, once background has been established, applicants might recognise that there are particular strengths in their department or wider organisation and

could make the case for funding on the basis of building on those strengths to provide an even more impressive offer to learners and the local community.

Again, applicants are advised to evidence these stronger claims. This might include but not be limited to

- Departmental or college performance on learner outcomes, in relation to national data.
- Evidence of departmental or college performance in relevant regional, national or international events (World Skills tournaments etc..)
- Evidence of departmental or college engagement with local government and employers, providing clear pathways to work and progression for learners and addressing evident skills gaps.

Proposal (400 words)

In this section applicants should outline what the grant funding will be spent on, giving details on:

- The range and quantity of items or materials being requested
- The suppliers of those items
- The lead-time of those items (if any)

Staff Beneficiaries (300 words)

Applicants should outline the number of staff members that will benefit from this funding in the **immediate, short and long term**. Short and long term should be understood as 1 and 5 years, respectively.

We are aware that predicting short and longer term impact may be tricky but we are happy to accept estimates built on a robust evidence base. In this instance, evidence might include departmental averages of team size carried into the future, calculations of staff numbers based on current or approved recruitment plans, or some other quantifiable factor.

Applicants should also use this section to describe **how** the purchases enabled by the grant will benefit staff. This might cover, but not be limited to, the following:

- Will new equipment make teaching, learning and assessment quicker and easier to deliver?
- Will new up-to-date tools and materials allow staff to give students as close to an industry experience as possible
- Will purchases help staff improve learner “buy-in” and so improve engagement and behavioural issues?

Learner Beneficiaries

Applicants should outline the number of learners that will benefit from this funding in the **immediate, short and longer term**. Short and long term should be understood as 1 and 5 years, respectively.

We are aware that predicting short and longer term impact may be tricky but we are happy to accept estimates built on a robust evidence base. In this instance, evidence might include departmental averages of cohort size carried into the future, feedback from current student engagement and recruitment campaigns, or some other quantifiable factor.

Applicants should also use this section to describe **how** the purchases enabled by the grant will benefit learners. This might cover, but not be limited to, the following:

- How the new equipment will improve learning and assessment process and outcomes?
- How new tools and materials will provide as close to an industry experience as possible for learners, smoothing their pathway to work
- How purchases will help improve learner “buy-in” and so improve engagement and behaviour

Additional Beneficiaries

In this section, applicants are invited to consider if there are any additional beneficiaries of this funding? These beneficiaries might include:

- Local businesses who support apprentices who will have access to better learning materials and tools following the grant
- Community organisations that also use the facilities that the fund is improving
- Local schools that can now make a stronger and clearer offer to their learners who are looking to pursue a particular course at your organisation.

Costings

Please use this section to provide costings and evidence of these where possible, feel free to use tables and charts if this is a more comfortable way of presenting this numeric data.