

Round 2: Advanced Practitioner Programme 2021-2022

#APConnect: Skylark Pathway Practitioner Led Professional Learning

Application Guidance

This is an invitation for ESFA-funded organisations to apply for a fully subsidised place on the [Education and Training Foundation's #APConnect Skylark Pathway: Practitioner Led Professional Learning](#), organised by touchconsulting Ltd and partners.

Participation carries with it a grant of £3,000 and places are available for up to 30 organisations.

The Skylark Pathway aims to:

- establish Advanced Practitioners (APs)¹ as leaders in leading professional learning to support quality improvements in teaching and learning
- enable APs to lead the drive for educational excellence, through networking and knowledge sharing
- extend appreciation of the AP role as values-driven leadership, in line with the #APConnect [‘Christmas Tree’ model](#).

You'll discover more about #APConnect [here](#). The programme has innovated year on year, to provide a blend of expert-led CPD and practitioner-led professional learning, such as the hugely successful AP-led Networks, now incorporated into the Skylark Pathway along with the Practice Development Groups of the last few years.

Introduction

The Skylark Programme is **professional learning**² led by APs. You will run a programme of ideas sharing and network events in your organisation, or as a partnership of two or more organisations. This extension of your AP roles challenges you to embed values, functions, ideas, and trail-blazing practices that have been cultivated over three years of the #APConnect programme and apply them to transformative effect.

The £3,000 grant will enable you to increase the visibility and traction of the AP role by:

1. opening and running reflective spaces ([Ideas Rooms](#) or [Action Learning Sets](#))

¹ Please note that the AP role has at least 44 different designations across FE (source: APDigital Research, 2021). Don't get hung up on the label. The Skylark pathway is designed for those in AP-type roles with some responsibilities for supporting others to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

² Professional Learning (**peer led events e.g.**, practice constellations, knowledge exchanges, teach meets, action learning sets, Ideas rooms etc.).

2. running [AP-led Networks](#) including knowledge exchanges (e.g. [#FESwapShop](#)) in which FE practitioners lead professional development sessions based on their own practice, and practices of their peers.
3. participating in the Skylark PD programme to support you (and your Skylark team) to organise, run and evaluate a programme of professional learning from Oct – Mar 2022, and beyond
4. joining an expansive community of practice (#APConnect's 'Constellation C'), to pool energy and refresh ideas.

This approach pollinates knowledge and ideas throughout the organisation/partnership and outwards through communities of practice. It taps into contemporary research, thinking and practice, enabling a dynamic and critical approach to teaching, learning and assessment. The collaborative approach resists '*gobackery*'³ and develops practitioner agency.

Grant Funding

Each of the successful 30 organisations will receive a grant of £3,000, paid in two instalments, to deliver a practitioner led professional learning programme. The ETF expects this grant will be used to release AP time. FAQs on contracting and other topics can be viewed [here](#). Full details will be provided at the contracting stage.

Project Outline

1. Name three additional APs⁴ who will form your Skylark team⁵. All four of you will be required to attend the Skylark CPD Programme in Autumn 2021.
2. You will be the lead Skylark, and you will join the #APConnect Constellation C community of practice (if you haven't already).
3. Outline on your [application form](#) how you propose⁶ to:
 - design, deliver and evaluate a practitioner-led professional learning programme⁷ which runs from October/November 2021 to March 2022
 - ensure this programme is situated within the strategic priorities of the organisation(s).

Commitments

By becoming part of the Skylarks Pathway and receiving the £3,000 grant funding you commit to:

- recruiting 3⁸ additional team members

³ Coined by Jennifer Thetford-Kay, an AP at Shipley College. The pull of the old.

⁴ See Footnote 1, above. The ETF recommends that the three additional APs be new to the #APConnect 2021-2022 programme but recognise this may not be possible as many organisations do not have large AP teams.

⁵ If you are partnering with another small organisation, there is some flexibility on how many make up your Skylark team.

⁶ Outline only - don't worry, you get lots of support! The mandatory Skylark PD will result in a detailed, costed, and timetabled programme.

⁷ Activities to include at least one Ideas Room/Action Learning Set series, plus at least two AP-led Network events which can include Knowledge Exchanges.

⁸ See Footnote 5, above.

- all members of the Skylark team attending the Skylark PD
- your participation in Constellation C of the #APConnect community of practice.
- all Skylark team members involved with organising and evaluating a Skylarks Professional Learning programme which includes:
 - at least one series of [Ideas Rooms](#) or [Action Learning Sets](#) (minimum 3 events).
 - at least two [AP-led networks*](#); one in the autumn term (Oct – Dec 2021) and the second in the spring term (Jan – Mar 2022).

*AP-led networks can include Knowledge Exchange activities such as the [#FESwapShop](#). The network events can engage people from inside and outside your organisation.

- Submitting evidence that your Skylark AP team has engaged with 50 individuals through your Professional Learning programme. This will be via a monthly report which will be shared with you at the Skylark CPD. You will report monthly on:
 - project activity
 - names and emails of individuals engaged in the programme
 - an 'at risk' register
 - budget spend

Your organisation commits to:

- freeing up the Skylark team's time to the value of £3,000.

These commitments will form the basis of your contract, which will be shared with you via the Skylark PD. This guidance has no contractual status.

Support

You will be supported throughout by the touchconsulting Ltd and PDN team. As part of the Constellations, you will have access to your own thinking spaces (Ideas Rooms) and workshops via the [Festival Fridays](#) programme.

Timelines

Closing date for applications
(round 2)

5pm, Wednesday 13 October 2021

Application link

<https://bit.ly/Skylarks2021>

Application queries

joss@touchconsulting.net
@LouMycroft via Twitter

FAQs

<https://touchconsulting.net/faqs-skylark-pathway/>

Annex - Application Questions

We have listed the application questions below to help you prepare in advance of your [electronic](#) submission. This must be submitted no later than 5pm on Wednesday 13 October 2021.

Please note:

- Q13 requires a response from a senior manager.
- All questions are compulsory except for question 7.

Section 1: Skylark Application

1. Organisation name(s)
If applying as a partnership, please indicate the lead organisation touchconsulting Ltd will be contracting with.
2. Company Number or UKPRN of lead organisation
3. Skylark Team Lead (name and email address)
4. Skylark Team Member 1 (name and email address)
5. Skylark Team Member 2 (name and email address)
6. Skylark Team Member 3 (name and email address)
7. Additional Skylark Team Members if applicable (names and email addresses)

Section 2: Your Ideas for the Skylark Pathway Practitioner Led Professional Learning

Please share with us your initial ideas. Your Skylark team will have opportunities to finalise plans during the mandatory Skylark PD resulting in a detailed, costed, and timetabled programme.

8. What do you want to achieve? (max 150 words)
9. What is your outline plan? (max 150 words)
N.B You are expected to engage 50 practitioners via a programme of professional learning to include a series of Ideas Rooms or Action Learning Sets (min of 3 events), at least two AP-led networks; one in the autumn term (Oct – Dec 2021) and the second in the Spring term (Jan – Mar 2022). AP-led networks can include Knowledge Exchange activities. The professional learning events can engage practitioners from inside and outside your organisation. Your Skylark team must participate in the Skylark CPD (Oct/Nov 2021).
10. How does this fit with the organisation's/department's strategy and mission? (max 250 words)
Please note the ETF want to know how you plan to support the development of English and ESOL teaching and learning, and/or how you plan to support the embedding of maths and English for vocational teachers.
11. How will you engage 50 practitioners? (max 150 words)
12. What support are you looking for, from Constellation C? (max 150 words)

Section 3: Senior Manager

13. How will you ensure that the £3,000 grant will be spent in line with the Education and Training Foundation's expectation, that it is used to free up the Skylark Team's time?
14. Senior manager (name and email address)