

APPRENTICESHIP WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

JANUARY 2024

CREATED BY:



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) Programme..... | 1 |
| | |
| EXPLORING APPRENTICESHIP DELIVERY | 1 |
| Year 2 Collaborative Projects - Aims, Outcomes and Possible Outputs | 1 |
| | |
| THEMES | 2 |
| Why Get Involved | 2 |
| The Research Framework..... | 3 |
| Impact Measurement | 4 |
| Assessment Criteria and Process | 5 |
| | |
| MAKING A PROJECT PROPOSAL | 6 |
| Identifying a theme for investigation and specifying your research questions | 6 |
| Outputs..... | 6 |
| Building your Project Consortium | 7 |
| Eligibility Criteria | 7 |
| TIMETABLE | 8 |
| | |
| MANAGING YOUR PROJECT | 9 |
| Project Roles | 9 |
| Project Leads..... | 9 |
| Project Consortium Members | 9 |
| Project Initiation | 9 |
| Project Team and Mentor Kick-Off Day | 10 |
| Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion | 10 |
| Value of Grants and Financial Management..... | 10 |
| Data Protection and Cyber Security | 11 |
| Terms and Conditions..... | 11 |

INTRODUCTION

The Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) Programme

The first phase of the AWD programme launched in 2021 to support staff at all levels and roles delivering apprenticeships across Further and Higher Education settings. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), the AWD programme is being delivered by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) in partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC), Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), Strategic Development Network (SDN), and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC), supported by SQW as an independent evaluation partner.

This work is a key activity the Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned to drive quality improvement across apprenticeships and is a key part of their quality strategy. The programme will provide industry-relevant Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to apprenticeship providers, employers, and their workforces to ensure training needs are met, to enable the delivery of high-quality teaching and training that will equip apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for industry-specific roles.

During year 1 of the AWD Programme, organisations involved in apprenticeship delivery were invited to apply for practitioner improvement (small-scale individual projects) and collaborative project (larger in size, involving a minimum of three partners) opportunities. The objectives of these projects were to identify, explore and disseminate:

1. Effective approaches for enabling high quality apprenticeship delivery.
2. Effective approaches for the development of staff who deliver apprenticeships.
3. Effective practice in the delivery of apprenticeships

EXPLORING APPRENTICESHIP DELIVERY

Year 2 Collaborative Projects - Aims, Outcomes and Possible Outputs

The objectives of Year 2 projects are to “develop and manage opportunities for providers and employers to share learning and development activities, collaborating as needed for maximum impact”.

Projects will need to focus on a specific issue/challenge based on evidence, ensuring that outputs/resources are transferable and accessible to other providers throughout the sector.

We have provided five themes for you to consider in your application – these are based on the DfE quality strategy and feedback received during year 1 AWD Training Needs Analysis and focus group activities, which highlighted the key challenges/barriers for the sector.

THEMES

| |
|--|
| Tracking Learner Progression/Data |
| A project looking at how can providers (involving input from tech/e-portfolio organisations) improve the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to better analyse and harness learner progression (inc. BIL and PPED) to ensure effective intervention. |
| Sector Specific Barriers |
| A project to consider identifying any sector-specific barriers/challenges to increase apprenticeship completions where high withdrawals occur i.e., are there good practice/targeted intervention techniques/strategies for low retention in some sectors (i.e., care/construction), or specific ways you select and/or work with your employers/learners that can be highlighted and shared to reduce withdrawals and drive engagement? |
| Grade 1 Ofsted Providers – Mentoring and Modelling/Showcasing Excellence |
| A project with a Grade 1 Ofsted Provider leading, to impart knowledge and experience of some examples of measures they have put in place to increase apprentice satisfaction, improve quality, and programme development, ensure staff retention and learner retention through to EPA |
| Functional Skills |
| A project to consider how to reduce the impact of Functional Skills as a barrier to apprenticeship completion, particularly taking account of the costs and time within delivery and funding and sharing of good practice to how to remove emotional fear for learners of revisiting maths/English. This could be looking at providers' ability to skill scan and review reasonable adjustments/ALN identification. |
| Provider and Employer Collaboration/Resources |
| A project looking at how to improve onboarding processes for apprentices and employers with some resources (outputs) to ensure understanding from both sides, and why a "tripartite approach" to effective CEIAG as part of onboarding has a positive effect on achievement data. |

Why Get Involved

A collaborative project will give you the chance to explore approaches for improving the quality of a specific issue/challenge for apprenticeship delivery.

You will have a "safe space" and a funding grant, to subsidise project work with colleagues to explore new and emerging practices.

Projects are collaborative, research focused, evidence and output based. The previous round of AWD projects has provided compelling evidence that intensive collaboration with other practitioners does result in improved teaching, training, learning and assessment.

You will have the opportunity to create or use an existing network of like-minded colleagues working in similar areas that you will be able to draw on, build on and sustain as you continue to deliver apprenticeships.

Projects should generate a wealth of knowledge and resources, and a range of materials that will

be of interest and use to practitioners, managers, and leaders across the sector. You will have a chance to help define what constitutes outstanding practice in apprenticeship delivery; to create examples and models of effective practice; and to produce resources for cross-sector practitioners who are delivering apprenticeships.

The Research Framework

All projects within this phase of the programme will sit within an overall framework that has two elements: **collaborative inquiry** and **impact measurement**.

Collaborative Inquiry

The projects will be supported by using a collaborative inquiry model. The features of the model that projects will need to adopt will:

1. Be evidence-based, drawing on actual experiences aligned to a key theme, develop new knowledge and understanding.
2. Produce solution-focused with practical outcomes, and robust resources, which can be widely shared across the apprenticeship sector.
3. Allow a safe space to test new approaches allowing practitioners freedom to define and trial methods with a variety of possible outcomes, without fear of failure.
4. Adopt a similar process across all projects based on the following:
 - a. Aligning to a key theme for investigation and specifying research questions
 - b. Exploration of project partner existing knowledge and perspectives
 - c. Collecting relevant existing materials
 - d. Searching for possible outstanding practice and solutions
 - e. Inquiry and research in practice
 - f. Review, evaluation and definition of outstanding practice and solutions
 - g. Producing tangible outputs/resources that can be shared across the sector.
 - h. Review of outcomes and impacts, and process evaluation
5. Be realistic and deliverable, within the period of this programme activity phase and within the delivery context that the participants are working in.
6. Be democratic, with all project partners having the right to express their own thoughts and values in the conduct and results of the inquiry.
7. Be measurable, relating directly to the impact measures.
8. Be supported by an AWD project mentor throughout the research.

Impact Measurement

We will seek to measure impact within the AWD consortia, at programme, project, and participant level, and beyond the programme for the wider sector. Most importantly for apprentices and their employers. We expect each project team to be able to generate and measure their contribution at each of these levels.

We will ask applicants to outline what they expect the outcomes and impact of their project to be, and how they intend to measure this. The AWD mentor will work with each of the project leads, at the start of the project, to agree these and ensure the process for capturing this information is robust and links into wider AWD programme evaluation.

As a summary, we will expect your outcome/impact indicators to link into the below:

| | Outcome Impact indicators (participants) | Outcome Impact indicators (Apprentices and employers) | Process indicators for the research (participants) |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Programme | Systematic improvements throughout the apprenticeship learner journey | Impact on reducing withdrawals (measured as a %) Apprentices consistently experiencing high-quality learning experience in the areas of investigation. Effective employer engagement and contribution | Collaboration between projects and with other elements of the AWD programme Participation of a range of organisations and individuals that reflect the diversity of the sector. |
| Projects / Direct Participants | Embedding new knowledge and practical approaches Direct improvements in apprenticeship delivery Embedding Professional Standards | Apprentices consistently experiencing high quality learning experience areas of investigation. Effective employer engagement and contribution. | Effectiveness of the research-based approach in generating knowledge, outputs, and resources. Collaboration between peers within and across providers. On-going collaborative working. Commitment of senior leaders in participating organisations to create sustainable impact from projects. |
| Indirect Participants | Embedding new knowledge and practical approaches Improvements in teaching, training, learning and assessment | Effective employer engagement and contribution | Transfer of effective practice and robust outputs/resources between providers |

Assessment Criteria and Process

All applications will be assessed by an assessment panel, made up of representatives from the AWD consortia partnership. All applications will be reviewed and scored by at least two assessment panel members, before being moderated and final decisions being made.

The Assessment Panel will use the following assessment criteria to guide their scoring decisions: (Numbers in brackets relate to sections in the application form). The Department for Education (DfE) will also review shortlisted applications.

| Criteria | Max score | Weighting |
|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| Eligibility (1) (2) Are the project / participants eligible for grant funding? | <i>Qualifying criteria</i> | |
| Research Question / Rationale / Fit with the programme (4) Are the research questions and the rationale for their selection clear? Do projects fit within the key themes identified for exploration? | <i>Qualifying criteria</i> | |
| Group demographics and experience (2) (3) Does the proposed make-up and diversity of the group, and their experience / expertise in the delivery of apprenticeships indicate that the project will be effective and well managed? | 5 | 4 |
| Approach (5) (6) Do the methods / approach set out in the proposal indicate that the project will be effective in their methodology? How will the group work collaboratively, and how will the project lead manage the project group? | 5 | 5 |
| Outputs (7) What new knowledge and understanding of apprenticeship delivery is the project aiming to create? What tangible outputs are expected to emerge from the project? How will these be effective, accessible, and transferable to other practitioners? | 5 | 7 |
| Outcomes and impact (8) Will project proposals generate and be able to measure impact in relation to the indicators (page 6)? | 5 | 4 |
| Value for money Do the proposed activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact (and any added value) represent value for money? | 5 | 4 |
| Balance Will the project sit alongside other high-scoring projects to help achieve an AWD programme that is well balanced and high-impact? | | |

It is important that successful projects form a well-balanced AWD programme overall, that achieves maximum reach, outcomes, and impact for the sector. Scores in themselves will therefore not determine the final success or otherwise of the application.

Where your application is unsuccessful, we are happy to provide feedback on why this has been the case. Applicants, however, will not be able to appeal the decision or ask for a re-assessment.

MAKING A PROJECT PROPOSAL

Identifying a theme for investigation and specifying your research questions

Prior to presenting your proposals each collaborative project team will need to define and agree a specific research question.

This must:

- a. Relate to one of the key themes (see page 2) and precisely explain a robust project proposal that will address improving the quality of apprenticeship delivery.
- b. Specify precise questions for investigation
- c. Clearly set out the outputs/resources that will be produced, along with a clear project plan describing how this will be achieved
- d. Describe the context within which the project will be conducted.

Outputs

Practical Outputs

Each project will aim to produce practical outputs that can be widely shared across the apprenticeship sector.

The types of outputs you might produce could be, for example, tools, templates, case studies, checklists, procedures, process documentation, guidance, etc.

Outputs could be produced in a variety of media in print, audio, video, app, or other formats.

Projects do not need to limit themselves to a single output. The richness of the potential outputs set out in the proposal will be an important factor in assessing proposals.

All project outputs need to be checked for accessibility and submitted in an editable format.

Research and Evaluation Outputs

Each project will need to produce:

1. Concise monthly monitoring to a standard template
2. Two short formative evaluation reports during the project
3. A final summative evaluation report in September 2024.

Submitting Your Application

The application form can be downloaded as a separate document [here](#). Each section of the form

relates to the assessment criteria. Please keep within the word limit – any words over the limit will not be taken into consideration. No additional attachments or annexes are permitted.

Applications must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 16 February 2024.

Any applications received after this time/date will not be assessed.

All questions about the AWD programme and/or application process can be submitted to cswales@aelp.org.uk. We will aim to answer questions within two business days. All questions and answers will be anonymised and published as an open-access downloadable document [available here](#). Deadline for questions is **5pm on Wednesday 07 February 2024**.

Professional Standards

The Foundation's Professional Standards underpin all research activities and support for practitioners: [ETF Professional Standards](#)

It is important that you, and all project participants, have read and understand these Professional Standards. We expect these to be reflected in your application - in particular, in the way you design, conduct, and evaluate your project.

Your project mentor will explain the ETF Professional Standards to each project lead, as part of the project kick off day. We will also expect project leads to conduct a similar reflective session with all project participants during their first project meeting and discuss how the Professional Standards will be embedded in all project activities and outputs, and how you will measure progress against the Professional Standards.

Project leads will be asked to report on this, as part of their monthly and evaluative reports.

Building your Project Consortium

Proposals could originate from new and/or existing partners who have previous experience of collaborative projects and/or networks of organisations,

However, all projects must have a "home" with an eligible lead organisation who will be responsible for project management, reporting and delivery timescales.

An online briefing to explain the guidance, application process and themes will be delivered on **Monday 29 January at 1pm**. You can register your interest by emailing cswales@aelp.org.uk by **5pm on Friday 26 January 2024** noting the name, email address and organisation of the person that will be attending.

Eligibility Criteria

1. The **project lead** organisation delivers apprenticeship training and/or end-point assessments and is **approved** on the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR). The project lead is aware that they are responsible for meeting all project management, reporting and delivery timescales.
2. The project group includes practitioners from at least three organisations that participate in, or

*support, front-line delivery of apprenticeship training and/or assessment, i.e., collaboration with employers and *wider stakeholders delivering or directly supporting apprenticeship delivery

3. Each participant organisation has agreed to be involved in this collaboration and are ready to commence work on this project from the project award date.
4. All resources produced during this project will be robust, transferable, and accessible to other providers to ensure that project findings and outputs can be shared across the sector.
5. The project lead agrees to attend a dissemination event in October/November 2024 to share outputs, resources, and key findings with the sector
6. Each group must include at least three organisations that participate in, or support, front-line delivery of apprenticeship training and/or assessment. By 'front-line delivery' we mean those who have a day-to-day role in directly supporting, training, or assessing the apprentice and/or are collaborating with the employer.

Practitioners could be from FE colleges, independent providers, employer-providers, specialist colleges, universities, third sector organisations, local authority providers, end-point assessment organisations, or other related organisations i.e., employer participants, employed or free-lance trainers/assessors/coaches/curriculum design and employer engagement staff, network bodies or others.

Multiple applications

Eligible practitioners / organisations may be involved in more than one application if they are materially different. If there is found to be a duplication of the same application, focus or activities, this is likely to disqualify all such applications from further review. It is unlikely that multiple applications from a single organisation or consortia would be approved as we want to achieve maximum spread, impact, and value for money.

TIMETABLE

| Activity | Date |
|--|----------------------|
| Application and Guidance issued via ETF website | 17 January 2024 |
| Live / recorded webinar briefing published | 29 January 2024 |
| Deadline for questions to cswales@aelp.org.uk | 07 February 2024 |
| Proposals to be received no later than 5pm | 16 February 2024 |
| Assessment and appraisal of proposals | w/c 19 February 2024 |
| Grants awarded / project lead and mentor contact commences | 12 March 2024 |
| Live online briefing session 14:00 -15:00 | 18 March 2024 |
| Mentor and Project lead kick off meeting | Before 31 March 2024 |

MANAGING YOUR PROJECT

Project Roles

The key roles in each project will be:

Project Leads

- Project Manager
- Lead the team and maintain momentum during the project.
- Arrange face-to-face meetings and regular online catch-up points with the project team
- Monitoring of project activities and submission of monthly report
- Production of a case study to highlight the benefits of your project outcomes/outputs to others
- Grant and project budget management
- Be a practitioner researcher.

Project Consortium Members

- Practitioner participating in the research and output production processes.
- Providing peer support within the project
- Reflect on their role as practitioner researchers.

As a minimum, we would expect all participants to meet monthly throughout the project, with other regular contact throughout, as required (e.g., online meetings, email exchanges, surveys, Foundation portal).

It is also important that each participant has senior management permission / buy-in to collaborate in this way.

AWD Project Mentors

Providing advice and guidance to the project lead with:

- Understanding research and project processes
- Assisting with project-specific evaluation indicators
- Assisting with project set-up
- Attending the initial meeting of the project team to provide briefing and support with methodology, requirements, and professional standards.
- Monitoring project progress through monthly reporting
- Project output production

Project mentors will **not** be available for project administration or delivery.

Project Initiation

All successful applicants will be notified on Tuesday **12 March 2024**. The project lead will be contacted soon after this date by your assigned project mentor.

Applications may be approved subject to amendments. These will be agreed with the project lead before any agreements or payments are issued.

Contract agreements will be issued to each project lead and signed (by both parties), along with a payment schedule.

Project Team and Mentor Kick-Off Day

A short online briefing session with all projects leads and mentors will be held on **Monday 18 March 2024 (2pm – 4pm)**. Following this, each project team and mentor will meet, either in person or online, to kick-off the development phase of the project, which will cover:

- Programme and project management
- Research process and outputs
- Discuss the Professional Standards and how these should be embedded.
- Meet your project mentor and agree outcome and impact indicators.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The AWD Consortia are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

We expect each collaborative project to consider the equality, diversity and inclusion implications for practitioners, apprentices, and employers, as part of their line of enquiry. We will ask you to reflect this in all outputs and reports. This will be considered when assessing applications and as noted above, EDI-focused projects proposals are welcome.

It is important that all project participants, and in particular project leads, consider the varying needs of people from all protected characteristic groups in all aspects of project delivery. This, for example, means:

- Sourcing meeting venues that meet minimum accessibility standards and can make reasonable adjustments.
- Providing materials, papers, or discussion points in advance, and in different formats, where requested
- Using accessible online meeting / teleconference platforms It is also important that all project materials and outputs:
 - Written in plain English.
 - Conform to readability guidelines (e.g., uses accessible font sizes/colours)
 - Are suitable, where possible, for screen-readers
 - Reduce perceived / actual barriers e.g., using examples / images that represent diverse groups.

Value of Grants and Financial Management

The grant value available for each collaborative project is **up to £40,000**.

It is expected that the core purpose and activities conducted by each project group will sit outside of VAT requirements and will therefore be treated as grant funding. If you think that any costs are likely to incur VAT, it is important that you make this clear in your budget when applying. Any such costs will need to sit within the total budget (maximum of £40,000).

Guidance on VAT rules can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-guide-notice-700>.

It is important that project leads have agreement from all project participants that they are happy with the budget split submitted in the application form (as well as their activities and level of commitment).

Contract agreements will be issued to each project lead and signed (by both parties), along with a payment schedule.

Data Protection and Cyber Security

Protocols will be in place for programme data handling (electronic and physical) in accordance with the data protection legislation.

All project leads (and anyone else within the project who is required to store and/or share data from the project) will need to ensure appropriate security and password protections are in place for all servers, computers/devices, documents and software being used to host or share data.

Back-up copies should be made, and no project data should be shared with any organisation or participant outside of the programme, unless express permission has been given by those concerned.

We also expect you to have all relevant cyber security software and internal monitoring checks in place.

This will be reflected in the contract agreements signed with all projects leads.

Terms and Conditions

1. It is the project lead's responsibility to ensure all members of the group agree with the proposed budget split submitted to us as part of the application, along with their role, level of commitment, outputs, and timescales. It is also important that each participant has senior management permission / buy-in to collaborate in this way.
2. All grant funding must be used solely for the purposes of the collaborative project.
3. The project lead organisation must have good financial health and may be required to provide evidence (such as audited accounts) to prove this is the case.

FUNDED BY



Department
for Education

Delivered by:

