



## **City of Edinburgh Council – Network of Employment Support and Training (NEST) Grants Programme 2025-2028**

### **Background**

The City of Edinburgh Council currently issue a number of grants relating to employability support delivery in Edinburgh. These grants, largely funded via Scottish Government's [No One Left Behind \(NOLB\)](#) and [Tackling Child Poverty](#) funding streams, are due to come to an end in March 2025.

The Local Employment Partnership (LEP) has reviewed the strategic direction and available data to assess need in the city, and have undertaken a period of significant co-production to better understand support needs in the city. As a result of this co-production and review, a new specification of service for third-party grants for 2025-28 has been developed.

The City of Edinburgh Council and the LEP would now like to invite applications for the NEST Grants Programme for 2025-2028. The grants will fund work which supports key target groups as outlined in the Local Employability Partnership Strategy 2024-2026, who are experiencing poverty and are looking to progress towards work or in work. The aim of this grants programme is to reduce the impact that poverty has on Edinburgh's citizens and to empower people through fair employment. The NEST programme aims to provide funding to, and work with, organisations as part of the "Joined Up for Jobs" network.

### **Overview of grant programme**

Significant co-production activities have informed the grant making process. This includes focus groups and surveys with service users, service providers and other stakeholders. Applicants are advised to consult the results of this co-production on the [Joined up for Jobs Website](#) for more detail but, broadly summarised, participants in the co-production have told us that:

- Services should be person-centred and holistic, meeting a variety of needs.
- Though most people want to access services in person an online offer is also useful.
- Services should support with gaining skills/qualification/work experience/volunteering, moving into work, support in work and linking to other support services.
- Services should be inclusive and accessible.

### **Client Group**

The NEST Grants Programme should support key client groups outlined in the LEP Strategy 2024-26:

- Clients with health issues, and/or disabilities

- Clients struggling with in-work poverty
- Ethnic minority groups
- Over 50s
- Prison leavers

The latest available data shows that an estimated 17% of people in Edinburgh were living in poverty in the period to 2022, including 20% of all children. As such, the NEST Grants Programme will also support parents from the six priority groups under the Scottish Government's policy of Tackling Child Poverty:

- Lone parent families
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with a mother aged under 25
- Families with a child under one
- Families with 3 or more children

Bidders are expected to outline which groups their application supports and how these groups will be reached and engaged.

## Delivery

Significant co-production has highlighted the main support which service users, service providers and stakeholders see as being crucial to those looking to engage in services. The NEST grants programme would like to encourage projects and organisations who can demonstrate the following:

- **Person-centred approach.** Applicants should show us that projects are person-centred, for both participants and staff. Participants should be fully engaged in the project and how their individual needs will be assessed and met. Staff and volunteers should be treated well, maximising their individual abilities by being managed effectively, well-trained and supported to create a knowledgeable and caring team.
- **Holistic services.** Applicants should demonstrate that projects are holistic and link to other services or support clients wish to access. Delivery of your projects should have an employability focus but should also link participants to support with childcare, language skills, accredited advice on finances and benefits, and health and wellbeing including mental health support.
- **Support to progress into work and support while in work.** The overwhelming support need identified by clients was preparing for, finding and sustaining work. The Council has a range of contracted providers, through the Blended Employability Service, which offer this service but there is clear demand for further support. Applicants should demonstrate how they will prepare clients for work and help them to find work. It will

also be important for applicants to demonstrate that there is aftercare for clients and support in work, where appropriate, or making referrals into in-work support services.

- **Skills-based support.** A lack of skills and qualifications and a need for sector-specific training was highlighted by both clients and stakeholders. Funding has been ring-fenced under NOLB to continue delivery of the Vocational Training Framework, however further grant applications to complement skills training are welcomed. Applicants should demonstrate how their service will support people to progress towards further/higher education to improve their chances of gaining skills and qualifications, or how they themselves will deliver skills-based interventions. The cost of delivering qualifications can be included as eligible costs within your project budget.
- **Local knowledge and links.** Applicants should show us that their organisation is at the heart of the community it serves, be this a geographic community or community of interest. They should be able to demonstrate the links they have to other services in the area, which develops the ability to engage with clients and provide a holistic service to participants. Service design and review should involve not only participants but local stakeholders. A range of delivery methods should also be demonstrated, where appropriate. This can include in-person meetings, both at providers' offices and in locations clients find most convenient/comfortable, as well as support over the phone/online. Clients must live in the City of Edinburgh.
- **Expected Outcomes.** Organisations are expected to support clients to progress along the Strategic Skills Pipeline. As such, expected outcomes include jobs, in-work progressions, further/higher education, re-engagement with education and progressions to other employability provision further along the Pipeline. All job outcomes should seek to ensure clients are being supported into fair work which is also going to be sustainable. Outputs to support clients' progression along the pipeline include training, work placements and volunteering.

### How to apply

Capital City Partnership, who are administering the application process on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council, have recently launched a [new grant application portal](#). All applications must be submitted via the new portal. Applicants should register for the portal as soon as possible. Should there be any issues registering with the portal, please contact [contracts@capitalcitypartnership.org](mailto:contracts@capitalcitypartnership.org).

Organisations can make several applications, but each should be for a separate and distinct project and must aim to support a different cohort of clients.

Grants will be awarded for a maximum of three years. The total budget available for the NEST Grants Programme will be dependent on the annual Scottish Government allocation of funds to local authorities. Applicants are advised to consider sustainability of funding as there can be no certainty of continuation of funding.



The maximum award for each application will be £100,000 per annum in the first year. The current average amount allocated to projects in 2024-25 is c.£63,000, based on a maximum award request of £75,000 during the previous application process.

An additional 3% per annum will be included as an inflationary increase to all successful applicants. For example, if a successful bidder requests £100,000 in year one of delivery, then they will be provided with £103,000 in year two and £106,090 in year three. This will be subject to satisfactory project performance and local authority budget allocation from Scottish Government.

All applications should make reference to the Strategic Skills Pipeline and which part(s) of the pipeline service delivery is targeted towards. Applications should also reference the Edinburgh Pipeline and how any bids would complement, rather than duplicate, existing services such as Blended Employability Service. Partnership bids are welcomed but a lead partner should complete the grant application form.

Capital City Partnership can offer optional feedback on draft applications. Draft applications for discussion must be fully completed and submitted to CCP prior to any meeting, with the deadline for draft applications being Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Feedback on your application will be provided between Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September and Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The deadline for applications is **Noon, Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### Timeline

- Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 – Application process opens
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024 – Deadline for draft applications
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September – Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024 – Draft application feedback
- Noon Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – Application process closes
- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024 – recommendations discussed by Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

### What happens next?

Upon submission of your application via the [grants portal](#), an auto-generated acknowledgement email confirming receipt of your application will be sent to you.

A scoring panel made up of members from the Local Employability Partnership will review your application, considering the key criteria outlined in this specification, while following the Scoring and Selection Criteria which is part of the application pack. The scoring panel will then hold a moderation meeting to arrive at a consensus score and to select the most appropriate applications to fit the programme of support Edinburgh's citizens require.



These applications will then be recommended to the City of Edinburgh Council's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for approval. If the Committee approve the recommendations, all applicants will be informed of the decision.

*If you are unsuccessful:*

You will receive an email to let you know you've been unsuccessful. You will also be offered a chance to get feedback to explain why your application has not been successful.

*If you are successful:*

You will receive an email you to let you know you have been successful, and an initial meeting will be set up as soon as possible to discuss your application and any minor changes that may be required. You will then receive an award letter and funding agreement, which will include full details of the award, the terms and conditions of our funding, payment schedule and any specific conditions that need to be met prior to releasing payment.

All funded organisations under NEST will be required to track clients and outcomes via HELIX, our management information system. You will receive training on HELIX, including details of reporting requirements for NOLB funding. We'll also agree how to work together over the course of your funding to maximise the potential of the project, including joined up working with other successful applicants and other key partners.

Once you're ready to start, have signed the funding agreement and returned it with any additional information asked for, the first instalment of your funding will be paid in advance of the first quarter of delivery. This will take place on or after 1 April 2025, when the project is officially set to begin, subject to the annual Scottish Government allocation of NOLB and Tackling Child Poverty funds to local authorities being available.

If you have any questions about making an application, please contact [contracts@capitalcitypartnership.org](mailto:contracts@capitalcitypartnership.org). A number of guidance documents have been provided as part of our application pack to make the process and expectations clear.