Highland Council on behalf of the

Highland Employability Partnership

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Innovation Challenge Fund

2022-23

**GUIDELINES**



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| **The Highland Employability Partnership (HEP)** |

No One Left Behind (NOLB) aims to change the employability system in Scotland to make it more adaptable, responsive and person-centred. In Highland this will be delivered via the Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) and 3 sub-Highland Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) in North Highland, West Highland and the Inner Moray Firth.

The Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) was re-established in 2021. It is a multi-agency approach to ensure that partners work collaboratively to deliver employability services across the Highland Council area. Through collective leadership, the Partners aim to develop shared objectives to service design which addresses the need of both clients and employers and embraces greater integration and alignment of resources in order to simplify and maximise opportunities.

The aim of the HEP is to work with individuals and employers to raise as many Highland residents as possible out of poverty through sustainable and fair work; supporting those who face multiple barriers into employment and enabling progression out of poverty for those who are already in work.

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| **About the Fund** |

Utilising Scottish Government funding in support of No One Left Behind in the Highlands, HEP partners have agreed to run a one-off Innovation Challenge Fund in financial year 2022/23 to develop innovative approaches to support people experiencing particular challenges which prevent them from progressing towards and within employment.

The fund is open to public sector and constituted third-sector organisations who have an operational base within Highland, to apply for funds of between £10,000 and £50,000.

The funding is available until March 2023 and therefore only projects that can complete or are well underway before the end of March 2023 will be considered. Projects that would fit the criteria are those that:

* Provide short term work that adds value to existing projects;
* Pilot a new approach in a particular area or for a particular client group;
* Undertake feasibility/ planning work for further development.

The purpose being to provide short-term investment in new and innovative ways of working which will have a long-term positive impact on the delivery of employability services in the Highland Council area, in particular enabling engagement with priority groups including:

* People for whom disability is a significant employability barrier
* People with protected characteristics, who are experiencing inequality, to enhance participation in employability services and / or employment. [[1]](#footnote-1)
* Working parents seeking to up-skills and develop a career path

Applications for the continuation of existing projects are not eligible, except where the project is an additional short-term intervention that will have a long-term positive impact.

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| **Project Requirements** |

**Who can apply?**

The fund is open to public sector and constituted third-sector organisations, delivering employability services to people living in the Highland Council area.

Organisations may submit a maximum of one project per organisation for this fund.

**Who cannot apply?**

* Individuals
* Commercial organisations
* Organisations not planning to deliver the project in the Highland Council area and for the benefit of people living in the area.

**Project Timeframe**

The fund will support projects which will start between 1st November 2022 and 31st January 2023. All must be substantially completed before or legally committed by the 31st March 2023 and fully completed by no later than 30th June 2023.

**Financial support**

We anticipate that the fund will be able to support a minimum of 9 projects. Applications may be made for a minimum of £10,000 and a maximum of £50,000, with up to 80% of project costs supported. The remaining 20% can be made up as in kind / volunteer costs and / or with cash.

You must ensure however, that none of the remaining 20% is made up as cash contributed by Highland Council, the Scottish Government or the European Social Fund.

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| **Making an application** |

All projects which contribute to wages or fees during the delivery period of the project, must pay at least the Scottish Living Wage (currently £9.90 per hour)

All applicants must apply via email, using the form which is available in word format below.



When applying you must include (or provide a link to) the required supporting documents listed below:

All applicants

* Most recent annual report
* Child protection and / or Safeguarding policy
* Equal opportunities policy or statement

Third sector organisations

* Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association
* Most recent annual report and accounts
* A bank statement to prove that the organisation has an active UK bank account at the time of application
* A list of committee members or trustees

Public sector organisations

* A copy of the most recent Corporate Plan

Application forms and supporting documents must be submitted by 5pm on Monday 24th October 2022 to employability@highland.gov.uk

Applications which don’t use the application form and / or don’t provide the supporting documentation outlined by the closing date will not be assessed.

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| **What happens next?** |

**Stage 1 – Acknowledgment**

Once an application has been received, you will be sent an acknowledgement within 2 working days. If you haven’t received this after this timeframe, please contact employability@highland.gov.uk

**Stage 2 – Eligibility check**

To qualify projects will need to:

* Demonstrate that they can be complete before or legally committed by the 31st March 2023.
* Are based on evidence of community engagement in identifying need and have clear purpose and targeting of activity to meet local needs;
* Demonstrate partnership working and engagement in design and delivery;
* Evidence the impact expected – numbers of beneficiaries, evidence of progression, training or employment outcomes;
* Evidence the impact on priority client groups and disadvantaged communities – e.g. make use of community assets, provides additional or improved facilities, amenity or service delivery;
* Evidence additionality – service provided adds value and does not substitute for, or displace services which otherwise are available;
* Evidence the organisation has the capacity to manage and deliver;
* Capacity to undertake end of project reporting, including relevant financial reports;
* Demonstrates value for money – includes commitments to ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and economy;

Before a formal assessment is undertaken, the following checks will be made. Applications which do not fulfil these eligibility criteria will not be assessed.

* The application was submitted by 5pm on Monday 24th October 2022, using the application form.
* The organisation has an operational base within Highland and the project that will benefit people living in the area.
* The project will commence between 1st November 2022 and 31st January 2023 with expectation of substantially completing by 31st March 2023 but recognise project may roll over into 2023/24 for full completion.
* The project will be fully completed by no later than 30th June 23.
* The total sum of money applied for is between £10,000 and £50,000
* The application is for no more than 80% of the total costs.
* The source of the remaining 20% is clearly outlined as in-kind and / or cash.
* The project isn’t already in receipt of cash from Highland Council, the Scottish Government or the European Social Fund.
* Full projected income and expenditure outlined in the application.
* Projects which contribute to wages or fees during the delivery period of the project, must pay at least the Scottish Living Wage (currently £9.90 per hour)
* All supporting documents or links to them provided with the application.
* Application signed by two persons from the organisation

**Stage 3 – Assessment**

Once it has been established that the application is eligible, formal assessment will begin. This will be undertaken by representatives from 3 of the Highland Employability Partnership partners.

The assessment will be in four sections as shown below, with the detailed questions for each section laid out in the application form. Each section will be scored 0 to 4 as shown below. For applications to be approved, each section must achieve a score of a least 2 i.e. satisfactory.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| No answer | Unsatisfactory | Satisfactory | Good | Very Good |

All sections are important, but each has a weighting as shown below, indicating the importance of the information in relation to the others.

Finally, the score and the weighting for each section will be multiplied together to give a total out of 40. Applications will be ranked highest to lowest, with funding allocated in that order until funds are fully utilised.

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|  | **Score 0-4**(4 being the highest) | **Weighting**(1-3) | **Total**(Score x Weighting) |
| Section 1: The Project |  | 3 |  |
| Section 2: Innovation |  | 3 |  |
| Section 3: Ability to deliver |  | 2 |  |
| Section 4: Budget |  | 2 |  |
| **Total out of 40** |  |

**Stage 4 - Decision**

Once the assessment has been completed, applicants will be informed of the outcome – either successful or unsuccessful.

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| **If your application is successful** |

**Payments**

If your application is successful, 60% of the award will be paid out at the start of the project and once the funding agreement has been returned.

The remaining funding will be paid out once there is clear evidence that the initial 60% has been utilised as per the agreement, the project has been completed and a final report submitted. The final payment may be reduced if there is evidence that the full sum isn’t required.

There may be some flexibility to this schedule if there is a reasonable requirement.

**Recording and Monitoring**

Successful applicants will be expected to record and monitor the progress of everyone they engage with via this project for reporting purposes in a secure manner and if need be, for signposting them to other services to ensure the best outcome for the individual.

**Final Report**

At the end of the project and to claim the final payment, a final report will be required describing how the project was delivered, what outcomes were achieved, how the funding was utilised, what lessons were learned (both positive and negative) and what next steps are planned.

**Publicity**

If you are successful, you will be expected to acknowledge the support of the Scottish Government and Highland Council in any publicity. You will need to show examples of this within the final report.

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| **More information** |

If you have any queries or would like more information, email to employability@highland.gov.uk

Privacy information relating to this funding scheme can be found on the Highland Council website [here.](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1831004/employability_grant)

1. The Equality Act 2010 brought together existing equality legislation. It focuses on people with the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, sex, sexual orientation and religion and belief. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)