



**Funded by
UK Government**

HIGHLAND EMPLOYABILITY PARTNERSHIP

TEST AND LEARN GRANT FUND GUIDANCE

Delivered by Highland Council's Employability Service

Purpose of the Fund

The purpose of the grant fund is to test a new service delivery model to support unemployed people who require more intensive, longer-term support in their journey towards employment. The requirement will be to deliver a high quality, end to end, work-focussed employability support offer which is tailored to the needs of the individual.

The aim of this model is to create the right conditions for a high performing (where outputs and outcomes are achieved) and high quality (with high levels of client satisfaction) employability service, which delivers good value for money.

This 'TEST AND LEARN' will be delivered through a grant challenge fund where ongoing learning will be used to inform future service delivery requirements. Flexibility will be offered throughout the grant period to enable continuous improvement developments to the delivery model.

Client Groups

1. Eligible clients should live in the Highland Council area, be of working age, and unemployed or economically inactive, and possess at least one of the following characteristics:
 - Disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010)
 - Long-term Health Condition
 - Long-term Unemployment (over 12 months)
2. Clients should be new to the Service Provider Organisation unless agreement received from the Council's Employability Service, assessed on a case-by-case basis.
3. Clients should want to work and be assessed as being able to secure employment within 6 to 12 months of being supported.
4. The Council reserves the right to adjust client criteria during the delivery period.

Key Dates

1. Implementation Date 1st October 2023.
2. Client registration will commence, at the earliest, from 16th October 2023 until 31st March 2024, unless exceptional circumstances result in an alternative start date being agreed with the Council's Employability Service.
3. Up to 12 months service offer should be provided for each client within the period up to 31st March 2025.
4. The latest eligible date for Job Entry Outcomes will be 31st March 2025.
5. The latest eligible date for Job Sustainment Outcomes (26 weeks after Job Entry) will be 30th September 2025.
6. Please refer to the Flow Chart in **Annex A**.

Minimum Service Delivery Standards

Clients can expect to receive the following minimum service offer:

- A flexible service that is convenient and accessible.
- A minimum of 50% face to face engagement, supplemented by online delivery where appropriate.
- Delivery through a mix of one to one, group work and peer support interventions where appropriate.
- A personalised package of support that is person-centred, strengths-based and tailored to individual needs.
- Access to e-learning, job search support, job vacancies and labour market information.
- Initial contact from Service Provider within 3 days of referral.
- A meeting with a named Employment Advisor within 10 days of referral.
- Individual assessment, including a full assessment of needs and skills.
- A detailed, co-designed, outcome-focused Action Plan with job goals.
- A tailored journey that addresses employment and skills needs, with access to a relevant level of Information, Advice and Guidance, work experience opportunities and a menu of skills and employability support.
- Access to soft skills and locally tailored vocational skills development opportunities.
- Advice and support to show how clients will be better off working (better off in work calculations)
- Contact made with the client fortnightly, and a brief review of progress at least once every four weeks with a full review every 12 weeks.
- Aftercare support once in work, for at least the first 12 weeks of work. This can be light touch support and is designed to enable a client to rapidly return to the programme for support if they leave work.
- Support for up to 12 months service delivery, contact for up to 18 months for job sustainment checks.

Highland Council will undertake a sample check to ensure the service is compliant and meets the minimum service standards.

Payment Model

The payment model will be based on a fixed Service Fee per client for the delivery of the service, plus additional payments for the achievement of Job Entry and Job Sustainment Outcomes. This approach is intended to give Service Providers financial certainty for the duration of the project. The details are outlined below:

1. The total value of the Service Fee will be calculated on the approved volume of clients. Payment will be made in arrears in equal quarterly instalments, as per grant offer, over an 18-month service delivery period from 1st October 2023 to 31st March 2025.
2. Outcome-based payments for Job Entry and Job Sustainment at 26 weeks, will also be paid quarterly in arrears based on evidence of achievement. Service Providers must be able to cashflow service, acknowledging that there is a time lag in the outcome payments being made. **Please see Annex A for volumes and Service Fee amounts.**
3. Service Providers should source their own referrals, however, the Council may also refer clients to the service. Where there is evidence that demand is likely to exceed agreed volumes, the Service Provider will have the opportunity to request an increase in client numbers.
4. The Council will undertake a review with the Service Provider at the end of the Registration period to determine progress against agreed volumes. Any recorded shortfall in client numbers may result in a reduction in the value of Service Fee instalments to reflect actual client numbers.
5. No Service Fee, only Job Entry and Sustainment Outcome payments, will be paid during the period 1st April 2025 to 30th September 2025 (see **Annex A** excel sheet for flow chart). The following dates relate to last eligible date to achieve Outcomes:
 - Job Entry Outcome - 31st March 2025
(to be claimed by 30th June 2025)
 - Job Sustainment Outcome - 30th September 2025
(to be claimed by 31st October 2025)

Administration and Financial Management

6. An individual must be working with the Service Provider for a minimum of 4 weeks before they can be classed as a client against agreed volume. In addition, with the support of the Service Provider, they should have completed the Highland Employability Service (HES) Registration Form, HES Employability Assessment and have received an outcome-focussed HES Action Plan.
7. Successful Service Providers must use the HANLON Management Information System to register and update client records. It would be expected that Service Providers gather the necessary client eligibility evidence and undertake Action Plan reviews at least every 12 weeks.
8. Job Outcomes must be evidenced and have to be:

- a minimum of 6-month contract
 - a minimum of 8 hours a week
 - NOT on a “zero hours” contractual basis
9. Job Sustainment Outcome payments can be claimed on receipt of evidence the client has been in work for at least 26 weeks.
 10. Service Providers should access mainstream and free service provision for clients, for example, College courses, at no cost to the service. They should also support clients to access these through warm handovers and introductions.
 11. Service Providers will be able to access a barrier removal fund, and HERO ERI to support progression as per the guidance which is provided in **Annex B**. Where there is a cost identified for specialist provision which cannot be sourced through other means, then a request for additional resource can be made to the Council’s Employability Service.

Geography and Coverage

12. The geographic areas for delivery will be:
 - Caithness
 - Sutherland
 - East Ross
 - Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey
 - Lochaber
 - Skye & Lochalsh and Wester Ross
13. One grant will be awarded for each geographic area.
14. To aid Service Provider capacity, the Council is open to an application to deliver in more than one geographic area.

Application Process

Application Dates

1. Applications must be submitted to the employability@highland.gov.uk email box by **Monday 25th September 2023 12 noon at the very latest**. Once submitted, you should receive an automatic email.
2. Applications will be assessed, and it is anticipated that the outcome of the grant application will be communicated to you by 29th September 2023.
3. Implementation will start from 1st October 2023 with first registrations being no earlier than 16th October 2023.

Who can apply?

The Test and Learn Grant Fund is open to Private Sector and constituted Third Sector Organisations. Providers must have an operational base within Highland.

Who cannot apply?

The following are not eligible to apply:

- Individuals

- Public Sector Organisations
- Organisations without an existing operational base within the Highland Council area
- Existing Fair Start Scotland Contractors and sub-contractors.

Initial Technical Assessment of your Application

An initial technical assessment will be made on receipt of application. Applications which do not meet the following eligibility criteria will not progress to full assessment:

- The application was submitted by Monday 25th September 12 noon using the application form.
- The organisation has an operational base within Highland and the project will benefit people living in the area.
- The type of organisation meets the grant criteria.
- Application signed by two persons from the organisation.
- When applying you must include (or provide a link to) the required supporting documents listed below:
 - Constitution or Memorandum and Articles of Association
 - Evidence that the primary base of your organisation is within the Highland Council area
 - Most recent annual accounts or if not available, the last 3 bank statements
 - A bank statement to prove that the organisation has an active UK bank account at the time of application
 - Child protection and / or Safeguarding policy
 - Equal opportunities policy or statement

Assessment of the Application

Once it has been established that the application is eligible, formal assessment will begin.

- The assessment will be in 4 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. Where the Council's grant assessment determines that the quality threshold has not been met, then a grant will not be awarded.

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 6. Applications will be ranked highest to lowest, with funding allocated in that order until funds are fully utilised.

	Score 0-4 (4 being the highest)	Weighting (1-5)	Total (Score x Weighting)
The Service Offer		5	
Skills, Experience and Capacity to Deliver		5	
Programme Management		3	
Performance Monitoring		3	
Total out of 64			

Post Approval

Payments

1. The Service Fee will be paid at the end of each quarter with the Service Provider submitting a claim form provided by the Council. The Service Provider will claim Job Entry and Job Sustainment Outcome payments quarterly issuing the same claim form.
2. Payment will only be made after checking that client records are complete and updated on the Hanlon Management Information System.

Test and Learn Dialogue

3. As indicated in the 'Purpose of the Fund', this is a test and learn approach. It is expected the Service Provider uses the prescribed model, however ongoing dialogue between the Council and the Service Provider will take place regarding the mechanics of the model and any potential adaptations required. There is a desire to have an affordable delivery model which encourages and rewards client progression at the same time as allowing for Service Provider certainty and sustainability, in particular within our more rural areas.

More information

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

Privacy information relating to this funding scheme can be found on the Highland Council website [here](#).