

National Skills Fund ‘Employer-led Technical and Digital Bootcamps’: Bidding for a Heart of the South West LEP lead Consortia

1) Overview

- 1.1 As announced by the Prime Minister, Devon County Council has been asked to bid, in its role as People Lead for the HotSW LEP, for a proportion of a £8m National Retraining Scheme pot being made available by DfE. The pot is aimed at supporting rapid training / redeployment of individuals into digital and engineering roles.
- 1.2 If successful, the project will require Devon to lead a partnership of College, training provider and other partners over the next year, to deliver the circa £1.75m secured. The project would however include provision for a fully funded project manager role and additional financial support for finance time / capacity and other services.

2) Background

- 2.1 Over the course of this Parliament, Government is investing GBP £2.5 billion (GBP £3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administration) in the National Skills Fund. This new policy will look to transform and reenergise the adult training landscape. The fund will increase skills, productivity, and individuals’ resilience, to better respond to a changing labour market.
- 2.2 To inform the roll-out of the National Skills Fund, the Department for Education is commissioning a minimum of 3 Employer-led Technical and Digital Bootcamp pilots in the following regions:
 - Leeds City Region
 - Heart of South West LEP area
 - Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire LEP area.
- 2.3 Consequently, there is now an opportunity for Heart of the South West LEP to lead a bid comprising FE, Private Training Providers and Employers to deliver a new training model which will address identified digital and technical Skills Shortage Vacancies (SSV’s) in the HotSW area. The training model envisages 12-week Bootcamps, free to the learner, that are designed to meet digital and technical skills shortages in a very short space of time, providing work-ready individuals who will be guaranteed interviews with local employers. If successful, the contract will secure around £1.75 million pounds of additional investment for bootcamps delivering resilient skills across the region.

3) Project Summary

- 3.1 Devon, on behalf of the Heart of the South West Partnership, is intending to submit a £1.75m proposal to DfE which will forward ten upskilling / employment bootcamp proposals as part of a consortia approach.
- 3.2 Each of the proposals has been selected following an open market competition process undertaken earlier in the summer, working closely with DfE’s commissioning team. Component bootcamps have selected based on a mixture of core factors, including their

deliverability, fulfilment against regional job demand, providing innovation around match and against their ability to demonstrate a clear track record of successful prior delivery.

- 3.3 The resultant group of projects, highlighted in Annex A, will bring together a mixed partnership of public and private lead organisations (including Cosmic, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Bluescreen IT, Exeter College, The Learning People, SWMAS, and South Devon College) to take forward a range of Level 3,4 and 5 equivalent training courses to 700 Adults over the next six months. The bootcamps will mostly be 12 weeks in duration and range between 60 and 288 hours of delivered content depending on the pathway, but will also uniquely lead to a guaranteed interview of progression route in employment for the individual learner.
- 3.4 The learning pathways incorporated in the project will include:
- Advanced training in Microsoft 365 or G-Suite to increase productivity in Health and Social care OR Microsoft 365/ G-Suite Intense burst bootcamp for staff returning from furloughed to support career progression;
 - Support for a Digital Healthcare professional pathway, supporting individuals to secure a new career and / or progression within the health sector;
 - IT Practitioner and Cyber Security Practitioner pathways, to provide progression in digital and cyber security career;
 - A Digital Insights pathway; focused on supporting the development basic programming, data analysis and digital marketing for business, leading to private sector digital opportunities;
 - A Software Developer and Data Scientist pathway, supporting both a development and research support progression route for technical level workers wanting to go into related professions;
 - Support for higher value welding and forming capacity, which will support new engineering and production roles across the area;
 - ECITB Engineering Construction Support Operative, supporting both individuals wanting to go into technical and civil engineering roles across the HotSW; and
 - A Photonics, Optics and Micro Electronics pathway, supporting specialist employment and recruitment in Torbay and South Devon around the photonics sector
- 3.5 On a day to day level, the programme consortia will be projected managed by the DCC's Digital Skills Partnership Manager, working on behalf of the HotSW Digital Skills Partnership. The Digital Skills Partnership has been instrumental in securing the selection of the region as one of the three regions to be selected by the Department for Education, and will act as the project board for delivery.
- 3.6 The proposal however includes a 4% top slice for project management (circa £64,000), which will cover the cost of 6 months of a H grade resource within DCC, and related campaign

marketing and operational costs. It will also include a further 1% to cover Devon County Council's Finance and Business Support capacity (circa £16,000).

4) The Rationale for Bidding

4.1 There are currently three primary reasons for bidding:

- **Building a resiliently skilled workforce for the region** – The research commissioned by DCC on behalf of SW Councils by Oxford Economics forecast the economic impact of Covid-19 may result in 25,700 job losses across the region by 2021. Facing an unprecedented level of unemployment, securing investment to support retraining is therefore critical to the region's recovery. There is also compelling evidence that supports a strategy that focuses on digital and technical retraining. Data from the Government Digital Economy Council shows that before lockdown, the digital sector was advertising over 150,000 jobs a week in the first three months of the year. Whilst this number did drop during lockdown, vacancies have since recovered to stand at 90,297, by the week commencing 9th August. Collectively, digital and engineering vacancies now make up the second and third sectors with the highest demand for roles behind health and social care.
- **Enabling better prospects for individuals** - The median salary for digital tech roles across the UK in 2019 was £39,000, with average salaries range from £28,500 in the lower quartile to £55,000 in the upper quartile. This was approximately 60-70% higher than the national average during the year, with median level digital roles consistently appearing in the top quartile of in demand opportunity throughout the calendar year. Similarly, engineering roles in the local area were both amongst some of the HotSW best paid and most in demand. It has been estimated that the South West currently has in the region of a gap of around 400-500 roles per annum that are being vacated by older staff but with no replacement skilled professional available.
- **Building a strong regional economy** - Over the past two years, jobs across the digital tech sector have increased by 40% and it now employs 2.93 million people. The digital tech workforce now accounts for 9% of the UK's total workforce with the number of jobs advertised in tech in 2019 outweighed several other sectors, including legal jobs (by 7x), manufacturing (by 8x), and finance and accounting (by 2.7x). Nine cities, outside the capital, now have more than a fifth of the workforce employed in tech. These include Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Newcastle, Leeds, Bristol, Reading and Cambridge.

5) Issues / Risks

5.1 There are 2 primary issues / risks that Devon needs to be aware of in bidding:

- **Covid prevents us achieving the target set by DfE of 75% of all trainees moving into new job or role within 6 months of completion** – The RFQ for the bootcamp proposal stipulates that 75% of those receiving support must move into a new or higher paid job within 6 months of completion. Given uncertainties around COVID though, this may prove difficult in the new year, dependent on the condition of the economy and wider opportunities.

To offset this, the RFQ doesn't currently include a clawback clause, and we are pushing for it to remain outside of any clawback provision through contracting. The Digital Skills Partnership is also well placed within the LEP and Local Authority Skills teams to work with stakeholders and broker this progression, with the HotSW including two full-day online job match conferences to support this, bringing together trainees, employers and apprenticeship providers training. The project will also run a substantial campaign #SkillLaunch (similar to the #ProudtoCare campaign) which will generate daily posts across social media giving trainees the opportunity to create an online training narrative and engaging the employer community.

However, it is worth being aware going in that this may remain a challenging target.

- **Covid restricts tuition** – With the exception of the welding and engineering construction support operative bootcamp and elements of the photonics, optics and microelectronics bootcamp, all of the other bootcamps will be able to move their delivery online. There is a risk however that not all of the learners will be able to access home learning due to lack of device or data.

This proposal, therefore, includes a contingency fund of £52,500 to provide 75 laptop and data bundles which can be loaned to the learners. Each of the training providers will be expected to match fund a further 75 laptop and data bundles proportionally to their contract size. This will create a contingency pool of 150 laptop and data allowances which would meet the worst-case scenario that 20% of the trainees did not have access to their own device or data to complete their learning. Though this figure seems to represent a low level of cover, this has been based on evidence from schools in the region that approximately 10% of households do not have access to laptops or data during the period of home learning April to July 2020.

Where face to face tuition is required and cannot be supplemented by online delivery, other approaches will be taken. The welding and engineering construction support operative bootcamp and the photonics, optics and microelectronics bootcamps costings for example include budget for the supply of individual PPE, and to cover related adaption costs. In a situation of level 5 lockdown however, the project may need to reapproach DfE to discuss next steps given the practical barriers to the timescale they have imposed.

Providing comfort however, DfE have indicated that they would not be seeking clawback in such a scenario, and instead would simply expect us to delay the relevant provision.

6) Next Steps

- 6.1 Subject to CoPHEP being comfortable with us proceeding on behalf of the LEP, the proposal will be submitted to the Department for Education on the 2nd of October 2020. If successful through tender, a partnership agreement will then be awarded in mid-November with provision due to roll out in November to March 2021.

Charlotte Collyer
24th September 2020

Annex A – Project Overview

	Bootcamp	Cost	Level	Role	Number of confirmed vacancies	Number of pipeline vacancies	Number of planned learners	Planned Hours of training
1	Microsoft 365 or G-Suite to increase productivity in Health and Social care (100) OR Microsoft 365/ G-Suite Intense burst bootcamp for staff returning from furloughed seeking career progression (50)	£125,250	Level 2/3	Care workers, home carers, medical practitioner, other administrative occupations	2084	Furloughed	150	60
2	Digital HealthCare professional	£95,000	Level 3	medical practitioner, programmers and software development professionals	2500		32	288
3	IT Practitioner	£300,000	Level 3	Network Administrator, Network Engineer, System Administrator, IT Administrator, Service Desk Analyst, Service Desk Engineer, IT & Infrastructure Engineer and	542	Apprenticeship demand	100	270
4	Cyber Security Practitioner Readiness Programme	£150,000	Level 3	Information Security Specialist, Jnr Information Security Technologist, Cyber Security Engineer, Cyber Security Apprentice Lv4	542	Apprenticeship demand	55	175
5	Digital Insights pathway	£175,000	Level 3	Business Administration, Business Data Analysis, Digital Marketing, Junior Web Developer	1082	Growth Deal pipeline	100	60
6	Software Developer pathway	£187,500	Level 4 & 5	Software Developer roles.	738	Growth Deal pipeline	125	110
7	Data Science pathway	£75,000	Level 4 & 5	Data Science roles.	200	Growth Deal pipeline	50	110
8	Welding pathway	£250,000	Level 3	Welders - level 3	50	800	60	288
9	ECITB Engineering Construction Support Operative Bronze pathway	£111,672	Level 2	Engineering Construction Support Operative Bronze programme level 2 leading to level 3	930		36	90
10	Photonics, Optics & Micro Electronics pathway	£150,000	Level 3	Photonics, Optics & Micro Electronics Technician (Engineers)	62	100 (Plessey- Semi)	60	80

Delivery of 10 Bootcamps	£1,619,422					Number of Learners	768
Project Management @ 4%	£64,777						
Finance & Busines Support @ 1%	£16,194						
Contingency fund (75 x £700 laptop and data bundles)	£52,500						
Total Bid	£1,752,893					Cost per learner	£2,282