

Appendix 1 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Application Summary

***These are extracts from the applications to provide additional information to Committee.**

Local Business Support

Aberdeen City Council - Business Support Grant Scheme

The proposal is to offer two targeted grant schemes (for start-up businesses and for business growth) plus continued update of ACC's Business Toolkit, in order to support and grow SME numbers and SME sustainability in the city. The proposal also addresses required resource, incorporating a project officer position.

The Business Start-Up Grant Scheme would provide seed capital to support new businesses, offering one-off grant awards of either £1,000 or £3,000 (where the new business is taking on a commercial room, premise or property). The proposal is inclusive, covering anyone setting up a new business with business address in the City boundaries. Co-ordination with ABZ Works' key workers and Business Gateway's community-based adviser will ensure awareness of the grant scheme is raised among target groups, and that support is offered to maximise uptake and create opportunities for these groups.

More generally, the grant funding will remove barriers to increased economic activity, providing all citizens with the financial means to enable them to progress their business idea, establish a start-up and grow their business more quickly than would otherwise be achieved. Expanding new businesses who are looking to take on commercial space will contribute to growing economic activity and development through job creation. The funding will also address the challenge of access to finance at a time when individual reserves may be minimal due to the cost-of-living crisis and borrowing is expensive due to interest rates.

To build on the momentum of the Business Start-Up Grant Scheme offered by ACC and funded by UKSPF through 2024/25, it is proposed that the same eligibility criteria apply, with a new business registration cut-off of 1 October 2024. The consistent availability of a start-up grant scheme further supports the incorporation of the Business Gateway service in-house to Aberdeen City and Shire Councils. Applicants will only be eligible for a grant award if engaging with, and are assigned to, a dedicated Business Gateway officer. This will ensure the applicant is accessing business support, as well as the grant, and maximise likelihood of business success. Furthermore collaboration between the grant scheme Project Officer and Business Gateway operations will assist with an enquiry pipeline, demand monitoring, promotion and management of the grant scheme.

The number of grant awards the Scheme would support is estimated at:

· 108 awards at £1,000

· 36 awards at £3,000

Total = £216,000

The second offering, "Grants for SME Innovation and Growth" will target existing SMEs in the city, with a flexible grant award that can be used to support their development and growth objectives and test innovation. Thriving, sustainable SMEs contribute to the diversity of the local economy, offer employment opportunities and foster an ecosystem of entrepreneurship that can benefit the region. Recognising the importance of the local city centre economy,

support for SMEs undertaking activity that contributes to vibrancy and meets local policy will also be considered.

Discretionary grants of between £500 - £2,500, based on costs, will be available to support such activity as:

- Training – to attend or purchase training resource; to attend events and conferences to increase industry connections and routes to market; to meet membership costs of relevant networks;
- Premises – expanding from home-based to a rateable commercial premise for the first time; improving existing premises; supporting fit-out costs;
- Equipment – acquiring capital equipment to enable a more efficient or productivity-enhanced approach; investment in new systems for operations;
- City centre vibrancy – supporting events and occasions that offer additionality, vibrancy and increase visitor numbers.

A list of ineligible costs will apply including operational costs such as rents, rates, utilities, stock and staffing.

As a pilot activity, and to enable monitoring of take-up as to what type of support is most useful, it is suggested that the project budget for this Grant Scheme be £60,000.

Aberdeen City Council's Business Toolkit webpage was launched at the end of 2024, and serves as a one-stop shop signposting training and resource available from ACC and partners including Business Gateway and AGCC for business. To sustain and maintain the Toolkit, including identifying ad-hoc training needs of businesses through the year and offering provision to meet these – through free to attend, group sessions, budget is required of £20,000.

Funding for a post to establish, deliver and manage the grant schemes on a daily basis, including all reporting requirements; and to proactively engage with businesses on the needs we can meet via the Business Toolkit, will be essential as the activities outlined above cannot be met by existing resource. Experience from the 24/25 grant scheme has also taught us the importance of print media in promoting grant schemes and reaching intended audiences (particularly for start-ups), so a small marketing budget is deemed helpful.

Aberdeen City Council, in partnership with Business Gateway - Digital Skills Programme

Supporting businesses to develop digital skills and assets is important in order for them to stay ahead, continue to innovate and grow. This project builds upon work undertaken by the Digital Boost Programme. The Programme supported businesses for seven years but unfortunately, funding is no longer available and the scope has been reduced to an online offering only.

As a replacement 'pilot', Business Gateway secured UKSPF funding in 2024/25 via Aberdeen City and Shire Councils for a Digital Business Support programme. This funding would secure that activity for a further year. The project is being delivered by an external provider, offering focused, bespoke interventions for individual businesses including:

- 1-to-1 tailored adviser support of 1, 2 or 3 days;

1-to-1 surgeries of 1-2 hours per business;

1-to-few coaching sessions.

The key objectives of the project are to strengthen the knowledge and skills of SMEs in Scotland about all aspects of digital technology, thus enabling them to enter new markets, trade internationally, increase business efficiency and therefore, through growth, potentially increase staff employed. Given that trends in digital are fast-paced and constantly advancing, there is a need for a constantly evolving and up-to-date expert offering. Even digitally savvy SMEs need to be engaging regularly in digital learning and forward planning for digital adoption.

The interventions will be free at the point of delivery for SMEs and it is intended that the support and consultancy provided will enable SME owners and employees to raise their skills and knowledge levels to enable them to adopt and optimise use of digital technology. The intention is not to execute tasks for clients. Client referrals will come from Business Gateway, partner organisations such as Enterprising Aberdeenshire and business-facing Council services.

Support themes will include: •Website Support •Data Analytics •Customisation of software or app development •Social Media Development or Implementation •Mobile or internet technologies •Cloud Computing •Digital Strategy •Cyber Resilience

Aberdeen City Council - Tall Ships Event Site Business Opportunities

The Tall Ships Races will return to Aberdeen's for four days in July 2025. An amazing spectacle of over 50 sailing ships from around the world, it is the largest free family festival in Europe. The Aberdeen leg seeks to attract 400,000 visits, and has hit targets to recruit over 100 youth sail trainees, and run a volunteer programme for around 250 local people of all backgrounds. In addition, the team have secured a number of nationally and internationally recognised major touring acts for a newly created 7000-capacity music festival venue adjacent to the quayside.

The focus on the event, city and wider region presents a huge commercial opportunity for local businesses, including bars, restaurants, caterers, hoteliers, visitor attractions, charities, retailers and artisans. Funding has been granted for additional activities to maximise some of those opportunities for businesses spread across the city, as well as ensuring that city dressing and communications encourage visitors explore more of Aberdeen.

However, the event site itself will also be a focus for commercial activity which has been upscaled considerably since the original costed proposals due to the increased size of the fleet and therefore numbers of crew; the addition of the music festival area and programme; the resulting extended opening hours of the site; and the addition of a 'Discovery Zone' focused on STEM activities for children.

As a result of these fantastic additions there will now be 6 bars, 24 food vendors and around 50 retail traders across the site. These elements are crucial to the event experience for the hundreds of thousands of crew and visitors expected. Given the wider aims for the economic impact of Tall Ships, priority has been given to local companies and employees, and locally made goods and produce wherever commercially viable. Similarly, planned activities on the site will include around 10 charities and 10 visitor attractions, with the latter featured on the Discovery Zone area of the Castlegate to provide free STEM activities for children and families.

This funding request is to assist with the costs of the commercial programme for businesses, charities and visitor attractions engaged in marketing, trade and revenue generating activity. The constraints of the event site mean that all business facilities are of a temporary nature requiring marquees and stands; health and safety compliant installation; site management, security and servicing; onsite marketing provision; access assistance for businesses; and a derig following the event. Grant funding would help to pay for vital infrastructure such as marquees, contribute toward supply of power and water, ensure adequate critical resourcing such as stewarding and security, and cover digital marketing to support businesses on the event site and in the wider city.

Passing the full costs for these services to local businesses, or applying onerous charges for charities and visitor attractions, would prohibit their participation in the event, and constrain the free STEM activities for visitors. Therefore, funds are sought to reduce fees for local businesses, offer free spaces to visitor attractions, and maintain low fixed-fees for retailers and charities. These savings will make participation more accessible, beneficial and profitable for businesses.

People and Skills

Healthy Minds - Skills Development - Blair Unit

Patients within the Blair Unit (locked forensic ward at Cornhill Hospital) often have poor education experiences due to mental illness. Improving numeracy and literacy skills will support learners to improve their understanding and use of maths and reading in their daily lives and to feel more confident when doing so. Patients within the unit have limited access to digital equipment with some have limited knowledge of digital skills due to long term treatment.

We currently have an adult learning tutor based in the Blair Unit 12 hours a week but this funding will provide an extra 6.5 hours per week to enable more patients the opportunity to work on their literacy and numeracy skills and work toward a SQA level 2 or 3 Literacy and/or Numeracy awards. Resources are to be bought to ensure that learners have the best opportunity to complete SQA assessments. SQA fees will be paid to ensure learners can take part.

The Aberdeen Creative Industries Skills Development Initiative

The Aberdeen Creative Industries Skills Development Initiative aims to identify and address the skills needs required to support growth ambitions and increase employment within the creative industries sector in Aberdeen. This project will focus on enhancing the skills of the local workforce to meet the evolving demands of the sector, thereby fostering economic growth and creating new job opportunities.

The creative industries sector in Aberdeen is a vital component of the local economy, contributing significantly to cultural and economic development. This importance will be recognised by the establishment of a new Creative Industries sector body as part of the Regional Economic Strategy. However, the sector has a far higher percentage of self-employment within its workforce and has had no focus or investment with respect to sector development needs or workforce skills analysis.

Project Objectives

- Identify the specific skills needed to support the growth ambitions of the creative industries in Aberdeen.
- Assess the skills required to increase employment opportunities within the sector.
- Develop a comprehensive delivery plan to address these skills needs effectively.

Undertaking this work will require specialised consultant research and follow the below points.

The following process and methodology would be applied:

- Literature Review
Analysis of current skill and training provision uptake
- Theoretical Framework
- Data Collection and analysis
Conduct surveys and interviews with key stakeholders, including industry professionals, educators, and policymakers. Analyse secondary data sources such as reports from Skills Development Scotland and Creative Scotland.
- Case Studies
- Comparison with Other Regions
Compare Aberdeen's skills needs with other regions in Scotland and the UK to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

Short-term Actions - Implement immediate steps to address critical skills shortages in the sector

Long-term Strategies - Develop sustainable plans for ongoing skills development and sector growth.

Delivery Plan

Outline a detailed plan for implementing the recommendations, including timelines, responsible parties, and required resources.

Tall Ships Jobs Fair and Training sessions – Young Person Development and Employability

The Tall Ships Traineeship programme is designed to support the training and development of young people, helping them to build crucial life skills and competencies, increase their confidence and sense of purpose, enhance their wellbeing and resilience, and broaden their career horizons and ambitions. Furthermore, through this experience, they will also improve their team-working skills, which are crucial for their personal and professional growth.

An independent study by the University of Edinburgh found that young trainees who participate in offshore sail training programmes show measurable improvements in social confidence and their ability to work with others. Moreover, the benefits are sustained over time after the voyage experience.

In addition to the trainee scheme, Aberdeen City Council, in conjunction with ABZ works, will organise a jobs fair and other training sessions to further support the trainees. These events will offer valuable resources and guidance to help them transition into the workforce successfully following the traineeships. Funding is sought from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support the jobs fair and other training sessions so that the young people can capitalise on the experience ensuring a legacy to the programme.

Our proposed timeline for the project is as follows:

- Sail trainees take part in one of the five journeys during the Tall Ships 2025 event either between Dunkirk and Aberdeen or Aberdeen and Kristiansand between the 13th of July and 30th of July
- 30th of August - post traineeship programme review
- August to November 2025 – further supportive training sessions and employability fair for trainees

We believe that this project aligns perfectly with the goals of the grant scheme and will have a significant positive impact on the lives of the trainees and the broader community in Aberdeen.

Employability - Paid Work Placements

Provision of paid six—month work placements for 5 economically inactive adults (age 25+), paid at real living wage rate.

Previous experience through Kickstart, NEERSF, and Long-Term Unemployed scheme has shown significant % go on to secure sustained employment while other completers gain skills, knowledge, and build CVs, and are better prepared and placed to enter the workforce or progress to further/higher education.

The target group for this project is those furthest from the labour market and facing barriers to employment, as set out by UKSPF. Delivery of this activity aligns with the aims of the Local Employability Partnership, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy, and the Children’s Services Delivery Plan. Working with partner agencies and employers, these paid placements will provide supported opportunities for people to enter and remain in the workforce, with in-work support in place to enable them to sustain the placement and longer-term employment.

An employability keyworker will be assigned to each. Additionally, this provides a direct progression route from employability activity into employment. The programme also aligns with work being carried out with city employers to make the city more inclusive in employment terms.

Employability – HMP Grampian

This project will provide vocational courses in HMP Grampian for prisoners who will be released to Aberdeen. The project will help prisoners to build skills and confidence to support them back into the workforce on release from custody. The courses will align with identified skills needs and roles in the city, and with opportunities available with employers which are working with the prison to recruit people on release.

This activity delivery of this project aligns with the aims of the Local Employability Partnership, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy, and the Children’s Services Delivery Plan. This is part of a growing piece of work to support individuals into a positive destination on release and to break the cycle of offending. Work is ongoing by ABZWorks and HMP Grampian with employers to build trusted relationships with supportive employers who have jobs available, and the training will be tailored to ensure that it enables the individuals to build the skills while in custody which will enable them to secure work on liberation.

Employability – Green Skills

Commissioned training provision, with particular focus on green skills (NB UKSPF enables this market to be targeted at a broader market than NOLB). This activity seeks to enable people to upskill and reskill to enable them to transfer from oil and gas roles, or to enter the renewables workforce and wider green jobs. The opportunities will be targeted at city residents of all working ages and provision informed via discussions with employers to ensure the training matches the opportunities.

This aligns with the Regional Economic Strategy, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Local Employability Partnership Delivery and Action Plan, and the Children's Services Delivery Plan.

Employability – People in Recovery

This is a continuation and further development of the People in the Recovery Project, which supports people in recovery from substance use to progress towards education, training, and employment. This complements ongoing work with HMP Grampian and enables support for those leaving custody, as well as for those without offending backgrounds who are in need of support as they progress in recovery and to build them up to engage in the types and levels of employment suitable for them, with a view to supporting economically inactive people into fair work, increasing chances of sustained recovery from substance use, and building Aberdeen's workforce.

This aligns with the Regional Economic Strategy, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Local Employability Partnership Delivery and Action Plan, and the Children's Services Delivery Plan. This project is delivered in partnership with NHS Grampian and Alcohol and Drugs Action.

Community Learning Development - Skills for Life

The Education & Lifelong Learning cluster works in partnership with others to reduce inequalities in educational outcomes and raise attainment given the key role education plays in long term outcomes. The cluster supports lifelong learning to enable and empower the people of Aberdeen to fulfil their potential and contribute to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of our city. The cluster oversees all funded Early Learning and Childcare settings (including funded childminders), out of school care provision, schools (primary, secondary and special), library and community learning provision as well as a range of support services.

We would employ 3 x 18.5 hours ESOL tutors to teach English to Asylum seekers in Aberdeen City this would allow them to prepare for life in the UK and develop the skills to access relevant services and to integrate to life in their local communities and be active participants in society, we would also offer a range of SQA qualifications.

This is a huge emerging need within Aberdeen which current resource cannot meet, we have a ESOL teaching capacity of 250 learners with an additional 40 to 50 learners being added to the waiting list every month.