



Funded by  
UK Government

Employability Fund

# General Information

2023 - 2025



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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Employability Fund is being distributed by VASLan on behalf of UK Government and is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The below is from the UK Government's guidance detailing the fund:

“  
*The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF or the Fund) is a central pillar of the UK government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. It provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition. It will help places right across the country deliver enhanced outcomes and recognises that even the most affluent parts of the UK contain pockets of deprivation and need support.*

*It seizes the opportunities of leaving the European Union, by investing in domestic priorities and targeting funding where it is needed most: building pride in place, supporting high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment and productivity growth and increasing life chances. It will reduce the levels of bureaucracy and funding spent on administration when compared with EU funds. It will enable truly local decision making and better target the priorities of places within the UK. It will lead to visible, tangible improvements to the places where people work and live, alongside investment in human capital, giving communities up and down the UK more reasons to be proud of their area.*

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities; [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

# OVERALL AIMS OF THE UKSP FUND

“

*The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will support the UK Government’s wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the levelling up objectives:*



*Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.*



*Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.*



*Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.*



*Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.*

*The primary goal of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. This aligns with Levelling Up White Paper missions, particularly: ‘By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.*

*Alongside economic pull and push factors, people’s lives are shaped by the social and physical fabric of their communities. The local mix of social and physical capital gives local areas their unique character and shapes where people choose to live, work and invest. Recognising the acute challenges town centres and communities have faced during the pandemic, this Fund will improve the places people live in, and support individuals and businesses. It will drive noticeable improvements that matter to local communities, foster local pride in place and increase life chances including health outcomes.*

# VASLAN'S APPROACH

Our approach at Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan) incorporates a networking platform and funding. Both of these are available to Third Sector organisations who provide employability and up-skilling services to support people in their communities.

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## Employability Network Platform (ENP)

This networking platform aims to give visibility to employability provision organisations across South Lanarkshire. This collaborative space is open to all Third Sector organisations and partners who wish to address needs and challenges of the sector in supporting individuals in their up-skilling. Networking and training is also provided through the platform.

By giving visibility, this allows organisations to recognise one another and refer between each other in order to provide fuller service to individuals i.e. someone offering job-clubs might refer to another organisation in order to help people with mental health barriers.

## Employability Fund

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This is a financial investment available until 2025 to Third Sector organisations for existing or new projects that aim to help individuals increase their employability skills and remove barriers. The Fund to which these guidelines are written for.



# FUND AIMS, PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

## AIMS

VASLan aims to provide a new approach in order to support Third Sector employability services and communities in developing resilience with focus on three main areas:

- **Helping people into fair work**- helping people seek employment that is fair and supports them to maintain a better quality of life
- **Helping to give children the best start in life**- by helping their parents improve their skills or supporting young people to achieve a positive direction in their career.
- **Removing barriers into employment**

## PRIORITIES

- People taking part in work experience programmes. An example could be organisations supporting people in job-searching activities i.e. identifying volunteering options, ESV (Employer Supported Volunteering), any other work experience programmes.
- People engaged in job-searching following support. For example organisations supporting people in job-searching activities i.e. job clubs, identifying skills, writing CVs, identifying volunteering or training options.
- People in employment, including self-employment, following support, i.e. when an organisation is offering advice on how to find a job matching with current skills, advice or working in partnership on self-employment.
- People in education/training in order to gain skills needed for employment in the future i.e. volunteers identifying educational destinations as a result of support during volunteering experience, staff in particular roles looking to enhance their skills in order to support individuals better.
- People experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and skills provision, i.e. when an organisation is helping with project-like mentorship for people with low self-confidence and mental health barriers which previously stopped them from employment, supported employment options etc.

# OUTCOMES

Below is a table that shows the short and medium-term outcomes that this provision aims to achieve. This is a guide for those who wish to apply for funding and will support with setting outcomes for your proposed projects.

Short Term Outcomes	Medium Term Outcomes
People are informed of employability support services available in their communities.	The capacity of employability services provided by Third Sector organisations is increased.
People feel supported in their employability journey.*	People are moving on to the next stage of the employability pipeline model* or their career progresses.
People have a greater confidence and knowledge of their own skills to seek employability options.	People overcome their barriers to employment after support and mentorship.
People identify further training needed in order to move to the next stage of their journey to seek employment.*	People have a more positive outlook on life and have a greater sense of wellbeing.
People engage in volunteering or work experience programmes.	People experience greater quality of life and move forward out of poverty.
People develop new skills or recognise the transferable skills they already have which can help them seek employment.	People feel more confident in maintaining a job or training and practicing their skills.
People identify further destination/ direction in their career or steps towards it.	

\*Refers to Employability Pipeline Model, explained on the following page.

# EMPLOYABILITY PIPELINE MODEL

The Employability Pipeline Model is a framework widely established in Scotland to support the effective delivery of employability services. There are 5 stages which are designed around the needs of the individual and their existing soft skills, employability skills and skills requiring development. Organisations who provide support services relating to any of these stages are considered an employability provision for the purpose of this Fund.

VASLan's approach to distributing funding focuses on collaborative working, which aims to complement and **NOT** duplicate services across South Lanarkshire - across the third and public sector. The South Lanarkshire Local Employability Partnership (LEP) funds and delivers a range of employability activity with a particular focus on the following key priority groups:

- » Young people in the later stages of their journey
- » Young people aged between 16 - 19 years of age
- » People with disabilities
- » Adults with barriers to employment
- » Parents

Challenged fund applications should seek to complement and not duplicate the South Lanarkshire Local Employability Partnership (LEP) programmes. The LEP has identified a particular need for early-stage, community-based activity at stages 1 and 2 of the employability pipeline including confidence building, volunteering and personal development. Therefore, applications for this funding from projects who focus on stages 1, 2 & 5 will be particularly welcome.

Additionally, South Lanarkshire Council Employability Services have a huge range of resources available to support participants on stages 3,4 and 5 of the employability pipeline. It is therefore important that the work between community organisations and the council is collaborative, in order to provide a fuller service and support to individuals. For this purpose, those participants on projects funded by this grant which are not yet known to South Lanarkshire Council's employability pathway will have a chance to be introduced and benefit from their services, resources, and support.



# EMPLOYABILITY PIPELINE MODEL CONTINUED

Each stage of the Employability Pipeline Model has a description and status assigned to it which helps to assess the individual on their employability journey. The different types of status are; not job ready, job ready and in work.



## The Employability Pipeline Model



## **Stage 1: Referral, Engagement and Assessment**

Status: Not job ready

Description: This stage is about reaching out to individuals, supporting people into regular activity and positive routines, and helping them to connect with others.

Activities: Outreach, self-referral, identification and assessment of needs, developing personalised action plan, re-engaging in learning via an activity agreement.

## **Stage 2: Barrier Removal**

Status: Not job ready

Description: This stage sees a range of partners assessing the initial needs of individuals and agreeing key activities to be undertaken with them in order to address any barriers to employment or training.

Activities: Confidence building, vocational rehabilitation, careers advice and guidance, financial advice and support, improving health and wellbeing, peer support and mentoring.

## **Stage 3: Vocational Activity**

Status: Job ready

Description: This is when a person is ready to think of further steps to employment. Activities are focused on delivering a range of accredited training, employability training, job search advice and activities to raise awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurship in order to meet the needs of the individual.

Activities: Employability skills development, vocational training, work experience, volunteering, self-employment and enterprise support.

## **Stage 4: Employer Engagement and Job Matching**

Status: Job ready

Description: At this stage, activities are focused around arranging work or volunteer placements that will help to practice skills. It is also about assisting individuals to secure job vacancies and matching job-ready clients to jobs.

Activities: Careers advice and guidance, employer engagement, job search support, job matching, self-employment and enterprise support.

## **Stage 5: In Work Support and Aftercare**

Status: In Work

Description: This is when an individual has gained employment and support is being provided to help them maintain and progress within the workplace.

Activities: Creating a wellness action plan to identify what support is needed (this might be important for those who need supported employment or have barriers to employment i.e. mental health). This plan helps individuals and employers work together to recognised triggers and needs, to create a support plan and a supportive environment. Other activities; are careers advice / guidance, supported employment, occupational health and wellbeing support, vocational rehabilitation, skills development, redundancy support, self-employment and enterprise support.

# CRITERIA AND FURTHER INFORMATION

## ELIGIBILITY

Read this guidance, our 'Support for Making a Strong Application' document and the 'Application Guidance' carefully, ensuring that your application is eligible before you submit it. In particular, check that:

- » Your organisation has achieved Volunteer Friendly / Investing in Volunteers accreditation or has already signed up for the Quality Standard process.

***An organisation does not have to have the Quality Standard achieved, however the requirement is that you sign the agreement to start the process. A verbal expression of interest of going through this Quality Standard is NOT sufficient and your organisation would need to commit by signing. This process is FREE, as it is provided by VASLan along with our SUPPORT to help your organisation to go through it step by step. We would like to encourage organisations to look at this as an enhancement to their practice and therefore recognition rather than just a Fund requirement.***

- » Your organisation is a VASLan member. Membership is free and provides a lot of benefits for your organisation to flourish. If you require a link for membership or help in understanding the application, there are dedicated VASLan staff members who can help.

- » Your organisation is contributing to employability provision by being relevant to Employability Pipeline Model. This relates to services that you provide, please read above for further details.

- » Your project meets the criteria and is aimed at adults over 16 years of age.

- » You have answered all the relevant questions.

## EQUALITIES / INCLUSIVE / ACCESSIBLE

Be clear about how this project is targeted towards people who would benefit from it the most. Tell us about the practical steps that you are taking to ensure your project is inclusive. Think about what equality, inclusiveness and accessibility really mean, and ask if you have taken the appropriate steps to ensure your project meets all three.

## COMMUNITY FOCUS

Show us how your project is embedded in your community. Be clear about the research you have carried out to determine the need for your project. Be clear about how volunteers are or will be involved in your project. Tell us who you are working in partnership with, if at all. Make it clear how you intend to monitor and report on your project.

## COLLABORATION

Have you looked at other small organisations in your area and considered if there could be any partnership or collaborative work?

# ASSESSMENT AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Applications are assessed by an external partnership panel that is made up of people from South Lanarkshire Council, Skills Development Scotland, South Lanarkshire College, Health Improvement Team (branch of NHS), Supported Employment Team, Third Sector Organisations, people with lived experience and peer support workers.

**THE OUTCOME OF YOUR APPLICATION IS MADE BY THE PANEL AND THAT DECISION IS FINAL. VASLAN HAS NO AUTHORITY TO OVERRIDE THIS DECISION. YOU CAN APPLY AGAIN IF APPROPRIATE – FOR EXAMPLE IF THE APPLICATION WAS NOT CLEAR ENOUGH OR DID NOT SUPPLY ENOUGH INFORMATION.**

VASLan are always looking for ways to make our panels more diverse. If your organisation has peer workers or service users with lived experience within mental health and wellbeing, who can commit to meeting on a fortnightly basis and would like to be involved in the decision-making of applications (not their own or organisations they have close working links to). Please get in touch with our team who can discuss this with you further.

Lived experience is essential for assessing that the fund is being used in areas where it is needed most. VASLan are committed to making sure grassroots organisations and communities have a say in where this fund is being distributed.

# WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THE FUND?

Ensuring equality of access and full participation from all relevant and at-risk communities is a priority of this fund. Local plans must take into account equalities considerations. Evidence shows that the pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health inequalities and has had a disproportionate impact on the mental well-being of a range of groups in society. South Lanarkshire would like to focus on initiatives which are inclusive of the following priority 'at risk' groups:

- Organisations who support people who are unemployed or are seeking new skills to gain fair work.
- Organisations who support anyone 16+ in to work.
- Women (particularly young women, and women and young women affected by gender-based violence).
- People with a long-term health condition or disability.
- People from a Minority Ethnic background.
- Refugees and those with no resource to public funds.
- People facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- People experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage.
- People with diagnosed mental illness or experiencing mental health problems as a barrier to employment.
- People affected by psychological trauma (including adverse childhood experiences).
- People who have experienced bereavement or loss.
- People disadvantaged by geographical location (particularly remote and rural areas).
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities.
- People who are experiencing barriers to employment (Barriers to employment are understood as any disadvantage or struggle people might be experiencing in order to move into employment.)

Where applicants are able, you should outline how they will address intersectionality (i.e., multiple- marginalisation, such as those experiencing both poverty and disability) and how their project specifically benefits any given community in an intersectional way. A clear example of intersectionality is where one person or community faces multiple disadvantages. For an individual, could be an unemployed, disabled woman. A community example would be a deprived, rural postcode with a high rate of crime/substance use.

# WHO CAN APPLY AND GRANT SIZES

The ambition of this Fund is to support initiatives which promote up-skilling, employability and removing barriers at a grassroots, community level. It is accessible to all groups, no matter how small or inexperienced you are. Since this Fund aims to support community based organisations, we would prefer that the annual income of your organisation does not exceed £1 million.

As mentioned above, in order to avoid duplication of employability services provided by South Lanarkshire Council Employability Partnership (see [more information here](#)) under [No One Left Behind](#), we will particularly welcome applications from projects aiming to offer support at stages 1, 2 and 5 on the employability pipeline.

National organisations undertaking initiatives in South Lanarkshire are not excluded but are not the main focus of the Fund. Funded organisations do not need to have to have employability as their sole focus, but, as this is the purpose of this Fund, their application does have to clearly outline how it benefits the employability of people in their community. For example, organisations who focus on helping individuals with improving their mental health might have a project which focuses on addressing mental health as a barrier to employability and supporting individuals with this.

Applications will be accepted from a range of voluntary, 'not for profit' organisations, associations, groups and clubs or consortiums/partnerships which have a strong community focus for their activities.

## **The range of organisations eligible to apply are:**

- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIO)
- Unincorporated Associations
- Companies Limited by Guarantee
- Trusts
- Not-for-profit company or asset locked company or Community Interest Companies (CIC)
- Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies
- Community councils
- Parent councils (only for activities or projects aimed at 16yrs+)

Please note that parent councils are eligible to apply, subject to the following conditions:

- » The funded activities must meet the aims of the Fund and specifically must focus on supporting adults rather than their children.
- » Any Parent Council applying to this fund must have a statutory duty to keep proper accounts, for which there may already be legal and regulatory requirements for them to do so depending on the status of the Parent Council, for example, some parent councils are registered with OSCA as a charity.

## UNCONSISTUTED ORGANISATIONS

If you don't have a written governing document, you can apply for grant funding up to a maximum of £2,000 but only where you are working in partnership with either a community council or an established, incorporated or constituted organisation that is willing to hold the funding on your behalf. If you select this category, we will ask for further information and written evidence to show an agreement in place between organisations.

Example of organisation un-constituted groups can approach to hold funds: (It is not guaranteed that any of the below will hold funding for your organisation)

- Community Councils.
- Church's (Project cannot be faith based).
- Well established, constituted organisations.

**Please note that VASLan cannot hold funds for any organisation.**

## WHAT SIZE OF GRANT CAN BE AWARDED?

The ambition of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund through UK Government is to support initiatives which promote employability at a small, grassroots, community level. It should be accessible to all groups, no matter how small or inexperienced they are.

There will, therefore, be three levels of grants:

1. Micro Grants - Up to £2,000 aimed at un-constituted organisations.
2. Small Grants - £0-£10,000
3. Main Grant - £10,001 – £20,000



# WHAT CAN /CANNOT BE FUNDED



## We Will Fund

- Equipment, materials and capital costs
- One-off events
- Hall and room hire, including appropriate refreshments
- Participation costs
- Staff costs
- Training costs
- Transport
- Utilities and running costs
- Volunteer expenses



## We Will Not Fund

- Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
- Political or religious campaigning
- Profit-making or fundraising activities
- VAT that you can reclaim
- Statutory activities
- Overseas travel
- Alcohol or other harmful substances (e.g. tobacco)

**Please note: Political or religious campaigning can not be funding. Although, faith-based organisations are still eligible to apply with the exclusion of any religious campaigning activities or activities restricted only to members of the faith based organisation.**

# TIMELINE

## Fund Opens

The Employability Fund opens on 15th November and we will be welcoming all applications for the Expression of Interest.

## Successful Applications Notified

VASLan aim to notify and pay successful applicants within 3-4 weeks of your application. This will depend how quickly you can get the information that we require to pay out funds.

## Funding Closed for Applications

Applications close on 6th October 2024 at 12 noon. We strongly advise having applications submitted as soon as possible to prevent situations where the fund is fully allocated and your project cannot be funded.

## Employability Network Platform (ENP) Event / Fund Awareness Session

The second ENP networking event takes place on 11th October 2023, where you can meet other organisations and find out more about the fund.

## Panel Meetings

The panel will meet to discuss applications every three weeks once the fund launches.

## Feedback for Unsuccessful Applications

Unsuccessful applications will receive feedback within 3-4 weeks of their application and support will then be offered through our capacity team where appropriate.

# HOW TO APPLY?

Please visit the [VASLan website](#) for full information about the Fund and to find resources that will help you to make a strong application.

We have tried to make this process as simple as possible therefore we decided to create an Expression of Interest (EOI) as a first step of application. EOI is a simple one-page form that asks general questions about your organisations and the project you wish to be funded by the Employability Fund. The form is easily accessible [here](#).

Once you complete the form you will be contacted by Ola MacInnes, Employability Network Coordinator at VASLan, to assess your project and whether it fits the criteria and refer you to the link to the full application.

Again the application is also user-friendly and you'll be guided by Ola about the process and how to make a strong application.

Applications for this Fund should be made online. If you struggle with funding applications, please get in touch for support - you can request to speak to Ola MacInnes or Peter McGhee, or send an email to [funding@vaslan.org.uk](mailto:funding@vaslan.org.uk).



**Ola MacInnes**

**Employability Network Coordinator**

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# USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACT INFORMATION



VASLan office phone number: 01698 300390



VASLan email address: [funding@vaslan.co.uk](mailto:funding@vaslan.co.uk)



VASLan website: [www.vaslan.org.uk](http://www.vaslan.org.uk) or [www.vaslan.org.uk/employability](http://www.vaslan.org.uk/employability)



[Living Wage Scotland | The Real Living Wage](#)



[Let's Get Active, Connected and Included | SCLD](#)



[National Performance Framework | Scottish Government](#)

