

27 September 2024

Title: UK Shared Prosperity Fund TUC Union Learn Project: Extension
Report of: Ruth Gaul, Principal Programme Manager
Portfolio: Education, Skills and Inclusion

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to request approval to utilise UKSPF People and Skills underspend to fund an extension to the existing TUC Union Learn project. This request is in line with the UKSPF Investment Plan approved by Government and the Implementation Plan originally agreed by the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) Technical Officer Group and Investment Panel.

In 2022, the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) as a designated 'lead authority' was allocated funding of £47.1m for 'core-UKSPF' and £4.1m for the 'Multiply' adult numeracy programme, until March 2025 and covering the areas of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. NTCA was also allocated £3,043,546 of Rural England Prosperity Fund. The UKSPF programme is being delivered in line with the Investment Plan agreed by Government.

In September 2022, the NTCA Cabinet delegated responsibility to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Director of Finance and relevant Cabinet Members to approve the commissioning approach and subsequent grant agreements and/or contracts associated with the Shared Prosperity Fund (minute 34 Resolution 5). In May 2024, the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) Cabinet agreed that 'the formal decisions which the former North East Combined Authority and the former North of Tyne Combined Authority made be treated as decisions of the Authority.' (Cabinet meeting 7 May 2024, Minute no C6/5/24 (4)).

This report includes one project requesting a total of £153,452 UKSPF People and Skills funding, to 31st March 2025.

Recommendations

The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Mayor and relevant Cabinet Member (s) and in accordance with the scheme of delegation, is recommended to approve the following funding award, and authorise entry into required agreements to facilitate approvals, as set out in this report:

- (i) A total of £153,452 of UKSPF funding to be awarded to the TUC for the delivery of the project set out in the report.
- (ii) To authorise the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to prepare the necessary documentation to extend the contract with the lead applicant (TUC).

1. Background Information, Proposals and Timetable for Implementation

1.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will invest in economic growth and regeneration in the regions of the United Kingdom (UK), replacing the previous European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The UKSPF Delivery Plan for the Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle area sets out a more inclusive area and is built on three key aims:

- Creating a more social and inclusive economy - one which promotes wellbeing across all communities by ensuring wealth is retained locally and distributed more equitably.
- Addressing inequality and poverty, enabling our residents to access opportunities at every stage of their lives.
- Driving better coordination of education, skills, employment, and health activities to help more people move into good work, and progress in work.

Activity within this report relates to the People and Skills investment priority of UKSPF.

1.2 The focus of UKSPF Year 3 (2024/25) People and Skills employment support and in-work support investment is to create an employment journey which supports people towards work, into work, and within work.

1.3 The North of Tyne Union Learn project supports workers to develop their skills, gain qualifications and undergo training, as well as supporting trade unions in workplaces across the region to provide access to learning opportunities. The project is led by TUC working with the three North of Tyne local authorities, to pilot a new approach to skills provision in the area. The TUC received £429,242 NTCA investment funding in July 2020, but delivery of the project was delayed until March 2021, subsequently the end date of the project was extended to September 2024.

1.4 Since its inception the project has faced various challenges which have resulted in several changes to delivery and delays to the project. The main issue has been ability to recruit and appoint appropriate skilled staffing into posts. The original business case included the provision of a Learning Skills Project Officer within the TUC and three Local Authority Project Worker posts. Due to challenges associated with recruiting to the Local Authority posts, the staffing structure was changed, and three project workers were eventually appointed into the TUC.

1.5 Due to the ongoing issues associated with the recruitment of staff the TUC have requested an extension to their current grant agreement to fund staffing costs for a further 6 months. This request will enable the TUC to retain their current specialist staff and continue to deliver the current North of Tyne project while alternative and financial options are being explored. It is proposed to extend the Union Learn project to 31st March 2025, utilising the UKSPF People and Skills underspend aligning the project to Strand 3: In-Work Support.

1.6 Project Outline

1.6.1 Key information

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| Funding Source | UKSPF People and Skills |
| Proposal Name | TUC Union Learn Project – Extension |
| Lead Organisation | TUC |
| Delivery Areas | Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland |
| Timescales | Extension 1 st October 2024 - 31 st March 2025 |
| Project Value | £153,452 |
| Grant / Loan amount requested | £153,452 |

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Budget Implications: | One of the Year 2 People and Skills projects is undergoing budget decommitment to the value of £246,000 which will be completed by the end of September 2024. It is proposed to fund this project extension via this underspend. This would take the overall UKSPF People and Skills Commitment, across Years 2 and 3, to 3% under-programme (£353,545). |
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1.7 Outputs/Outcomes

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|---|-----|
| Outputs | |
| E13: Community Measures to Reduce the Cost of Living | 50 |
| Outcomes | |
| E34: Courses Including Basic, Life & Career Skills | 25 |
| Added Value Benefit: Deliver "Know your Rights" 16+ Skills Sessions | 100 |

1.8 Milestones

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Project milestone | Delivery date |
| Extension Start Date | 01/10/2024 |
| Project Financial Completion Date | 31/03/2025 |

2. Potential Impact on Objectives

2.1 All activity outlined in the report will contribute to the delivery of the outcomes of UKSPF Investment Plan which has been approved by Cabinet and by UK Government.

3. Key Risks

3.1 The risks associated with the delivery of the project outlined in the report are actively managed at several levels. Strategic risks associated with the delivery of the UKSPF programme are managed through the maintenance of a Risk Register and monitoring by the North East CA's UKSPF Programme Board. Risks at a project level are managed by the project sponsor and as a part of the regular claims and monitoring activity undertaken by the Programme Assurance Team.

4. Financial and Other Resources Implications

4.1 As a result of this report £153,452 UKSPF funding will be awarded to the TUC. UKSPF Funding will be allocated to the appropriate investment priority and intervention within the UKSPF Investment Plan and monitored in delivery in the usual manner; funding will be defrayed against the following profile:

| Funding Profile | 2024/25 | Total |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| UKSPF Revenue | £153,452 | £153,452 |
| Total | £153,452 | £153,452 |

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The comments of the Monitoring Officer have been incorporated into the body of the report.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for UKSPF and the implications of this will be considered in the project mobilisation and delivery stage.

7. Inclusive Economy Implications

7.1 The project included in this paper contribute to the delivery of the inclusive economy objectives of the North East CA. The project has submitted detailed responses to the Inclusive Economy case within the proposals and have been appraised.

8. Climate Change Implications

8.1 The project included in this paper contributes to the delivery of the climate change objectives of the North East CA. Projects have submitted information within their proposals and have been appraised.

9. Consultation and Engagement

9.1 Significant consultation was undertaken in the original development of the NTCA UKSPF Investment plan, which included several stakeholder events.

10. Appendices

10.1 None

11. Background Papers

11.1 None

12. Contact Officers

12.1 Ruth Gaul, Principal Programme Manager
Ruth.gaul@northeast-ca.gov.uk

13. Glossary

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| UKSPF | United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| North East CA | North East Combined Authority |
| NTCA | North of Tyne Combined Authority |
| NoT | North of Tyne |
| NE | North East |
| MFA | Minimum Financial Assistance |
| REPF | Rural England Prosperity Fund |
| TUC | Trade Union Congress |

14. Sign-off

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| 1) Portfolio holder: Yes | 2) Director/Head of Service: Yes | 3) Director of Finance and Investment Yes | 4) Monitoring Officer: Yes |
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