GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3510

2026-29 London Talent Pathways; 2026-27 Sector-based Work Academy funding

Programme: Supporting Londoners to Benefit from Growth

Executive summary:

This decision sets out the proposed allocation of Adult Skills Fund (ASF) grant funding of around £35.5 million per academic year, across 56 training organisations, through the London Talent Pathways (LTP) commissioning programme, over the next three academic years. The approach confirms the outturn of funding position for ASF through LTP for the academic years 2026-27 and 2027-28 – with the possibility to extend for an additional academic year (2028-29), subject to internal approvals and budget availability.

As part of the integrated settlement, additional funding was allocated to London to expand the Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) provision, to strengthen pathways into meaningful employment for Londoners. Following expressions of interest, £3.8 million of ASF funding will be allocated to 20 ASF grant-funded organisations to deliver SWAPs in 2026-27. Up to £900,000 of funding could also be claimed at end of the 2026-27 academic year reconciliation.

An additional £3.8 million for the 2026-27 academic year has also been recently allocated under the terms of the Integrated Settlement to deliver ASF and Skills Bootcamp qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies. This decision seeks approval for the funding mechanism for awards to existing ASF grant and bootcamp providers.

Decision:

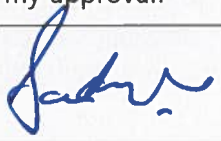
That the Mayor approves:

1) the allocation of £35.5 million Adult Skills Fund (ASF) grant funding, for each of the 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 academic years for funding under the LTP set out in Appendix A
2) the allocation of £3.8 million ASF funding to deliver Sector-based Work Academy Programmes to 20 ASF grant-funded providers (set out in Appendix B); and up to £900,000, for up to 18 additional ASF grant providers, for the 2026-27 academic year
3) the allocation of £3.8 million additional ASF funding to deliver ASF and Skills Bootcamp qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies
4) a delegation of authority to the Assistant Director - Skills and Employment Delivery to confirm the final grant awards funded by decision three above in line with the funding mechanism set out at paragraph 2.18.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature: 

Date: 9/7/26

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Under Mayoral Decision (MD) 3407,[1] in July 2025 the Mayor approved the launch of a new competitive grant award process: the London Talent Pathways (LTP) Fund, an employer-led programme funded by the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). The Mayor approved the LTP funding for two academic years (2026-27 and 2027-28), with the potential to extend for another academic year (2028-29).

1.2 LTP has been designed to align with the London Growth Plan, London's Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Inclusive Talent Strategy (ITS) to focus on creating a talent pipeline and work progression pathways for priority occupations in key industries. The funding opportunity will support Londoners to access vocational skills at Level One (pre-GCSE learning) or above; and to progress into good jobs, work or into further training.

1.3 Under MD3481, the Mayor approved the allocation up to £3.8 million of ASF funding across ASF grant providers, to deliver Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) via an expression of interest (EOI) process. SWAPs are delivered in partnership with employers, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and training providers. The programme offers unemployed Londoners up to six weeks of support, including: sector aligned pre-employment training; a short work placement and a guaranteed job interview.

1.4 As part of the integrated settlement, DWP recently notified the GLA of additional funding. The GLA will be receiving £3.8m ASF funding for 2026-27 academic year to deliver qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

London Talent Pathways

2.1 Following input from Interim Sector Talent Boards on skills gaps and priority occupations, the competitive LTP process was launched in October 2025; bidders had six weeks to submit an application. In early November, GLA officers held two market-warming events, attended by more than 200 training organisations.

2.2 In total, 168 applications were received. Of these, 129 bids were submitted by Independent Training Providers (ITPs), 16 by local authorities (LAs) and 23 by further education (FE) colleges.

2.3 GLA officers performed compliance checks on all applications subject to the mandatory and discretionary exclusion criteria (listed in the published prospectus and LTP application guidance). Each eligible application was assessed by three scorers (GLA and specialist external consultants), whose average scores resulted in an overall percentage score. This generated the subsequent ranking of all bidders.

2.4 Subject to all scoring criteria for funding outlined in the commissioning documents, and the results from the gateway visits and financial due diligence checks, 56 training organisations were recommended for funding. These comprise 47 ITPs, five LAs, and four FE colleges. The total awarded funding (combined ASF and Free Courses for Jobs (FCfJ) funding) is £35.5 million annually, for two academic years (2026-27 and 2027-28). There is the possibility to extend this for a third academic year (2028-29), subject to internal approvals and funding availability.

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[1] MD3407 has been deferred from publication as it contains commercially sensitive information.

2.5 The Interim Construction and Creative Talent Boards have reviewed, and given helpful feedback on, the ASF provision and targets suggested by successful organisations, which together submitted over 300 letters of endorsement from London employers. Creative Talent Board members queried whether some level three qualifications are adequate, in light of the Department for Education's qualification review. A further meeting with some members of the Construction Talent Board has been arranged, at their request, to do a deep dive into the proposed delivery so they can provide more in-depth feedback.

2.6 GLA officers performed gateway visits for 54 organisations with gateway visits to take place for two further organisations; this was to confirm necessary arrangements have been made by training organisations, to ensure they are ready to commence delivery in August 2026. Where GLA officers have concerns, arising from these visits, around capacity, scale of delivery, accreditation or past performance, organisations will receive conditional (or, in one case, reduced) grant offers – subject to rectifying any issues before the start of the programme, and being closely monitored once delivery starts.

2.7 GLA officers concluded the financial due diligence checks, and found two organisations to be of a 'very high risk' financially. As a result, it is recommended that neither organisation receives LTP funding.

2.8 The recommended successful organisations, and their associated annual allocations, were subject to a pro-rata calculation. This was done in line with the available funding, and the allocation of awards methodology outlined in the LTP prospectus. These calculations are set out in Appendix A.

2.9 The successful organisations have committed to support approximately 17,800 Londoners to enrol on 20,300 training courses per academic year. This is expected to result in 6,272 job outcomes in each academic year of delivery. Those expected outcomes are in line with the GLA commitments against the GLA Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework in moving learners into employment, and training learners to progress in or towards work in London's key sectors.

2.10 The spread of ASF provision across London key sectors is relatively balanced, and satisfies the minimum funding requirements per sector. The creative and frontier innovation sectors have not undergone a pro-rata process so that the minimum funding requirements are satisfied. The requested funding under the construction sector will also be granted in full. This approach will further support achievement of construction skills enrolment and achievement targets outlined in the GLA Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework.

2.11 The sectors with the highest projected enrolments are:

- construction (including green construction): 26 per cent
- health and social care: 22 per cent
- the experience economy (including hospitality and retail): 21 per cent.

The frontier innovation and 'other' sectors have the lowest number of expected enrolments, with a maximum of one per cent of total enrolments.

2.12 In early June 2026, feedback letters and revised delivery plans (where appropriate) were sent to all applicants subject to Mayoral approval to give sufficient planning time ahead of delivery starting date of 1 August 2026. Once the successful organisations confirm they have accepted the funding offer, the onboarding process will commence. All ASF grant agreements are expected to be in place before, or shortly after the start of, the 2026-27 academic year.

Sector-Based Work Academies

2.13 The SWAP EOI process resulted in 38 applications for funding from ASF grant providers. After careful consideration and in line with the criteria outlined in MD3481 and the EOI guidance, 20 ASF grant

providers are recommended to be awarded a total of £3.8 million of ASF funding for the 2026-27 academic year (as set out in Appendix B). The outlined EOI assessment criteria include:

- experience of effective partnership working with JCP
- evidence of successful SWAP delivery
- commitment to delivering job outcomes
- proposals aligned to London's priority sectors.

2.14 A further 18 ASF grant providers who submitted an EOI but have not been recommended for a direct ASF allocation for SWAP delivery, are recommended to be able to claim up to £50,000 of additional ASF funding for SWAP delivery at 2026-27 reconciliation. This amounts to a potential maximum of additional ASF funding of £900,000 for SWAP delivery in the 2026-27 academic year which would be funded through the ASF. This approach is designed to encourage a wide adoption of SWAP programme activity across London, whereby providers will work with employers and the Department for Work and Pensions to co-design training to support progression into employment.

2.15 The additional SWAP funding allocation of £3.8 million, to 20 ASF grant providers, is expected to benefit an additional 2,443 Londoners; and secure 1,154 job outcomes in London priority sectors as set out in Appendix B. The suggested cost of provision, and the corresponding average cost per learner of £1,555, represent good value for money. This is in line with the cost of SWAP provision in 2025-26 academic year (£1,500 per learner). This sets realistic expectations for the successful achievement of the committed outcomes. Furthermore, the additional funding is expected to strengthen the relationship between ASF grant providers, JCP and employers across the capital.

2.16 The proposed SWAPs allocations are in line with the officer-level thresholds for an increase in grant-award value set out in the ASF Assurance Framework. Therefore, SWAP allocations were agreed by the Assistant Director, Skills and Employment; and were communicated to successful providers in May 2026, to ensure they had sufficient time to prepare and mobilise delivery ahead of the 2026-27 academic year.

Additional ASF funding for engineering delivery

2.17 As part of the integrated settlement, DWP recently notified the GLA of additional funding. The GLA will be receiving £3.8m ASF funding to deliver ASF and Bootcamp qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies (sector subject area four) at level two and above for 2026-27 academic year. Funding will be allocated to ASF and bootcamp providers based on current delivery, ability to scale up provision, and importantly, capability to deliver outcomes to be able to meet new targets that would be added to the Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework.

2.18 Existing providers will be given indicative allocations based on the criteria above and asked to confirm their additional delivery in engineering and manufacturing technologies. The additional delivery offered will be reviewed in line with local governance arrangements and final allocation will be signed off by the Assistant Director – Skills & Employment Delivery in consultation with Executive Director – Communities & Skills as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Supporting Londoners to Benefit from Growth programme.

2.19 The Assistant Director will ensure compliance with the obligations set out in The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 which describe when written records of decisions and their content need to be published. Assistant Director Decisions will be required where appropriate to meet these transparency requirements, including in instances where GLA funds are paid to external organisations.

2.20 This allocation of funding is possible as the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 received Royal Assent and the relevant section came into force on 29 April 2026. Schedule 13 of

this Act amends the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children Learning Act 2009 which allows the Mayor and the GLA to directly assume responsibility for functions that were previously delegated by the Secretary of State of Education (SSE). This is in line with the approach set out in the English Devolution White Paper which advised the provision of Integrated Settlements for established Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) to consolidate funding and increase flexibility to deliver local priorities.

2.21 From April 2026, the ASF was incorporated into the IS under the joint skills and employment pillar. The GLA is now in receipt of consolidated funding for adult skills and employment support for the Spending Review period to April 2029. As a result, the specific legislative framework and governance requirements that required the Mayor to take all ASF decisions personally have now fallen away as the delegation of ASF responsibilities no longer takes place via section 39a of the GLA Act.

3. Equality comments

3.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA (including the Mayor of London) must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) when exercising its functions. The PSED is a duty to have due regard to:

- the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a 'protected characteristic' as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and those who do not.

3.2 The protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Compliance with the duty may involve ensuring people with a protected characteristic are provided with all the opportunities that those without the characteristic would have.

3.3 This involves having due regard to the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low.

3.4 ASF grant providers will be held accountable against what they set out in their delivery plans, including targets for engaging learners from groups with protected characteristics.

3.5 In determining the GLA's LTP funding approach and SWAP allocations, due consideration was given to their impact on learners with protected characteristics. The SWAP allocations approach was based on an EOI process considering providers':

- experience of working with JCPs
- previous SWAP delivery
- commitment to delivering job outcomes – particularly for young people at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- alignment to London's priority sectors.

3.6 The LTP competition documents clearly outlined the disadvantaged priority groups that all successful bidders have committed to prioritising. The aim of ASF is to improve opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market. Many potential ASF participants have protected characteristics. The GLA's ASF provision will support a range of groups, particularly the most disadvantaged people not currently receiving sufficient support into employment or education. These include young adults who are NEET; people without basic skills; and people who are workless. It will also support Londoners in low-paid/low-skilled jobs.

4. Other considerations

Key risks/mitigation

4.1 The following risks and mitigations have been identified:

Risk	RAG rating	Mitigation
Unsuccessful SWAP organisations complain about the EOI outcome.	Green	Each of those organisations will be able to claim up to £50k for the delivery of SWAPs at 2026-27 reconciliation.
Unsuccessful LTP organisations may submit appeals or escalations regarding the outcome.	Amber	A robust scoring process was carried out by internal staff and independent expert consultants. There was a robust quality-assurance process with regards to LTP scoring, and feedback letters has taken place.
Successful LTP organisations do not deliver the skills and job outcomes outlined in their application.	Amber	GLA delivery managers have carried out extensive onboarding and financial due diligence, to ensure providers are adequately resourced to start delivery (in accordance with their application) at the start of the academic year. Ongoing delivery will be closely monitored in line with providers' delivery plans.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.2 The LTP programme aligns to the ITS, the Get London Working programme's delivery plan (approved under cover of MD3440) and the Supporting Londoners to Benefit from Growth (SLBG) programme's delivery plan (approved under cover of MD3395). It does so by ensuring Londoners have the skills they need to improve their lives and move into employment that meets the Mayor's definition of 'good work'. The LTP also helps develop the skills required to make London's economy grow in key sectors as set out by the London Growth Plan.

4.3 The LTP programme will:

- align with the delivery of the 'Talent Pipelines for London's Key Sectors' project
- support the success of the 'Upskilling for Resilience' project
- strategically link to other projects under the Mayor's SLBG programme, approved under cover of MD3395.

4.4 The LTP programme will help deliver the skills and employment outcomes set out in the GLA Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework by supporting more Londoners to gain the skills and qualifications needed for life, work and progression.

4.5 In his Equality Objectives published in 2022, the Mayor set out how all his policies and programmes will help to create a fairer and more inclusive city, where all people feel welcome and able to achieve their full potential. Delivery of the LTP takes this into consideration and seeks assurances from providers that they will support this ambition.

Conflicts of interest

4.6 There are no conflicts of interest to note from those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

Follow up to ASF Mayoral Board Meeting

4.7 Two of the 56 providers were recommended for funding after the June ASF Mayoral Board meeting following a recently identified discrepancy with the published scoring methodology in the London Talent Pathways competition documents. Following a thorough review process of quality assuring the overall scores for all applicants, two additional applicants (now included in Appendix A) are recommended for funding subject to successful gateway visit and financial due diligence.

4.8 Including these two additional providers also increases the allocations towards Frontier Innovation sector provision and engineering provisions in London both of which are key to London's growth.

5. Financial comments

5.1 Approval is sought for the allocation of:

- £35.5 million Adult Skills Fund (ASF) grant funding, for each of the 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 academic years, for funding under the LTP set out in Appendix A
- £3.8 million ASF funding to deliver Sector-based Work Academy Programmes to 20 ASF grant-funded providers (set out in Appendix B); and up to £900,000, for up to 18 additional ASF grant providers, for the 2026-27 academic year
- £3.8 million additional ASF funding to deliver ASF and Skills Bootcamp qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies.

5.2 Under MD3407 the Mayor approved the launch of a new competitive grant award process: the London Talent Pathways (LTP) Fund, an employer-led programme funded by the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). The Mayor approved the LTP funding for two academic years (2026-27 and 2027-28), with the potential to extend for another academic year (2028-29).

5.3 Under MD3481, the Mayor approved the allocation up to £3.8 million of ASF funding across ASF grant providers, to deliver Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) via an expression of interest (EOI) process.

5.4 The proposed spending is financed by external funding (Adult Skills Fund) which is part of the GLA's Integrated Settlement. This funding sits in the Supporting Londoners to Benefit from Growth (SLBG) programme's delivery plan within the Talent pipelines for London's key sectors project.

5.5 Funding in future financial years is subject to available funding, and the GLA's annual budget setting process. Appropriate break clauses should be included in the funding agreements.

6. Legal comments

6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that certain of the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the:

6.1.1. GLA's general powers as per section 30 of the GLA Act 1999, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development or the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people

- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom

- consult with appropriate bodies

6.1.2. new direct Mayoral functions as set out in the amended Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, specifically s100 provision of financial resources. This enables the Mayor to allocate funding for training and educational purposes. These functions are no longer delegated by the SSE as was done previously.

6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty - namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Assistant Director should have particular regard to section three of this report.

6.3 It is also proposed that the Mayor delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Skills and Employment Delivery to consider and approve the final grant awards which are funded by the allocation of £3.8 million additional ASF funding to deliver ASF and Skills Bootcamp qualifications in engineering and manufacturing technologies. These decisions are made in line with the funding mechanism set out at paragraph 2.18 above. The Mayor has the power, under section 38 of the GLA Act 1999, to authorise any member of GLA staff to exercise functions that are exercisable on behalf of the Authority by the Mayor, to the extent that the Mayor so authorises, whether generally or specially, and subject to any conditions he may impose.

6.4 Should the Mayor make the decisions sought officers must ensure that:

- they do not commit to any expenditure which relies upon: ASF or any other third-party funding before the grant of the same has been made to the GLA (whether by annual ASF allocation, Integrated Settlement or otherwise); GLA budgets which have not yet been approved definitively

- any award of grant funding is made fairly, transparently, in accordance with the GLA's equalities requirements and with the requirements of GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and funding agreements are put in place between and/or varied (as applicable) and executed by the GLA and recipients before any commitment to fund is made

- where any sums payable to current recipients of ASF are to be made pursuant to the reconciliation processes and/or variation procedures set out in the agreements concerned, those procedures are followed.

6.5 To the extent to which the proposals in respect of which decisions are sought involve the making of commitments which extend beyond the current Mayoral term, officers must ensure that the terms of all agreements entered into in respect of the commitments do not fetter the discretion of any successor administration, considering in particular the London elections taking place in May 2028. Accordingly, officers must ensure that all agreements which involve making such commitments include a GLA right to not extend the funding beyond the London elections and terminate at any point for convenience and all such agreements are managed in such a manner, and any deliverables, milestones and/or output requirements are structured so as to mitigate risks of the GLA incurring abortive expenditure (which might be reasonably be taken to fetter, practically, the exercise of such discretion).

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1 The next steps are set out below:

Activity	Timeline
SWAP 2026-27 letters sent	May 2026
LTP feedback letters sent to applicants	June 2026
LTP onboarding process with successful providers	July 2026
ASF engineering letters sent	July/August 2026
LTP grant agreements in place	July/August 2026
LTP delivery start	August 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:

- **Appendix A** – LTP allocations and outcomes for 2026-27 academic year
- **Appendix B** – SWAP allocations and outcomes for 2026-27 academic year

Public access to information
Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.
If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Strategic Programmes
Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES
If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Supporting Londoners to Benefit from Growth

Part 1 – Deferral
Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES
If YES, for what reason: This MD is intended for publication on the date shown below. Disclosing the information now would adversely affect the GLA's efficient entry into and execution of the relevant agreements with the proposed funding recipients and potentially prejudice its commercial interests, which is not in the public interest.
Until what date: 1 September 2026

Part 2 – Sensitive information
Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.
Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:	Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)
Drafting officer: Lubomira Anastassova-Chirmiciu has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:	✓
Sponsoring Director: Tunde Olayinka has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.	✓
Mayoral Adviser: Howard Dawber has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.	✓
Advice: The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.	✓
Mayoral Delivery Board This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 29 June 2026.	

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:
I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Date 1 July 2026

Signature Peter Sebastian

pp Peter Sebastian, Assistant Director, Financial Services
on behalf of Fay Hammond

CHIEF OF STAFF:
I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Date 29 June 2026

Signature D. Bellamy