

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2667

### Title: Skills for Londoners Emergency Recovery Support Funding in response to COVID-19

#### Executive Summary:

The Emergency Recovery Support Fund responds to pressures faced by skills providers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will enable them to invest in equipment and adaptations to support delivery of online/remote learning and to provide 'COVID-19 secure' facilities for staff and learners to return to premises. Skills providers will be able to bid for £25,000-£200,000 capital funding from a £6m pot.

This MD seeks approval for expenditure of £6m of unallocated Skills for Londoners capital funding in the form of an emergency recovery support fund for the skills sector with delegation of decision making for project awards to the Executive Director for Good Growth in consultation with the LEAP Programme Board.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

- 1 Expenditure of up to £6m of remaining, unallocated Skills for Londoners Capital funding (from MD2142) to be made available to the Skills sector as an emergency COVID-19 response capital fund, as a contribution to eligible third parties' costs of putting in place IT and online measures, as well as adapting onsite facilities to enable their learning service provision in a COVID-19 and post COVID-19 environment; and
- 2 A delegation to the Executive Director, Good Growth, to approve detailed allocations of the funding proposed above.

#### 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: 30 July 2020

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1 Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, LEAP Delivery Team officers have been actively engaging with current skills delivery partners to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their capital projects and the day to day running of the organisations. As well as this, on the 27 of April 2020 the Association of Colleges (AoC) hosted a meeting with a range of delivery partners, including London's Institutes for Adult Learning (IALs), Further Education (FE) colleges and GLA officers. The meeting included a discussion on the key challenges being faced by skills providers in the short to medium term and how the GLA could support providers going forward.
- 1.2 One of the key challenges raised by delivery partners is the growing pressure for IT equipment to enable effective online learning. Delivery partners have expressed a significant need for capital funding to enable them to invest in the technology needed to facilitate remote learning in both the short term and the longer term, as the need for more innovative online learning is anticipated to continue beyond the course of the virus.
- 1.3 The sector has also expressed a significant need for investment in creating 'COVID-19 secure' physical learning environments, in order to enable re-opening of London's education and skills establishments.
- 1.4 Via an urgency procedure in July 2020, the LEAPIC endorsed a £6m capital emergency equipment fund. The fund responds to the IT and online learning pressures that London's skills providers are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as responding to the sectors' need to create 'COVID safe' learning spaces to enable skills providers to reopen their doors.
- 1.5 The funding is being sourced from unallocated Skills for Londoners Capital funding, which is currently endorsed by the LEAP to provide COVID-19 related contingency funding to existing delivery partners. The Mayor approved receipt of this funding from Government to LEAP as part of the £56m Growth Deal 3 allocation in MD2142.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1 The objective of this funding pot is to respond to the IT and online teaching needs of London's skills providers necessitated by the measures that have been put in place in response to COVID-19. The funding will also respond to the sector's needs to invest in creating safe learning spaces so that they can reopen their facilities and deliver onsite learning where possible. The LEAP Delivery Team would open this funding up to the sector using a short online application form.
- 2.2 The funding will be available to London's skills sector and will be made available via an online application launching in July, with funding being given out in late August/early September. Providers will be able to bid for between £25,000 and £200,000 to invest in equipment to support online and remote learning as well as safety equipment to enable colleges to reopen.
- 2.3 To be eligible for applications to be considered, skills providers will need to show the following:
  - an evidenced and clear need for the funding having arisen as a result of the measures put in place in response to COVID-19;
  - how they will put in place and maintain effective online/remote learning arrangements during the COVID-19 and post COVID-19 environments;

- how they will create safe learning spaces onsite; and
  - demonstrate the organisation's ability to secure value for money in using any funding granted.
- 2.4 Eligible applications will then be evaluated by GLA officers by reference to clear evaluation criteria which will be developed and published with the application materials.
- 2.5 Examples of some of the capital costs incurred by skills providers as a result of COVID include; protective screens, adaptations to reception areas, toilets and other facilities, sanitizer stations, provision of one way circulation, signage and adaptations to fire doors to reduce human contact.
- 2.6 To enable maximum accessibility for skills providers, match funding would not be required. It is clear that the sector is currently facing financial challenges as a result of COVID-19, and organisation's reserves will likely need to focus on recovery and contingency funding going forward.
- 2.7 Due diligence will be carried out on applicants to mitigate potential risk and a grant agreement will be put in place for all recipients to ensure accountability.
- 2.8 To ensure that the impact of the funding is evaluated, it will be a condition of the funding that all recipients must complete a self-evaluation/closure form. As the grants will be relatively small, it would not be proportionate to measure outputs for a given period after the funding has been drawn down. Self-evaluation forms will be collated, and the impact of the funding reported back to the LEAPIC.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1 The GLA is required, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.2 In the context of the emergency support funding, the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy launched in 2018 includes the following relevant objectives:
- a) many more people of all ages progressing in learning to reach their full potential;
  - b) ensuring all Londoners and London's businesses can access the skills they need to succeed;
  - c) promoting social integration and contact between different groups and tackling the inequalities that exist which prevent people from being active citizens;
  - d) more young people having the knowledge, skills and life experiences to succeed;
  - e) reducing the number of jobless young people;
  - f) London being a city where people of every background feel connected with each other and can realise the benefits of London's diversity; and
  - g) creating greater equality, diversity and inclusion (which includes gender parity in terms of career outcomes and greater social mobility within professions).
- 3.3 Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how they will utilise the capital funding to ensure that those who are the most digitally disadvantaged are prioritised to receive the IT and digital equipment needed to ensure effective learning.

#### **4. Other considerations**

##### *a) Key risks and issues*

- 4.1 There is a risk that the emergency funding cannot be easily accessed by the sector. The LEAP Delivery Team will ensure that the application is short and will be advertised on multiple platforms including the Regeneration and Economic Development GLA webpages, Skills and Employment Unity webpage, LEAP webpage and will also be communicated via the Association of Colleges and skills contact database.
- 4.2 There is a risk that unsuccessful applicants challenge the appraisal process. Officers will follow a fair process by two officers evaluating applications, solely by reference to published evaluation criteria and scoring methodology followed by a manager review. All unsuccessful applicants will be offered the opportunity to receive feedback, with areas for improvement outlined to support them should they decide to apply for any future round of funding.
- 4.3 As with all funding programmes, there is a risk that a delivery partner will be awarded funding and then be unable to carry out the project. To mitigate against unallocated spend for the programme falling away, a reserve list will be drawn up.
- 4.4 Funding required to deliver projects exceeds that available –all funding pots rolled out to date have been oversubscribed. The GLA continue to lobby government for further funding using informed evidence-based proposals on the future requirements of the sector.
- 4.5 Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the ever-changing environment, there is a risk that the sector's needs change further. The LEAP Delivery Team will continue to actively engage with the sector in order to keep abreast of their needs and respond accordingly.
- 4.6 There is a risk of fraud. To mitigate against this, the LEAP Delivery team will seek support of the Regeneration and Economic Development team's Programme Office to support with checking the credibility of those applying for funding.

##### *b) Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

- 4.7 The investment supports the priorities set out in a *City for All Londoners* based on the principles of 'good growth' and investment in London's future. The funding will form an integral part of London's recovery post COVID-19. The Government have been clear that London's skills and education providers are critical in enabling the economy to recover and grow. The Skills for Londoners Capital Fund (from which capital is being provided for the Emergency Response Support Fund) provides a significant foundation and support for the skills sector to ensure that London's skills system meets the needs of London's businesses while supporting all Londoners to access the skills they need to find and progress in work.
- 4.8 The Skills for Londoners Capital Fund also supports the London Infrastructure Plan 2050 by enabling skills providers to understand London's forward infrastructure investment pipeline and ensure that skills provision aligns to the capital's requirements.

##### *c) Links to National strategies and priorities*

- 4.9 The Skills for Londoners Capital Fund aligns to the government's Post-16 Skills Plan and Industrial Strategy green paper's commitment to 'developing skills' by providing investment in FE estate and machinery to enable the delivery of high quality skills provision.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1 Approval is being sought for the expenditure of up to £6m as a Capital Emergency Fund under the Skills for Londoners programme. This fund is required as a response to the IT and online learning pressures London's skills providers are facing as a result of COVID-19.
- 5.2 The £6m will be dispensed via a bidding process in which applicants can request funding anywhere between £25,000 - £200,000. The emergency aspect of the fund requires payments to be made upfront to help alleviate cashflow problems many skill providers have encountered since COVID-19. To mitigate the risk associated with this, a funding agreement will be issued with clawback clauses requesting evidence of equipment orders before funds are released with invoices to follow. Furthermore, successful recipients will be subject to due diligence checks.
- 5.3 This will be funded from Growth Deal funds repurposed from a planned third round of the Skills for Londoners programme.

## **6. Legal comments**

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that:
  - 6.1.1 the decisions requested of the Mayor fall within the general statutory powers of the Authority, to do anything which is considered to promote or facilitative of or conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation in Greater London; and
  - 6.1.2 in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
    - a) pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people;
    - b) 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; and
    - c) consult with appropriate bodies.
- 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, gender, 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 Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3 Officers must ensure that in the case of each grant paid from the fund the subject of decision 1 that:
  - 6.3.1 in allocating the grant funding, they adhere to the requirements of section 12 of the Authority's Contracts and Funding Code;
  - 6.3.2 the GLA receive no direct benefit from the recipient of the grant in return for the grant funding; and
  - 6.3.3 an appropriate grant agreement be executed by both the Authority and the relevant recipient before payment of any part of the relevant grant funding be made.
- 6.4 Any function exercisable by the Mayor on behalf of the Authority may also be exercised by a member of the Authority's staff albeit subject to any conditions, which the Mayor sees fit to impose. To this end, the Mayor may make the requested delegation to the Executive Director of Good

Growth, if he so choose.

## **7 Planned delivery approach and next steps**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Communicate outcome of LEAPIC endorsement to skills sector	July 2020
Launch short application	w/c 20th July 2020
Close and assess application	w/c 3rd August 2020
Announce successful applicants	Early October 2020
Get into contract with successful applicants	October 2020 onwards
Project evaluations	Upon project completion

### **Appendices and supporting papers:**

None

## 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 either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

## Part 1 - Deferral

**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO**

## Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under 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:

Beth Lackenby has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

### Sponsoring Director:

Phillip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

### Mayoral Adviser:

Jules Pipe has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

### Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

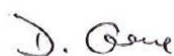
### Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 27 July 2020.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

### Signature



### Date

28 July 2020

## CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

### Signature

Approval received via email from Nick Bowes, Mayoral Director, Policy (on behalf of the Chief of Staff), to Felicity Harris on 29 July 2020.

### Date

29 July 2020