

## Information Pack: ESOL Plus – Employer Strategic Partnership

### Introduction

The Mayor’s new **ESOL Plus** initiative will work with partners to meet identified gaps in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision for learners. The focus of the pilots will be on innovation, partnership working, and the potential for scaling to a regional level.

This proposal is for a strategic partnership to improve the provision of ESOL for employees, and to evaluate this work to create an evidence-based business case for employer investment in ESOL.

City Hall will provide up to **£20,000** grant-funding which is expected to be matched by the employer, membership body or sector skills institution. The project will create provision for a pilot cohort of employees and lay the foundations for a company- or sector- wide ESOL strategy.

It is anticipated that the evaluation will track outcomes such as productivity, risk management, staff retention, staff development and increased employee wellbeing. The successful applicant should carry out this evaluation in partnership with the ESOL provider, and the GLA will be able to provide support by way of guidance, training and templates.

Organisations who partner with us will be investing in a strategic skills initiative for their sector, will have the credibility of partnering with the Mayor, and will be involved in an evaluation of the project that will provide a valuable case study to inform future work.

### Background

One in three Londoners were born outside the UK, and more than 300 languages are currently spoken on our streets<sup>1</sup>. The Mayor has described the importance of English and the need for government and cities to improve the support we provide to learners, because a common language is necessary for a common life. The Casey Review described English language as a “common denominator and a strong enabler of integration”<sup>2</sup>.

Being able to speak English is crucial for accessing employment in London. It is also associated with several other benefits including independence, confidence and self-determination. It leads to tangible benefits such as better access to healthcare and education and unlocks migrants’ capabilities<sup>3</sup>. The wider social benefits of ESOL in the long term include saving costs to health and welfare, and harnessing migrants’ potential employment skills to strengthen the economy<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> GLA (2017) *The Mayor’s Vision for a Diverse and Inclusive City: Draft for consultation*. London: GLA.

<sup>2</sup> The Casey Review (2016), *A review into opportunity and integration*

<sup>3</sup> DEMOS (2014) *Making ESOL policy work better for migrants and wider society*. London: Demos.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Most migrants who do not speak English when they arrive in the UK want to improve their English language skills<sup>5</sup>, but often face barriers in terms of the availability, sufficiency and flexibility of the ESOL offer in London. They can find themselves locked out of language learning, stuck at a basic level, and unable to progress to a level that would support their independence and integration.

Demand for ESOL is high in London. Over 50 per cent of the country's ESOL provision takes place in the capital<sup>6</sup>. Public spending on ESOL has been reduced by 60 per cent since 2009. Groups affected by the funding changes were identified in the government's ESOL Equality Impact Assessment in July 2011 as being those in low-paid work, those with low-level English language and literacy skills, and women with childcare responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> There is a diverse base of established providers and a range of ESOL provision delivered across London, but over half of providers, rising to two thirds of colleges, report that they struggle to meet demand for ESOL<sup>8</sup>.

ESOL Plus will fund innovative pilots to provide ESOL to learners whose needs are not currently being met through mainstream provision. There is a clear role for employers in this context that we would like to support the Mayor's initiative through a strategic partnership.

### **Objectives and expected outcomes**

City Hall will enter into a strategic partnership with an employer, membership body or sector skills institution, with match-funding provided by the employer, to deliver a project that will:

- Run ESOL classes for a pilot cohort of employees, that meets the needs of learners – including providing a space for learning and ensuring employees have the time to attend<sup>9</sup>;
- Fully evaluate pilot classes to support the development an ESOL strategy for their organisation or sector that is ambitious in meeting the needs of employees and achieves positive outcomes for the employer.

The joint funding (up to £20,000 grant from the GLA plus match from the strategic partner, including in kind support) will provide for a bespoke ESOL course and qualified ESOL teachers for an agreed number of employees to access on a regular basis for the duration of the project. The joint funding will also be expected to cover the expense for appropriate learning space, compensation for learner time where appropriate, and an evaluation of the pilot.

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<sup>5</sup> Bell, R. and Plumb, N. (2017) *Integration not demonization: The final report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration's inquiry into the integration of immigrants*. London: The Challenge.

<sup>6</sup> The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (2012), *English Language for All*

<sup>7</sup> Stevenson, A., Kings, P. and Sterland, L. (2017). *Mapping ESOL provision in Greater London*. London: Learning and Work Institute.

<sup>8</sup> Stevenson, A., Kings, P. and Sterland, L. (2017). *Mapping ESOL provision in Greater London*. London: Learning and Work Institute.

<sup>9</sup> This can be achieved in several ways, including offering employees paid time to attend lessons during work hours, or offering additional annual leave for employees who participate in lessons on their own time

Priority will be given to:

- Organisations working within or representing sectors that have a high proportion of migrant workers, especially those that can identify a specific need amongst their workforce;
- Organisations which can evidence existing good employment practices<sup>10</sup> and are interested in developing a better ESOL offer for their employees, with a willingness to work creatively to overcome barriers for employees to access ESOL;
- Organisations which are able to fully engage in an evaluation of the ESOL pilot, and willing to develop an ESOL strategy/business-case for their organisation that will have resonance across their sector.

Interested organisations will be asked to complete a light-touch application form. Applicants are expected to demonstrate:

- Senior commitment and support of the pilot
- A strong project delivery plan with evidence of engagement with potential ESOL providers
- Recognition of barriers workers face in accessing ESOL, and how they will be overcome
- Willingness to fully evaluate the pilot and work with partners to disseminate findings

### Key dates

- Wednesday 7 March – applications open
- Monday 23 April, 4pm – applications close
- Thursday 26th April – interviews
- Monday 30 April – notification of outcome

### How to apply

To apply for this grant-funding please complete and return the application form available on <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees> by email to [Hannah.boylan@london.gov.uk](mailto:Hannah.boylan@london.gov.uk) by **10.00 on Friday 6 April 2018**.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/making-london-best-city-world-work>