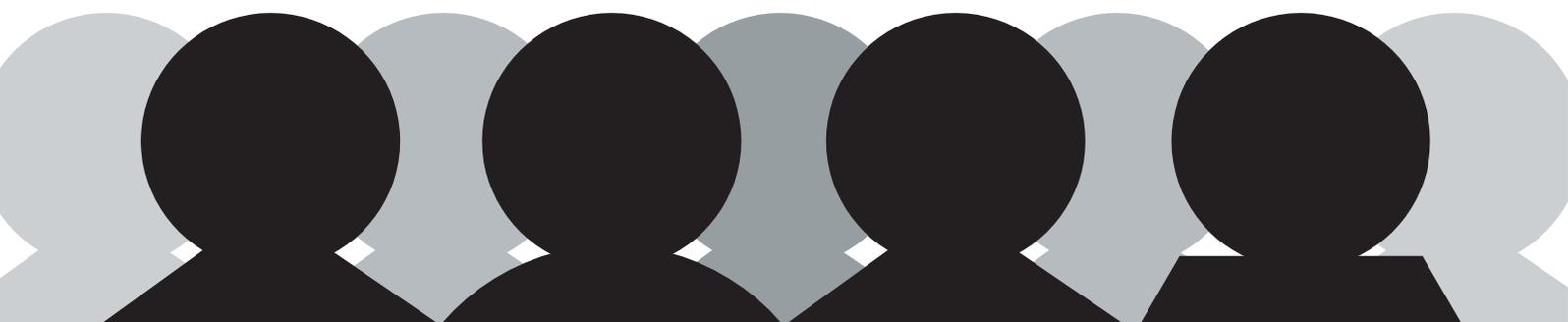


**MAYOR OF LONDON**



**GLA ESF 2014-2020 CO-FINANCING PROGRAMME**

# **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**Higher Level Digital Skills – w/c 18 June 2018**



**European Union**

European  
Social Fund

This document is a 'live' document that will record all of the questions submitted during the open tendering period for the GLA's "Higher Level Digital Skills" ESF project, and the responses to the submitted questions.

Please read the questions and responses prior to submitting a new question. Responses will not be provided for questions that are repeated.

This document will be the only document published in relation to the "Higher Level Digital Skills" ESF project, and will be updated and published each Friday until the period for Q&A comes to an end on 20 June 2018. The Prospectus indicates a deadline for weekly submissions of questions as 16:00 hours on the Wednesday of each week, and questions submitted by the deadline will be responded to in this publication. However, where a question is submitted after the deadline but prior to publication the GLA will endeavour to include a response, rather than waiting a full week. To confirm the reasoning for this; (i) the publication will be available to all applicants at the same time, so no organisation will be disadvantaged, and (ii) the questions will be answered at the earliest possible publication date in order to assist all applicants and give them the maximum amount of time to consider responses. If further clarification is required that prevents the GLA from providing a response by the Friday following a Wednesday submission, the GLA reserves the right to publish an updated version of this document prior to the next publication deadline. The final date for the submission of questions is 20 June 2018.

Individual questions will not be responded to directly, but will appear in this published document so that all potential applicants receive a response at the same time to ensure that no advantage is given to any one bidder.

Questions will be printed in full, although the GLA reserves the right to amend wording to improve clarity if necessary, and to split questions which include more than one request into multiple questions. Questions will include a date on which they were submitted, but will be published in an anonymized format.

Where questions relate specifically to the "Higher Level Digital Skills" project, they will be published under that project heading.

Where questions are generic or can be considered as generic, they will be published under the "Generic Questions" heading.

The GLA reserves the right to publish questions that are asked about a specific project, but which can be considered as generic, under the "Generic Questions" heading.

You are strongly advised to read both the generic questions and answers and those for the project for which you are applying before you submit your application.

Generic questions and answers will be republished in the Q&A document for any future opportunities funded via the GLA ESF 2014-2020 programme, although the GLA reserves the right to make amendments to responses if circumstances change or additional information is made available.

## **Generic Questions**

Generic questions 1 to 16 are replicated from those published during the recent GLA grant award Q&A periods.

**Q1. What is the minimum turnover for bidding as lead for the <project title> tender?  
(18 November 2016)**

A1. *The GLA does not require a minimum turnover from organisations bidding as Lead Delivery Partners. The GLA's Due Diligence process will look at a variety of areas, as described in the Prospectus, and they will collectively be considered prior to GLA Finance making a recommendation of whether to support an application. The GLA Finance recommendation will be risk based and may include suggested mitigations if risks are considered high but manageable. The GLA Finance recommendation will be considered alongside additional information requested within the application, and a decision will be made at moderation. Organisations should take a sensible approach when considering whether to apply as a Lead Delivery Partner, and should consider whether they have the financial stability and knowledge to manage a project of any particular value and complexity in terms of partnership.*

**Q2. To aid greatly with preparing our responses could you possibly provide the approximate maximum character counts for each of the response boxes in Part C of the application form?  
(24 November 2016)**

A2. *No character limit has been published because the response boxes in Part C of the application form have been set up to be size-restricted so that all applicants have the same space for their response in the required font (Arial 10 point).*

**Q3. We are interested in becoming involved in the delivery of your <project>, but we feel we might not be successful if we submit a bid as a Lead Partner and we are therefore considering joining a partnership. Can you provide any information about the organisations that you know are bidding to become Leads?  
(25 November 2016)**

A3. *Unfortunately the GLA will not know who intends to submit a bid as a Lead Delivery Partner until the deadline. However, we have put up an option for people to join our Mailing List on our website, and this asks whether people would like to be put on a Partnership Database.*

*If you would like to access our Mailing List, please fill your details in [here](#).*

*If you would like to view the Partnership Database, please download it [here](#).*

**Q4. I have downloaded the Partnership Database from the ESF pages on the GLA website, but it is not clear whether an organisation wants to be a Lead Partner or a Sub-Partner. Can you let me know how I should find out?  
(25 November 2016)**

*A4. The early version of the Mailing List included a Yes/No option for this question, but it has now been updated. We have written to the organisations on the Partnership Database to let them know that they can update this information, and we will continue to republish an updated version of the Partnership Database on our website on a regular basis.*

**Q5. As part of Due Diligence bidders are required to provide financial regulations unless legally unable. Our finance department are uncomfortable about this as it is an internal document and feel our audited Annual Report should provide sufficient assurance, are there any alternatives to that particular document and will not providing it mean we fail the Due Diligence?  
(25 November 2016)  
As a follow on to my Financial Regulations question, would our Procurement Policy suffice?  
(29 November 2016)**

*A5. In order to aid the Due Diligence process and obtain a clear understanding of an organisation's capacity, processes and risk regarding financial exposure, the GLA has requested a number of documents. The Prospectus allows a relaxation of the requested documentation provided there is a legal reason. In this instance we do not believe that there is a legal reason to withhold the documentation. Furthermore, it being an internal document gives us greater insight into the procedures and processes related to the financial areas of your business. Whilst we appreciate the offer to substitute the Financial Regulations documentation with your audited Annual Report and Procurement Policy, these documents will not provide the breadth of information that the Financial Regulations will provide. We therefore confirm that we require the documentation and that if you fail to supply it we reserve the right not to assess your application or consider it for an award of funding.*

*The GLA will review the Due Diligence process and documentation requirements, and may amend this as future Specifications are published.*

**Q6. Please can you confirm whether or not someone could be on the SFA ESF Youth Programme at the same time they are on the GLA ESF Programme. Will there be the same opportunity to refer between Strands?  
(25 November 2016)**

*A6. A participant may be on both the SFA and GLA ESF programmes at the same time, provided that the projects are delivering different outcomes or results. For example, if an activity identified during client assessment could be delivered via an SFA project, and would not be reported or claimed from both, the participant could access both streams of funding. Applicants*

*should note however that care should be taken where the end result for the participant is the same on both programmes, as it would not be able to be reported to and claimed from both organisations, regardless of whether the activity was delivered by more than one organisation or not.*

**Q7. The Payment Trigger Calculator asks how much additional funding bidders could absorb to deliver additional outcomes at the same unit price – is there an upper limit for funding available?  
(1 December 2016)**

*A7. The question in the Payment Trigger Calculator is not related to current budget availability, but is intended to verify the value of project that an organisation could accommodate if additional budget did become available and the GLA wished to invest additional funding into this project.*

**Q8. We are looking at the <project> application, and would like to know in more detail how the scoring mechanism works in practice. We have already referred to the information in the Application Form, as well as in the Prospectus on ‘How GLA will score your application’ but we would like clarity on how the scoring of each section of the application is going to work. So for example what is the maximum and lowest score for a question with say 6% weighting or 20% weighting? I also assume the scoring will work in the same manner for the <other GLA ESF projects>. I look forward to your feedback.  
(8 December 2016)**

*A8. The final section of the application (usually Part F) will indicate the values that each question will be scored from, (usually 0 to 3), and the percentage weighting for each question. Therefore, if a question is worth 6%, and score of 3 would mean that the application answer has contributed 6% to the overall score, with a 2 achieving 4%, a 1 achieving 2%, and a 0 achieving 0%. The question weighting therefore indicates the overall importance of the question.*

**Q9. Please could you confirm whether an apprenticeship can be claimed as an employment outcome for GLA ESF co-financed projects?  
(13 December 2016)**

*A9. Participants who commence an apprenticeship will also have a contract of employment, and the preferred supplier will therefore be able to satisfy the evidence requirements for a claim for entry to employment for GLA ESF co-financed projects.*

**Q10. We are currently considering a bid, but would prefer to engage with the programme as a subcontractor. I am aware that there is an ESF Partnership Database, but am not sure how to access it. Could you confirm this please?  
(1 February 2017)**

*A10. The link to access the Partnership Database is [here](#) and can be found in the response to Q3 above. The database is updated every week and the updated version is published on Friday of each week.*

**Q11. Would a Young Person's participation in this programme affect their entitlement to JSA or other out-of-work benefits in any way?  
(2 February 2017)**

*A11. Applicants should note that although individuals in receipt of JSA or ESA are eligible for the Programme, they may be mandated onto Department for Work and Pensions (DWP's) Work Programme. This would result in participants being required to exit the project prior to completion and prior to results being achieved, therefore meaning that the GLA would be unable to make further payments in relation to the mandated participant. However, at their discretion, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) advisors may be able to defer mandatory Work Programme entry for a period of up to 12 months to allow a client to engage with alternative provision, and the GLA therefore advises that if JSA or ESA clients are recruited, successful Applicants should liaise with the individual's JCP advisor to confirm deferment at the earliest instance.*

**Q12. If we submit an application, can you confirm when we will find out if we are successful (or not)?  
(3 February 2017)**

*A12. The Prospectus confirms that, whether successful or not, all applicants will be notified at the same time, (within one week of a decision being made by the GLA). A table which indicates provisional dates for various milestones is included at the end of the Specification.*

**Q13. In a previous answer you have indicated that there is no minimum turnover for organisations submitting a tender, but that the financial tests in the prospectus will be followed. Are you able to provide more detail about what the thresholds are for pass/fail on the measures indicated in the prospectus so that we can make an assessment about whether we will meet these requirements?  
(15 February 2017)**

A13. *The GLA Due Diligence process looks at a number of indices in order to determine whether they feel that there is sufficient risk appetite for us to make an investment. As each area reviewed impacts on all others, there are no thresholds that are set as either pass or fail. A generally poor score throughout could result in a recommendation that we do not invest, as could a good score throughout but with one area reviewed scoring particularly poorly.*

**Q14. Is there a minimum number of hours per week that someone needs to be in employment or training for this to count as an outcome?  
(15 February 2017)**

A14. *The Evidence Handbook confirms the minimum number of hours per week that someone needs to be in employment for this to count as an outcome. There is no minimum threshold for either education or training.*

**Q15. Is there a minimum period of time that someone needs to have been out of education, employment or training before they are eligible for this programme?  
(15 February 2017)**

A15. *The Specification confirms that participants must be either unemployed or inactive on entry to the project. Eligibility for the “Digital Skills Training” project also includes ‘At Risk’. Please refer to the Evidence Handbook for a definition.*

**Q16. I'm writing with a query regarding the <Project Name> ESF Prospectus, we are considering submitting a bid as part of a <organisation status> consortium. As part of the due diligence process we have been requested to submit our Financial Regulations. This document is for internal use only and contains potentially sensitive information that could leave us open to the risk of fraud if we allow our risk management processes and controls to be shared externally. Please could you confirm if an abridged version of our Financial Regulations would be sufficient (removing sensitive information)?  
(21 February 2017)**

A16. *Further to the response to Q5 (above), the GLA are prepared to accept a ‘desensitised’ version of an organisation’s Financial Regulations, but applicants should ensure that the documentation provides sufficient information for the GLA to carry out their checks, and the GLA reserve the right to approach the applicant for additional information if it is required. However, the GLA would wish applicants to consider whether there is a need to submit a desensitised document, as the GLA would not share the document further and it would only be used internally for our review and checks.*

## **Questions relating specifically to the “Higher Level Digital Skills” project**

As at 30 May 2018, no questions had been submitted in relation to the “Higher Level Digital Skills” project.

**Q1. The versions of these documents on the GLA website do not seem to be annotated with a version number, which makes it hard to be sure that I am downloading the correct versions. Could you confirm whether they are labelled as Version 2 or have simply replaced the previous versions on the website?  
(4 June 2018)**

*A1. Version 2’s of the following documents replaced the published version 1’s on the GLA website on 31 May 2018 with the following annotations:*

- *Prospectus: Renamed Prospectus v2 on the front cover, and with VERSION 2 on the inside page just below ‘COPYRIGHT’*
- *Specification: Publication date on the inside cover amended to “31 May 2018 – version 2”*
- *Application Form: Publication date on the inside cover amended to “31 May 2018 – version 2”*
- *Payment Trigger Calculator: ‘Title page’ amended to read VERSION 2 just below PROJECT CODE.*
- *Evidence Handbook: Publication date on the inside cover amended to “31 May 2018 – version 2”*

*All other documentation remains as originally published.*

**Q2. Having reviewed the documentation for the Higher Level Digital Skills funding stream, we had a few questions we wanted to clarify. We may have simply overlooked some of the details in some of the documentation but we’ve read through and there are some things we’d be grateful to clarify. Having checked the portal, I can see that these questions haven’t been raised by any other organisation as yet.**

- **Are there specific guidelines regarding the preferred areas of focus within ‘digital skills’ - being safe online, through to SEO or UX/UI or coding languages?**
- **We may have missed this detail but is there a specific age range for the students?**
- **Are there longer term social impact measures which will be tracked, beyond the completion of the placement?**
- **Of the 400 start ups, are these distinct across the areas or can the same businesses be involved in the skills review as well as the placements?**
- **How many young people need to take part (training through to placements)?**  
**(6 June 2018)**

A2. *In response to the queries raised:*

- *There is no preferred area of digital skills to be covered by the project; the businesses that are engaged with will inform and direct the delivery focus through highlighting their particular business needs.*
- *There are currently no plans to track longer term social impact measures beyond completion of the project. A self-evaluation template will be provided by the GLA which will allow Delivery Partners to assess whether the project has achieved its objectives and outputs for the duration of the project only.*
- *The same business will potentially be able to participate at different stages of the project e.g. in reviewing existing training and in providing a work placement, subject to a minimum total of 400 businesses that must be engaged by the project.*
- *There is no target for the number of students who will benefit from the training modules developed; there is also no expectation of numbers of students undertaking work placements or project opportunities. The outputs relate to the number of businesses engaged with.*

**Q3. Please can you confirm if the training developed as a result of the project needs to be accredited at level 4 and above, or can the focus be developing short courses/training programmes targeted at students on level 4 and above courses.**  
**(11 June 2018)**

A3. *To elicit a Business Co-Design Of Digital Skills Training Programmes output payment, the training module(s) developed must enhance an accredited training programme leading to a qualification at Level 4 or above, or be module(s) that could be considered as a stand-alone qualification at Level 4 or above.*

<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

*In order to clarify this further is the current published documentation, a revised Evidence Handbook (version 3) has been published, with amended wording highlighted in yellow for ease of reference.*

**Q4. Please can you advise the minimum number of Higher Digital Skills Providers and Students you expect to benefit from the programme. Please provide a base figure.**  
**(11 June 2018)**

A4. *This project has a minimum target for the number of start-ups, micros or SMEs reviewing higher level digital skills training programmes and identifying opportunities (400), but does not have a minimum target for the number of students or Higher Level Skills providers engaged during the delivery.*

**Q5. Please can you advise if you deliver accredited qualification via a professional body that the quality assurance can be delivered via the professional body  
(12 June 2018)**

*A5. We understand this question to be “Can the same professional body carry out both the delivery of a qualification and the quality assurance aspects. In this instance the GLA do not have a requirement, and would request that it is confirmed that this is in compliance with the policy and guidance of the professional body. The Confirmation of Training Enhancement declaration should be signed by the body delivering the Level 4 or above training, who will also be required to complete a Higher Level Skills Provider Engagement Form.*

*If this response does not answer the query, we would request for further clarification of the question.*

**Q6. We are already Quality assured by the QAA for our Level 4/5/6 delivery of training/ our accredited programmes. If we were successful with the funding grant would we need to undergo an OFSTED inspection as well, as per page 27 of the prospectus point 5.35.  
(14 June 2018)**

*A6. The GLA asks for OfSted reports and Common Inspection Frameworks from those who will be involved in delivery of qualifications on the project in order to obtain an overview of the organisation’s general provision. Where an alternate organisation provides Quality Assurance, please include their report which confirms their assessment of delivery and confirm in writing with your application that the report is in place of the requested OfSted report. The GLA does not expect Delivery Partners to request an OfSted assessment where alternate QA is already in place. Centre Accreditations or Accreditations for specific qualifications that are intended to be delivered on the project should be provided to give confirmation that what is offered can be delivered.*

As at 20 June 2018, no further questions had been submitted in relation to the “Higher Level Digital Skills” project. However, one question was received after the deadline for questions, but before the publishing deadline. As the question relates to the functionality of a published document, the GLA have agreed to respond.

**Q7. When inputting our figures into the payment trigger it turned red indicating our figure was too low for the number of businesses engaged. The figures indicated that for a £1,000,000 of funding you expected a minimum of 400 business. Does this not correspond that for 500k of funding you expect a minimum of 200. Please confirm minimum number of Businesses engaged for 500k.  
(21 June 2018)**

*A7. The specification was originally intended for one project only, but this was relaxed prior to publishing. The GLA omitted to amend the Conditional Formatting in the Payment Trigger Calculator, so please ignore that the cell turns red. The minimum volume of businesses will be applied proportionally to the value of grant requested.*