



served by One Team

South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership



# People & Skills - Funding Prospectus

**Theme One: Digital and Employability Skills Support**

**Theme Two: Addressing Local Skills Needs**

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# 1. The Context and Opportunity



## 1.1. What is this funding for?

This Prospectus details our offer of grant funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) People and Skills Strand. We are using this funding to address the following priorities within our UKSPF Investment Plan:

- E33 – Employment support for economically inactive people (not currently participating in the workforce)
- E34 – Courses including basic, life and career skills.
- E35 – Projects that enrich lives and develop volunteering opportunities.
- E36 – Projects that increase levels of digital inclusion by developing essential digital skills.
- E37 – Projects that provide tailored support for the employed to access training and development courses.
- E39 – Projects that address specific local skills needs and shortages.
- E41 – Funding to support local digital skills.

As of the 30th October 2023, we are open to applications from interested, eligible parties (see Section 2.3 for eligibility guidance).

## 1.2. What is the context for investment?

The context for our People and Skills Investment is one of both challenge and opportunity.



### The challenge

The employment rate in East Lindsey District stood at 61.7% in the most recent set of data (December 2022),<sup>1</sup> which marked an impressive rise of 8% on the year prior but still remains one of the lowest rates in the country. Boston and South Holland recorded rates of 74.7% and 83.1%, which are considerably higher and above the regional average.<sup>2</sup> These strong figures mask challenges for employers. In-work productivity remains a significant challenge in the area, with GVA in Boston and East Lindsey standing at only 74% of the national average and resident wages across Greater Lincolnshire standing at 6%.<sup>3</sup>

It also masks a changing labour market – nearly 160,000 jobs across Greater Lincolnshire will be affected by technological change and automation.<sup>4</sup> 37% of all vacancies in Greater Lincolnshire have been classified as ‘hard to fill’, with social care (a major sector in all three SELCP Districts) and agri-food (particularly prevalent in South Holland) reporting particular challenges in terms of both skills and employment.<sup>5</sup> Higher technical education also remains a particular challenge, despite businesses reporting that this is the area where demand is likely to grow most significantly. South Holland District has only 19.4% of the population qualified to NQF Level 4 or above (measured against a national average of 43%). These are the challenges that our investments must meet in order to bolster prosperity, social mobility and growth in our three Districts.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>ONS, Sub-Regional Productivity Data, 2021;

<sup>3</sup>GLLEP Skills Report, 2022, Pp.74

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, Pp.9.

## The opportunity

There are substantial opportunities in our three Districts. Major investments have been made in the local learning infrastructure through the Town Deal-funded projects at Boston College, Skegness TEC Partnership and in supporting the development of local provision. The strong employment figures for South Holland and Boston are indicative of a vibrant, growing private sector, with particular sector specialisms in food production and manufacturing. East Lindsey boasts one of the strongest visitor economy sectors in the country. In 2022, East Lindsey realised the highest net gain in GVA from tourism on record – a massive £824 million.<sup>6</sup>



The opportunity posed by a growing, vibrant local economy and a revitalised learning infrastructure, served by experienced and high-quality training providers across the public, private and third sector, is the context within which we are making this investment. This is an opportunity to develop that rich local learning ecosystem further for the benefit of our residents and local economic growth.

Our consultation identified the following key priorities for People and Skills Investment in our local area.

### In South Holland District:

1. Projects that develop skills and employment opportunities within the Fresh Food, Food Processing and Logistics Sectors.
2. Projects that provide remote learning opportunities, engaging learners in new opportunities for personal and economic development.
3. Projects that look to utilise redundant community buildings as Training Hubs to serve hard-to-reach communities.
4. Projects that build on the expertise and capacity of established providers and Social Enterprises to upskill local employees and residents.

<sup>6</sup> Global Tourism Solutions, 2022.

### In **Boston Borough:**

1. Projects that support Social Enterprises to deliver training and development in the community.
2. Projects that look at innovative ways of engaging both the migrant population and the over 65's in training and development activity.

### In **East Lindsey District:**

1. Projects that focus on the training & development needs of the Visitor economy & Tourism Sector.
2. Projects that support Social Enterprises and Sporting Organisations to deliver training and development in the community.
3. Projects that look to utilise redundant community buildings as Training Hubs to serve hard-to-reach communities.



## 2. What Will We Invest In?

### 2.1. The core principles for UKSPF investment in People & Skills in South and East Lincolnshire

Our core principles will guide decision-making across the People and Skills strand in South and East Lincolnshire. We have structured our programme with the following criteria in mind:

#### Principle one:

**Supporting Growth and Productivity within our Local Priority Sectors** – Enabling our businesses in key sectors within South and East Lincolnshire to access the skills they need to grow, as well as supporting new and niche sectors to establish a foothold in the local area.

#### Principle two:

**Supporting those who are economically inactive to re-enter the workforce** – Enabling those furthest away from the labour market to re-enter the workforce or to gain skills and experience which will support them in obtaining employment.

#### Principle three:

**Supporting social mobility for our residents, enabling them to access higher paid, higher skilled work** – Supporting both in-work progression and progression to higher skilled, higher paid work.

## 2.2. The structure of the UKSPF-funded People & Skills Programme in South and East Lincolnshire & the available funding

Our skills interventions will be split into three sub-Programmes (entitled 'Themes'):

### Theme one:

#### **Digital and employability skills support (grant aided)**

Addressing priorities E33, E34, E35, E36, E41



### Theme two:

#### **Addressing local skills needs (grant aided)**

Addressing Priorities E35, E37 and E39, with a particular focus on growth in emerging sectors in the local economy.



### Theme three:

#### **employer-led training initiatives (procured - not within this prospectus)**

Also Addressing Priorities E35, E37 and E39, with a particular focus on in-work progression and productivity within priority sectors.

Themes One and Two will be addressed through this document, while Theme Three shall be subject to a large, local procurement of funded project, specifically targeted at delivering interventions to support employers to recruit and retain the skilled staff they need to grow. The allocation of funding for each theme shall be as follows' to 'Themes One and Two will be addressed through this document, while Theme Three shall be subject to a large, local procurement. This will specifically target the delivery of interventions to support employers to recruit and retain the skilled staff they need to grow.



The allocation of funding for each theme is as follows:

<b>Local Authority/ Indicative Allocation</b>	<b>1. Digital and Employability Skills Support (Grant Aided)</b>	<b>2. Addressing Local Skills Needs (Grant Aided)</b>	<b>3. Employer-Led Training Initiatives (Procured)</b>
<b>Boston Borough</b>	Revenue: £178,000 Capital: £19,000	Revenue: £99,000 Capital: £10,900	Revenue: £118,800 Capital: £13,100
<b>East Lindsey District</b>	Revenue: £360,000 Capital: £40,000	Revenue: £200,000 Capital: £22,000	Revenue: £240,100 Capital: £26,800
<b>South Holland District</b>	Revenue: £218,000 Capital: £54,000	Revenue: £121,000 Capital: £13,000	Revenue: £145,800 Capital: £16,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£869,000</b>	<b>£465,900</b>	<b>£560,800</b>

\*All allocations are less the current budget allocated for administration of the Programme (September 2023). Figures are rounded down to their nearest £1,000.

Applicants may bid to deliver in more than one Council area or across the entire South and East Lincolnshire.

Grants can be awarded to a level up to 100%, though match funding (both secured and unsecured) is a consideration in the Assessment Process. We strongly encourage projects to have funding, or to have a plan for sourcing additional match funding, to support delivery.

## 2.3 Who is eligible to bid for funding?

### Bids are invited from the following organisations

- Higher and Further Education Institutions
- ESFA-Registered Independent Training Providers (ITPs)
- Local Authorities
- Registered Charities
- Community Interest Companies
- Voluntary Organisations, which are constituted.
- Private sector businesses, where a partnership with a training provider can be demonstrated.

### The following organisations are ineligible:

- Individuals
- Organisations without a constitution
- Private sector businesses, where a partnership with a training provider is not demonstrated.

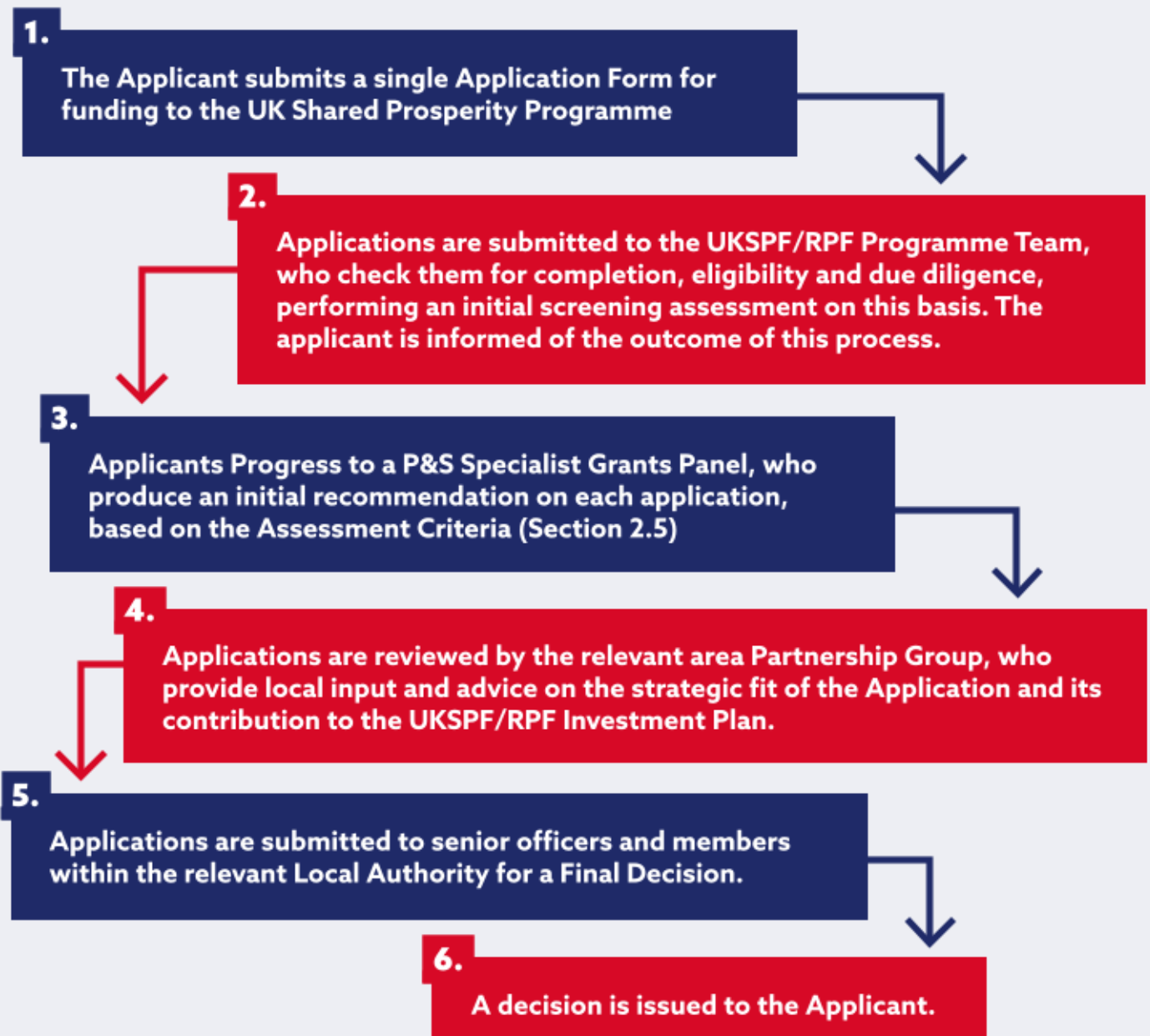
### The following costs are also ineligible:

- Duplication of pre-existing DWP or NSF Provision – Dual funding
- Any non-project-specific working capital or expenditure outside of a project's approved purposes
- Statutory or legal obligations
- Debt repayments
- Statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties
- Bad debts, costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors, or winding up a company
- VAT reclaimable from HMRC
- Payments for activities of a party political or exclusively religious nature
- Gifts, or payments for gifts or donations
- Paid for lobbying, entertaining, petitioning or challenging decision
- Contingencies and contingent liabilities

- Dividends
- Expenses in respect of litigation, unfair dismissal or other compensation
- Payments for works or activities which the lead local authority, project deliverer, end beneficiary, or any member of their partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources
- Costs incurred by individuals in setting up and contributing towards private pension schemes.

## 2.4. What is the process for assessing bids?

Bids received for People & Skills projects will be assessed using a slightly different process to that employed for the Supporting Local Business and Communities and Place strands. It is anticipated that there will only be two rounds of decision-making and awards (in line with the timescales outlined in Section 5). The process for assessing applications is as follows:



The process is anticipated to take six weeks, with the assessment process for all applications to take twelve weeks in total (December 2023 – March 2024). Projects will be delivered between April 2024 and March 2025, with a continuous evaluation process. Each project will be given a dedicated contract manager from within the UKSPF/RPF Team at South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

## **2.5 Assessment criteria for bids under themes one and two**

**The core principles for assessing bids will be the same as those employed for Supporting Local Business and Communities and Place.**

- Value for Money
- Additionality – Whether the project offers new or distinct provision to that which is existing
- Strategic fit with UKSPF themes in our Investment Plan
- Deliverability by March 2025
- Low or well managed risks
- Scale out UKSPF Investment Plan outcomes delivered by the project.

**In these strands, we will also consider the following:**

- Number of individuals supported into employment
- Number of individuals supported into higher paid, higher skilled employment
- Number of individuals gaining a NQF-Accredited or industry-recognised qualification.

We shall also conduct the usual financial and organisational due diligence on applicants.

## 3. Our Invitation to Bid for Funding: Theme One - Digital and Employability Skills Support



### 3.1. What we're looking for

This strand is seeking to fund projects that support individuals to move into employment or to gain key skills that enable them to access the job market. There will be a particular focus on digital skills and life skills that enable individuals to become 'work ready' and engaged with employers. We would like applicants to be creative, shaping their proposals to what they see as the local need for communities with high levels of economic inactivity. We are seeking projects that offer:

- Clear pathways into employment for individuals participating, demonstrated by either a guaranteed interview or work experience with a named employer.

And/or

- Self-contained programmes of life skills, digital skills or skills that enable participants to access the jobs market.

#### **In these strands, we will also consider the following:**

- Digital Skills Training
- Interview coaching and CV writing skills
- Support for individuals who are on long-term sickness benefit to re-enter the labour market
- ESOL classes for learners from new communities, to support them in accessing employment opportunities in the local area
- Work experience programmes in priority sectors for those who are economically inactive
- A targeted, focussed programme of support for learners aged 19-25 who are NEET or at risk of NEET
- Mentorship schemes for the newly employed, to sustain employment
- Support for retired individuals to return to the workforce or to undertake a career change
- Support for those facing economic inactivity to either start their own business or to become self-employed.

#### **What is the minimum level of grant available?**

£25,000

#### **What is the maximum level of grant available?**

There is no maximum level of grant available within this Theme. We do, however, encourage applicants to review the funding detailed in this Prospectus and bid within the envelope of funding awarded to the Council by DLUHC.

## **3.2. Examples of projects that could be funded under this theme**

*Please Note – These examples are indicative and do not reflect any applications received at time of publication, we are encouraging applicants to submit their own responses to the call for proposals.*

### **Examples of projects that could be funded include:**

- A Programme of Digital Skills learning for learners in rural and remote communities, delivered across the three Partnership Councils
- Supporting a cohort of NEET young people in East Lindsey with work experience in the hospitality industry, with a guaranteed job interview at the end of the Programme
- Supporting a cohort of economically inactive individuals to obtain employment in the agri-tech and food manufacturing sector in South Holland District, with guaranteed job interviews at the end of the Programme
- A work experience programme in the construction industry in Boston Borough for a cohort of Universal Credit recipients.



## 4. Our Invitation to Bid for Funding: Theme Two - Addressing Local Skills Needs

### 4.1. What we're looking for

This strand aims to address local skills needs through developing innovative projects across a range of local sectors. The objective is to enable our businesses within South and East Lincolnshire to access the skills they need to grow, as well as supporting new and niche sectors to establish a foothold in the local area. We are anticipating that this will be a series of training programmes for learners in our District.

#### We are seeking projects that offer:

- Industry-recognised and/or NQF-accredited qualifications at Level 2 – Level 7
- A guaranteed job interview in the sector or progression into higher skilled, higher paid employment (for those learners already in work).

We are encouraging applications from both private sector employers and training providers, as well as the voluntary and community sector.

#### We will accept applications from any sector but we are particularly interested to hear from the following areas:

- Digital and IT – Including AI, Robotics and Communications
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Agriculture, Food Processing and Food Manufacturing
- Construction – Including heritage construction skills, planning and surveying and sustainable retrofitting
- Health and Social Care
- Hospitality and the Visitor Economy
- Transport and Logistics.

#### **What is the minimum level of grant available?**

£20,000

#### **What is the maximum level of grant available?**

£150,000 (Capital and Revenue)

Projects may have a higher overall value but we would expect any costs over this level to be met by match funding.

## 4.2. Examples of projects that could be funded

Please Note – These examples are indicative and do not reflect any applications received at time of publication, we are encouraging applicants to submit their own responses to the call for proposals.

- A private sector business in Boston wishing to train additional care workers to serve the local community, targeting economically inactive individuals and offering a NQF Level 2 qualification, with a guaranteed job interview.
- A construction business in East Lindsey wishing to 'up-skill' pre-existing employees with an additional trade qualification at NQF Level 2, with a pay rise awarded to successful completions.
- A digital business in South Holland, wanting to train new employees in Python Programming, with that employee gaining both a guaranteed interview and an industry-recognised skill.



## 5. Timeline for Delivery



In line with DLUHC Guidance on the delivery of the UKSPF-funded People & Skills Programme, all People and Skills Initiatives must be delivered between April 2024 and April 2025. All offers will be conditional upon each Council's receipt of funding and each Council will not be in a position to either legally contract or pay against awards until the formal commencement of the Programme in April 2024. However, to give providers certainty over delivery and an appropriate 'lead in' time to mobilise the resources that they require, South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership propose to award the vast majority of grants under this scheme significantly in advance of the project commencement date.

It is anticipated, therefore, that there will be two Rounds of Awards subsequent to the launch of the Prospectus for Themes One and Two, utilising the following timeline:

Milestone	Anticipated Date*
Launch of Prospectus - Theme One and Two - Open for Submissions	30th October 2023
Applicant Information Events - Themes One and Two	November 2023
Deadline: P&S Grants Round One (Bids received after this date will be entered into Round Two)	December 18th 2023
Grants Panel & Awards: P&S Grants Round One**	W/C January 22nd 2024
Contracting: P&S Grants Round One	January-February 2024
Deadline: P&S Grants Round Two	March 1st 2024
Grants Panel & Awards: P&S Grants Round Two	W/C March 11th 2024
Project Delivery	April 2024 - March 2025
End of Programme	April 2025

\*These dates are indicative and may be subject to change. Any changes will be communicated to applicants appropriately and in advance.

\*\*If all, or the majority of funding is committed in Round One in a Council area, then the respective Council reserves the right to close for applications prior to Round Two.

## 6. Frequently Asked Questions



### How is VAT accounted for within the grant?

If an organisation is registered for VAT, they cannot claim the VAT element of any expenditure. For example, if they are spending £12,000 (purchasing training equipment and materials for £10,000 + VAT) they can only claim against the £10,000 net cost. If an organisation is not VAT registered, they are entitled to claim against the gross cost. In the above example the full £12,000 would be treated as the eligible cost.

### Do you welcome partnership working?

Yes, we highly encourage it.

We want to encourage the development of bids which build on local potential and existing best practice. We are keen therefore that you think hard about local partnership opportunities and the scope to build on the good things which are already happening. We recognise the importance of partnership working and understand how partner organisations can complement each other, especially within large, complex projects.

It is important however to have a Lead Partner with overall contractual responsibility for delivering the outputs on time and to budget.

### Can I bid for activity across more than one District Area?

Yes.

Again, we welcome this particular approach where organisations feel the issues are more general and applicable to a wider geographical area or where economies of scale may be realised by working across two or three District Council areas. We encourage bidding applicants to note and be aware of the different allocations of funding awarded to each District and to scale their bids accordingly.

### What percentage of total eligible costs can be covered by the grant?

1-100%

**Theme One: Minimum Award - £10,000, Maximum Award - None**

**Theme Two: Minimum Award - £5,000, Maximum Award - £100,000**

### How important is matched funding?

To maximise the value for money and impact of the funding we are looking for Applicants, where possible, to leverage additional investment. Grants of 100% will be awarded in exceptional cases only.

Matched funding can come in the form of hard cash or as in-kind support, provided to cover running costs such as salaries or office administration.

Larger projects will be asked to present detailed financial plans showing what steps have been taken to attract either Public, Private or Third Sector matched funding.

Applicants are expected, as part of their application, to have investigated and actively sought other sources of matched funding. We will also expect successful applicants to work to source funding to sustain projects, where those projects have been a success.

## **Will you consider projects that are already running?**

**Yes.**

We want to capitalise on known successes so will consider supporting activity that has proven to add value.

However, we are looking for additionality so won't simply displace your own existing or committed funding. It's more about helping you to develop your project by delivering more or expanding its reach.

## **How long will it take before I have a decision?**

The Programme aims to contract all of its People and Skills provision by April 2024.

We have given indicative dates for decision above. Any changes to these will be communicated to applicants.

## **What information will I be expected to submit as part of my Application?**

To support the assessment the Investment Panel will require certain information, likely to include:

- Three years of Financial Accounts or Business Plans & Management Accounts if the bidding organisation is less than 3 years old.
- 3 quotes for each eligible expenditure item (depending on value)
- Completed Subsidy Control and Procurement Compliance statements.
- Organisation Equality and Environmental Policy Statements
- Other documentation where relevant (planning permission, proof of matched funding, Partnership agreements etc)

## **How will we pay grants once they've been approved?**

The standard practice will be for grants to be paid in arrears once expenditure has been incurred and payment made in full.

As a general rule, smaller grants will be paid out as a single payment once bank statements, showing that invoices have been paid, have been checked by the Administration Team. Organisations will need to pay for their purchases from their Business/Organisational Bank Account before claiming the money back from the council. (Purchases through Personal Credit Cards will be deemed ineligible)

Where the grant relates to a capital expense, evidence that the asset is based within the District will be required.

Larger grants may be paid against an agreed schedule but again only upon proof that the agreed expenditure has been incurred and that the asset or service has been delivered. In exceptional circumstances an agreement may be reached whereby the whole grant, or an element of the grant, can be paid in advance of expenditure being incurred.

Where grant recipients request special payment terms the Investment Panel will carry out a Risk Assessment taking into account the amount being claimed and the financial health of the organisation.

## **What is Subsidy Control and does it affect me?**

In most cases, UKSPF or Rural subsidies will not take recipients beyond the subsidy thresholds set by the UK government. Unless a Grant recipient receives in excess of £315,000 when adding their award to any grant aid they've received within the current financial year, or the previous two, there is unlikely to be a need to classify or justify the support being offered and to comply with the majority of subsidy control measures as contained in the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

We will however, as a matter of course, need to ask Grant Applicants to confirm the value of any recent previous support to eliminate any risk of non-compliance and to determine if the Grant can be considered as Minimal Financial Assistance under the Act.

## **Is my grant contract binding?**

Yes. It is a legal contract between your organisation and the Council for the provision of funding.

Contracts will detail the value of the grant against specific items of expenditure. If organisations claim for expenditure that has not been agreed then that element of the grant will not be paid.

Similarly, any expenditure that pre-dates the formal grant award offer letter is entirely at the applicant's own risk and will be deemed as ineligible expenditure for grant assistance. Organisations failing to deliver the outcomes and outputs detailed within their contract will be asked to present remedial plans and work with the Investment Team.

Larger, more complex projects will be monitored closely to ensure that key milestones are achieved and risks mitigated. Regular project management meetings may be necessary if there are issues with delivery. Contracts will also set out reporting obligations to ensure we track and capture outputs and expenditure information.

## **Use of personal and organisational information**

Information submitted by organisations applying for grant funding may be shared with partner organisations to support marketing activity, to assess impact and to undertake independent programme evaluations.

Information provided to the Council will be disclosable to Government offices such as DLUHC and the Cabinet Office.

The Councils are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – and as such may be compelled to release details of applicants’ expressions of interest – personal details will be redacted. Business financial details will also be redacted for up to 2 years after the application period, but then potentially become disclosable.

Where there is a specific “commercial sensitivity” to expressions of interest or applications please make the Council aware at the time of application.