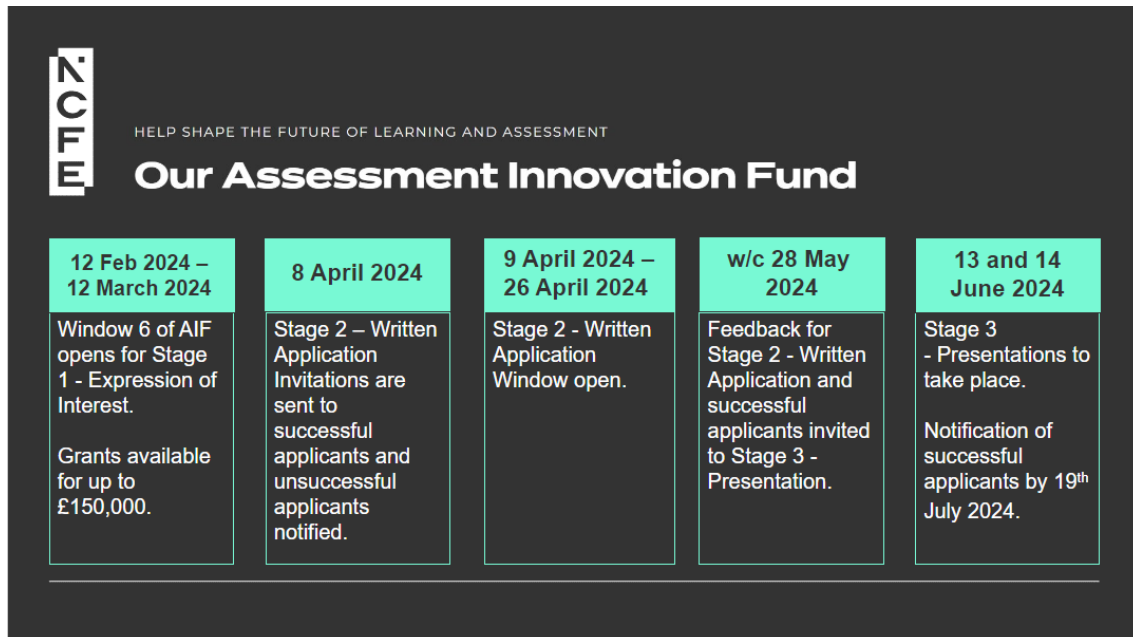


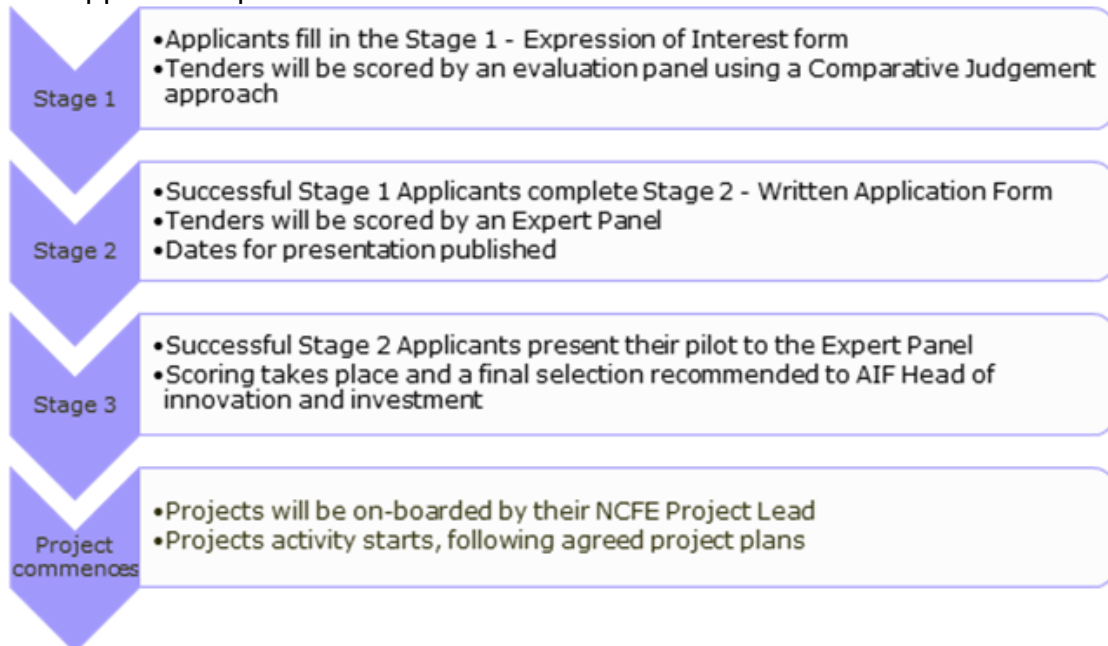
Assessment Innovation Fund (AIF) Application and Scoring Guidance

Application Timeline



Application Process

The application process can be summarised as follows:



Stage 1 – Expression of Interest (EoI)

This online form is used by applicants to outline the context, problem area, proposed solution, intended impact and to provide details about the organisation and the requested amount of funding.

Evaluation of all EoIs is carried out by NCFE and Ufi VocTech Trust colleagues from across both organisations who make up the Expert Panel. This ensures that ideas are considered from every angle. Comparative judgment will be used to ensure that there is a fair and robust process in place to carry out the initial process of shortlisting applicants for stage 2.

Stage 2 – Written application

The written application form will guide applicants through the information needed, including outlining the problem that the innovation aims to address as well as demonstrating the potential impact, feasibility, robustness, and suitability of the proposed assessment innovation. Stage 2 application forms will be pre-filled with all information provided at stage 1 (Expression of Interest) to avoid duplication for applicants.

Evaluation of all written applications is undertaken by an Expert Panel who have been selected based on their experience and expertise in relation assessment innovation. The Expert Panel consist of a mix of NCFE and Ufi VocTech Trust staff and external representatives who are from a variety of backgrounds and areas of expertise including academic, awarding, EdTech and educational bodies.

Stage 3 – Presentation

If applicants are successful in stage 2 of the process, they will be invited to present to the Expert Panel. The presentation will focus on the rationale for the solution, project methodology and associated risks, high-level project plan and budget in more detail. The overall aim of this stage is to deep dive into the proposal to ensure alignment with the AIF principles as well as allowing for open dialogue between the Expert Panel and the applicant(s).

The structure of stage 3 will be as follows:

Item	Timing
Introduction	10 minutes
Presentation	30 minutes
Q&A from Expert Panel	20 minutes
Q&A from applicant	10 minutes

On submitting your application at each stage of the process, you will agree that NCFE can share information provided by the lead applicant, including personal or confidential information, with our evaluation panel, expert panel, and any service providers we use to facilitate the evaluation including third-party digital evaluation tools. NCFE treats your data seriously and will

ensure that third parties have appropriate measures in place to protect the Lead Applicant's data, and retain the data only as long as is needed.

The applicants will be awarded a share of the funding subject to the final approval of the NCFE executive team and following completion of the project on-boarding process.

Scoring

Stage 1 – Expression of Interest

Stage 1 applications are judged by an Evaluation Panel, based on the suitability and impact of the application. Applications will be ranked and shortlisted using a comparative judgement approach in which the Expert Panel will be asked to decide:

“Which application best demonstrates an innovative assessment idea that is likely to solve the problem identified and have a positive impact?”

This approach ensures that all applications are seen multiple times by different panel members, adding robustness to the process of shortlisting for stage 2.

Stage 2 – Written application

Stage 2 applications are scored on the following elements in the application form, where each has an associated weight in the overall evaluation as indicated in the table below.

In addition, where concerns about ethics, confidentiality and/or conflicts of interests are identified, NCFE reserves the right to exclude the applicant from further participation in the process.

Category	Element	Weighting (%)
Suitability and Impact 50% weighting (See appendix 1)	Alignment to assessment innovation strategy	20%
	Potential impact to learners	15%
	Scalability and sustainability	15%
Robustness 25% weighting (See appendix 2)	Methodology principles	15%
	Risk and uncertainty	10%
Feasibility 25% weighting (See appendix 3)	Cost	10%
	Time	10%
	Delivery	5%
Wider Considerations (See appendix 4)	Ethics and confidentiality Where ethical or confidentiality conflicts are identified, NCFE reserves the right to exclude the applicant from further participation in the process.	Not scored.

	Conflicts of Interest Where conflicts of interest are identified, NCFE reserves the right to exclude the applicant from further participation in the process.	Not scored.
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Stage 3 - Presentation

Stage 3 provides applicants the opportunity to present their proposal in further detail as well as allowing for open dialogue between the Expert Panel and the applicant(s).

Each element in the presentation has an associated weight in the overall evaluation as indicated in the table below and will be scored using this.

Element	Weighting (%)
1. Potential impact to learners (appendix 1)	30%
2. Scalability and sustainability (appendix 1)	20%
3. Robustness (appendix 2)	20%
4. Feasibility (appendix 3)	20%
5. Leadership and team (appendix 3)	10%

Scoring Methodology

The following scoring methodology will be applied to responses at all stages.

Score	Commentary
1	Response provides NCFE with a weak level of confidence in the applicant's ability to meet its requirements.
2	Response provides NCFE with a moderate level of confidence in the applicant's ability to meet its requirements.
3	Response provides NCFE with a strong level of confidence in the applicant's ability to meet its requirements.
4	Response provides NCFE with a very strong level of confidence in the applicant's ability to meet its requirements.

What happens following the application process?

Once projects have been recommended to the NCFE executive team, NCFE will conduct a series of due diligence checks.

Following successful completion of the above activities, projects will need to agree to the standard terms and conditions of the grant. Your Project Lead will work with you to further develop the proposed project plan which sets out how the project will be delivered and the project milestones. Funding will be granted in arrears throughout the duration of the project. Payment will be made in line with project reporting and will be dependent upon the successful achievement of project milestones.

What happens if you are unsuccessful?



We will provide limited feedback to applicants who are unsuccessful at stage 1 (Expression of Interest) based on the scoring by the Expert Panel. Applicants can only expect to receive an indication of their rank amongst all EoIs received.

We will provide detailed feedback for applications that are unsuccessful following stage 2 (written application) and stage 3 (presentation), based on the scoring and dialogue provided by the Expert Panel.

Appendix 1 Suitability and Impact Descriptors

Element	Alignment to assessment innovation strategy
Description	<p>All applicants should be considering how their innovation facilitates learner informed choice towards a positive destination and evaluates the impact of the learner journey. In addition, applicants should provide confidence that the proposal is sufficiently aligned to a minimum of one of the following Assessment Innovation Guiding Principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivers a transformational learning and assessment experience for all learners that considers meta and technical skills development and provides learners with the insight and support they need to develop agency. 2. Enables personalisation in assessment by exploring the opportunities and limitations to personalisation within assessment. 3. Tests and evaluates a range of assessment methods and practices that support the development of an assessment system that is fair and inclusive by design and moves away from high stakes, stressful exams, where appropriate to do so. 4. The balance and interplay of formative and summative assessment and the implementation of technology to make assessment more readily available and fit for purpose and building a real-time picture of the impact of the learning. 5. Establishes a culture that promotes innovation within vocational and technical education, training and assessment by working in partnership with regulators and the Department for Education to test and evidence new solutions and practices. 6. Uses data and technology in insightful and efficient ways to enable high quality teaching, learning and assessment, removing the disconnect in data across the learner journey and taking account of data that exists on prior learning and experience. 7. Using data more collaboratively and throughout the whole learner journey to improve the level of perceived value of assessment processes as a means of enabling choice, understanding needs and progress and informing every stage of the learning journey.

Element	Potential impact to learners
Description	<p>For stage 1 and 2, to provide the confidence that the proposal has clear and impactful benefit to the learner in at least one of the following success criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empowers learners and educators to make the best possible choices about learning and progression. 2. Equips contributors to learning with the expertise and resources to deliver transformational learning and progression experiences. 3. Supports learners to develop wider skills, such as “agency” so that they are better prepared to succeed within an evolving labour market. 4. Inspires all those who participate in learning to give back more than they took out. 5. Supports educators to improve teaching, learning, assessment, outcomes and progression of learners. 6. Provides learners with assessment that: is fair and inclusive; is available as part of a formal qualification or programme; recognises prior learning and competence; on-demand and multi-channel; is tailored to the delivery context and learner needs; is robust, secure, and credible to all stakeholders; supports continuous improvement in the learning experience; is converted into a recognised store of value, whether credential or otherwise. <p>At stage 3, this element will prioritise that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The innovation is founded upon sound understanding of the ‘problem area’ and provides a clear, well-defined solution that addresses the problem. • The project provides well-defined outcomes for learners and there is a logical connection between the solution identified and intended impact.

Element	Scalability and sustainability
Description	To provide the confidence that the applicant(s) understands how the solution may provide future public benefit beyond

	<p>the project. The applicant(s) should demonstrate the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant has an understanding and vision of how to scale the solution following conclusion of the project.• The applicant understands their customer and has evidence of market demand for the solution. <p>At stage 3, the following criteria will also be evaluated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project applicant understands how the solution would be funded beyond the project.
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Appendix 2 Robustness Descriptors

Element	Methodology principles
Description	<p>To provide confidence that the project methodology proposed would be suitable for evaluating the impact of the project's success.</p> <p>The applicant (s) should demonstrate the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project questions are measurable and concise. The questions are appropriate for the purpose of the project. • The design of the project is suitable for answering the proposed project questions. If a project question investigates effectiveness, the applicant has considered how to reduce potential bias by selecting an appropriate project design. • The applicant has indicated who the sample will be, the indicative sample size and how the sample will be selected. The project tries to ensure the sample being tested are a fair and close representation/approximation of those most likely to use the intervention. • Considers the outcome measures and how these will provide reliable indicators of the project's success. • Demonstrates an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the project study and how potential bias could impact the validity of the evidence generated. • Considers any controls required to meet relevant ethical standards and ensures the project does not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly.

Element	Risk and uncertainty
Description	To provide confidence that the risks and uncertainties are suitably mitigated and deemed appropriate within the accepted risk threshold for the project.

Appendix 3 Feasibility Descriptors

Element	Cost
Description	To provide confidence that the proposal has been adequately resourced in terms of pricing and that this delivers value for money.

Element	Time
Description	To provide confidence that the proposal has been realistically and optimally resourced in terms of time.

Element	Delivery
Description	To provide confidence that the applicant's experience will ensure they are successful in delivering the project as well as that the applicant has the required means to access the tools/resources required to prototype their solution and adequately perform project methodology.

Appendix 4 Further Considerations Descriptors

Element	Ethics and confidentiality
Description	To provide confidence that the ethical and confidentiality requirements of the project have been considered.

Element	Conflict of interest
Description	To provide confidence that conflicts of interest within the project have been considered.