

Assessment Innovation Fund (AIF) Overview

Purpose

The strategic partnership between NCFE and Ufi VocTech Trust will harness the transformative power of technology to drive change and reform in the assessment of vocational training and skills, helping support innovators, showcase new digital approaches to assessment and champion the need for change in assessment practices. Together, NCFE and Ufi will foster innovation and advance learning around the role technology can play in creating assessment methods and models that can adapt and respond to the needs of the changing UK economy and help get more adults learning.

The ongoing strategic partnership, which includes support for The Assessment Innovation Fund (AIF) Window 6, will be a catalyst for change by providing evidence-based, alternative assessment solutions to drive change and reform in the assessment of vocational training and skills.

All AIF applications should focus on assessments that will build trust and confidence and add value to all stakeholders including learners, educators, employers and government. Approaches and solutions should be inherently fair and provide an appropriate level of 'recognisable value' to all stakeholders who have invested in learning.

Our view of assessment is any activity that measures current knowledge, skills, or behaviour at any stage of the learner value chain for the benefit of learners, educators and managers. This could be in the pre-programme, onboarding, formative assessment, summative assessment or progression stage of the learner journey.

Who can apply?

The fund will be open to applications from any organisation with an interesting idea about what assessment innovation might look like. We want applications to fund projects that look to measure an improvement or change brought about by implementing the innovative approach. This is what we call an Impact Project.

An Impact Project aims to:

"Systematically measure a change or impact in a specific area of assessment on a large scale. It focuses on achieving specific outcomes and making a difference in a particular context."

During the application process, applicants will need to be able to demonstrate:

- the issue that the innovation is trying to solve
- the potential impact on learners
- that the innovation is linked to at least one of the guiding principles for assessment innovation
- the sustainability and scalability of the proposed solution
- feasibility and robustness of the methodology.

Applicants will need to cover some of these elements in the Expression of Interest (EoI) form, which is the first stage in the evaluation process. The Expression of Interest (EoI) form will be [here](#) when applications for the next window open.

How much funding is available?

Organisations will be awarded up to £150,000 funding each for large-scale impact projects. By large-scale, we mean that your project should have an ambition to reach 1,000 learners.

The level of investment may vary from the funding applied for, depending on the proposed solution. Each proposal is evaluated separately against its alignment with the AIF principles and the proposed scope.

What are the project timelines?

Projects can start as soon as the grant agreement is signed and will last between 18 and 24 months, although each project is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. On completion, a final project report will need to be delivered.

What will the AIF fund?

The AIF will fund anything that is connected to the project including people's time, equipment, and technology development. We expect that budgets set out in stage two of the application process cover the minimum requirements to deliver the project.

In this window, project! applications should include:

- an intention to measure an improvement
- a comparative group, ideally a randomised controlled group.

If your organisation is 'for profit' we will require match funding or co-funding to demonstrate a shared commitment to the project. This could be equivalent to staff time, or funding for specific activities within the project. We do not prescribe expectations on the level of match-funding; however, we would expect that match funding is transparent and reasonable with respect to an organisation's size.

The AIF will not fund:

- day-to-day overheads and will not fund other organisational costs unconnected to the project
- projects primarily focussed on learners up to the age of 16 (e.g. schools-based projects)
- projects not primarily focussed on driving change and reform in the assessment of vocational training and skills
- projects for beneficiaries outside the UK
- projects not primarily focused on assessment
- projects focussed on early-stage development and testing
- routine business or product development where there is no public benefit case for charitable funding.