



Infrastructure Fund Grants Prospectus

August 2021

Youth Futures Infrastructure Fund Wave 2

The Youth Futures Foundation Infrastructure Fund was set up to support the youth employment ecosystem by providing funding for key backbone organisations. As the first wave of funding comes to an end, we are planning our wave 2 funding to support a mix of existing and new grantees. **We will be accepting applications for this fund from September 1 2021.**

Through partnering with the 11 infrastructure organisations in our current portfolio, we are gaining important insights into effective ways to support youth, community, education, training, and employment organisations to tackle youth unemployment. We have commissioned RAND Europe to produce a full report of these findings in September 2022.

Together, we are also creating a national network through which we can share these insights and additional learnings about 'what works' drawn from global evidence and evaluations commissioned by Youth Futures.

To build on this work, Youth Futures will be committing a further £2.9million over the next two years to provide new and continuation infrastructure funding.

We are seeking to work with infrastructure organisations that can demonstrate how they will help young people who face intersectional barriers move towards and into work, through equipping the organisations in their networks with the knowledge, skills, and connections to provide world class employment support and training.

To be successful organisations must be strong advocates of Youth Futures' mission and our 'what works' evidence-based approach – and be able to demonstrate the role they will play in helping us to achieve it.

By working alongside a diverse range of regional and national backbone organisations, we aim to build a nationwide coalition of support to identify and share 'what works', invest in evidence and innovation and ignite new ideas to change behaviour and practice. You can read more about our strategy and theory of change [here](#).

Why is this funding needed?

Youth unemployment has long been an area of concern, particularly for young people facing disadvantage or discrimination. Too many young people in England are not supported to make a successful transition from education to training and employment. This has significant consequences for them and their future prospects, including reduced lifetime earnings and poor mental health and wellbeing. It also has a negative impact on their families, communities, and the national economy.

Following the pandemic, the challenges have grown even greater, with a significant risk that a generation's future will be blighted by the scarring effects of long-term unemployment. Fortunately, we are experiencing a strong recovery in employment levels post pandemic. However, youth employment levels have been slowest to rebound and Universal Credit statistics show that 450,000 16 to 24-year-olds were listed as 'searching for work' in March 2021 – nearly double the figure in March 2020. Long-term youth worklessness is also at a five year high (ONS, July 2021).

Why are we investing in infrastructure organisations?

We recognise that even before the challenges presented by COVID-19, infrastructure bodies were working hard to modernise and continuously improve services. Many are seeking to lead systems change (including better integration of services; to demonstrate sector leadership and effective policy influencing; evidence generation; collaboration and partnerships) – all with the aim of enhancing frontline services for young people.

Infrastructure organisations are under acute pressure to do even more to support the youth employment ecosystem. Many are being called on to lead youth voice activity, carry out research and insight work, convene frontline organisations and develop strategy papers to feed into local, regional and national policy development.

At the same time, the demand from their membership, movement or network, for hands-on support has increased significantly as frontline organisations have struggled to adapt to socially distanced delivery, maintain safeguarding and respond to the changing needs of young people.

Youth Futures understands the need to invest in these organisations to strengthen the youth employment ecosystem and support young people throughout their employment journey.

We understand the importance of infrastructure organisations to draw together, champion and respond to the needs of all young people seeking work; and infrastructure bodies focused specifically on empowering young people who face multiple barriers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many infrastructure organisations were unable to attract the same emergency funding as front-line organisations, and in response to this, we provided support for these vital organisations, with a specific focus on:

- National infrastructure organisations that draw together, champion and respond to the needs of all young people seeking work
- Infrastructure organisations focused specifically on empowering young people from Black and ethnic minoritised backgrounds, including those of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller heritage.

Through our Emergency Infrastructure Resilience Fund, throughout 2020 to 2021 we provided £1.7m in funding for 11 national and regional infrastructure organisations. This investment has enabled us to facilitate capacity building for

frontline charities and helped us develop a movement of support for evidence-led practice. A list of organisations supported can be found [here](#).

Youth Futures is now launching the second phase of Infrastructure Resilience investments. Full details of how to apply are set out in this prospectus.

What are our grant-making and investment principles?

We have five key principles that underpin our trust-based approach to grant-making and investments. These are:

1. Providing multi-year funding
2. Simplifying and minimising the application process
3. Being open, transparent and honest about who we fund and why
4. Listening and acting on your feedback to our approach
5. Providing support alongside funding, with the aim of helping to build leadership and capacity.

Wherever possible we will simplify requirements and use available public records (such as published annual accounts) to understand your purpose, leadership, and financial standing.

Where appropriate we will also commit to using other sources of information related to the delivery of your strategic objectives – an existing business or programme plan, proposals and reports written for other funders – in lieu of completing application forms.

Details of the Youth Futures Infrastructure Resilience Fund Wave 2

Our new £2.9m investment is a route to *ignite change* across the youth employment ecosystem by investing in infrastructure organisations that can demonstrate how they will help young people who face intersectional barriers move towards and into work, through equipping the organisations in their networks with the knowledge, skills, and connections to provide world class employment support and training. We do not require applicants to be engaged in direct delivery to young people (although you may be).

We are looking for organisations that can work in partnership with Youth Futures, and one another, to achieve the following:

1. Learn about the role of systems change in supporting young people into work
2. Gain a deeper understanding of good practice in designing and delivering evidence informed youth employment programmes
3. Share this knowledge and insight widely with members
4. Support and equip members to adopt best practice when delivering activity to boost youth employment
5. Convene members to share learnings between one another and with Youth Futures to build the evidence base
6. Participate in evaluations, research, and communications activity relating to youth employment

To be successful organisations must be strong advocates of Youth Futures' mission and our 'what works' evidence-based approach - and be able to demonstrate the role they will play in helping us to achieve it.

Our intention with this Fund is to work alongside infrastructure organisations who harness evidence, strategically uplift their networks, and lead effective Communities of Practice.

We are seeking to work with organisations with a strong track-record in the following areas:

- **POLICY & INFLUENCING:** Influencing regional or national policy on behalf of their members/networks and young people.
- **KNOWLEDGE MOBILISERS:** Sharing learning, evidence and research, to inform, transform and develop practice.
- **MOVEMENT BUILDING & CHAMPIONING:** Building effective Communities of Practice to strategically mobilise and drive the ambition of stakeholders, informing decision-making and practice.
- **YOUTH VOICE:** Embedding youth voice and leadership across organisations and communities.
- **COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP:** Enabling and facilitating collaboration with diverse stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

Your organisation does not need to have deep expertise in youth employment, but you do need to recognise the importance of this agenda and be willing to put it at the heart of what you do to help improve job outcomes for marginalised young people across England.

We will work alongside infrastructure organisations who share our mission and who use, share and promote evidence of what works to support their networks to secure young people employment.

The two strategic pillars below underpin this fund. Organisations must demonstrate the ability to work with Youth Futures in each of these areas:

Identifying and sharing 'what works'

- Understand and use evidence of 'what works' in tackling youth unemployment
- Understand practitioner operating models, challenges, and evidence
- Understand the employment environment

Igniting change through collaboration, coalition-building and policy influencing

- Share knowledge and 'what works' across memberships and networks
- Influence and reach frontline organisations across England delivering effective solutions to youth unemployment
- Champion and mobilise practitioners and commissioners.

We recognise the importance of national learning and local context, as well as promoting strong coordination and partnership across government, funders, delivery organisations and employers.

We will invest in activities that meet membership, movement and/or network needs, and align with Youth Futures' mission and target groups of young people.

By working alongside a diverse range of regional and national backbone organisations, we aim to build a nationwide coalition of support to Identify and share 'what works', invest in evidence and innovation, and Ignite new ideas to change behaviour and practice.

What funding is available?

Restricted investment from £50,000 up to £200,000, over two years, to work with infrastructure organisations that meet the criteria set out within this prospectus. This is a restricted investment to deliver your proposal, and can include the overheads and the core costs to deliver the work.

We will accept proposals for existing activities, new activities, or a blend of the two.

What type of organisations can apply?

National and regional infrastructure bodies that indirectly support young people who face discrimination and/or multiple barriers in moving towards or into employment.

We are particularly interested to hear from Black and ethnic minoritised-led organisations, including those of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller heritage.

We will accept applications from registered charities, including voluntary or community-sector organisations.

You will need to demonstrate how your organisation meets the following eligibility criteria:

- Have more than 20 organisations in your network, membership or movement.
- Have been operating for at least three years
- Have income of at least £50,000 in last published accounts and the equivalent of at least three months' operating expenditure in reserves
- Align with our mission and target groups of young people (as described below)
- Have genuine interest in evidence and seek to learn and share what works (and what doesn't). Previously supported organisations are expected to have fully engaged in current research
- Collect and utilise data about your work, your members' operating models and service provision to support young people into employment

Have organisations in your network or membership who are working with young people aged 14 to 24 in at least one of the following groups:

- Face greater racial and ethnic barriers in the labour market
- Have experience of the care system
- Young parent, or have a caring responsibility
- Have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Have experience of offending

- Have experience of exclusion or alternative provision
- Have experience of homelessness
- Have a mental health or long-term health condition
- Have experience of substance abuse

What will we ask in the application form?

Organisations will be asked to clearly outline and explain their proposal, the rationale for the work, and its value to your network/membership and the wider youth employment ecosystem.

We will ask you for a detailed explanation of how you will use the funding over the next 24 months.

Applications must ensure they explain how your proposal meets the intention of this Fund, 'what good looks like,' and why your organisation is well placed to deliver.

Infrastructure organisations must be able to supply:

- A completed online application form
- Contact details for two organisations from your membership or network as your referees
- A bank statement in the name of the organisation listing all transactions for the month ended June 2021
- Your annual Report and Accounts for the past three years
- Your current management accounts
- Your cash-flow projections for the next 12 months
- Links to your website so we can view the online support available for your network, community or movement (and a link to your member or network portal if you have one)
- Your membership criteria and a full list of your members
- Short biographies of your management team and board members
- Copies of your child protection and/or safeguarding policy
- Copies of your diversity and inclusion policies, procedures or plans
- Current insurance certificates (i.e.: including both professional indemnity and employer's liability).

We will not fund:

- Activities that generate profits for private gain
- The practice of religion, or any activities that actively promote religion or particular belief systems.

How do I apply?

Applications will open on **Wednesday 1 September 2021** on the Youth Futures Foundation and Rocket Science websites.

The deadline for receiving all applications is **midnight on Thursday 30 September 2021***.

How will decisions be made?

- Stage 1: Full application. Your online application and proposal of work will be assessed against the purpose of this Fund (see Criteria above). You will then be notified on the outcome of your application by email.
- Stage 2: Meeting (in person or remote). If your application progresses, as above, we will invite you to meet with us for a two-hour visit to support the assessment of your application. Visits will take place the first two weeks of November 2021.
- Stage 3: Final Decision. Final decisions will be communicated by email after the Grants Committee has met in December 2021.

Key dates:

Fund Launch	Friday 20 August 2021
Portal to Applications opens	Wednesday 1 September 2021
Application Deadline	11:59 pm on Thursday 30 September 2021
Visit (in person / remote)	Week commencing 1 November 2021
Final Decision	December 2021
Fund Start	January 2022
Fund End	January 2024

** Submissions received after this date and time will not be accepted. Submissions are electronic and close at midnight.*

We will build a close, honest relationship in reviewing your plans. It is anticipated that in some cases this may lead to ongoing support where there is a clear benefit for young people progressing towards and into work.

If you need help, do check our frequently asked questions on our website. Please contact us if you require further information by calling us on 020 7553 4539 or emailing grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org.

What is the Youth Futures approach to evaluation and research?

Youth Futures is a member of the national What Works Network. A core element of our mission is to support the youth employment sector at every level and show what works to improve practice.

We recognise that infrastructure bodies have often struggled to demonstrate the additional impact they have on the young people they indirectly support. With our investments, we have undertaken to address this gap through research and evaluation. All organisations we work with will be part of an externally commissioned research evaluation that will be developed with you. This aspect is a crucial part of our work and condition of investment.

Applying for other Youth Futures Foundation funding

To apply for our funding, please go to www.youthfuturesfoundation.org.

We recognise that applying for funding can mean that you spend an inordinate amount of time on paperwork. In light of this, our application portal has options in how you supply information you might already have prepared.

We'd love your feedback on our approach and if you are unsure why we are asking certain questions or asking for documents, please do ask us, or contact us with any feedback or questions.

Youth Futures will continue to offer funding and support through a variety of funds during 2021 and beyond. If you decide not to apply for this fund, please sign up to our [newsletter](#) to ensure that you receive updates about future grants and investments.

Further information

Youth Futures has appointed Rocket Science www.rocketsciencelab.co.uk to oversee the administration of grants and investments and to support the assessment of applications and the monitoring of the grants awarded.

If you have any questions about the application process, please call us on 020 7553 4539 or by email at: grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org.

A list of regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions and other relevant information can be found at <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/our-work/invest/infrastructure-grants/>