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FOUNDATION

**Connected Futures Fund
Frequently Asked Questions**

Youth Futures Fund Connected Futures Fund FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions about the Youth Futures Connected Futures Fund

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1. What type of organisation is eligible to apply for Connected Futures Fund?

You must nominate one partner to be accountable for the grant. We will make our grant to this partner and they should then distribute funding to the other partners and procure services or activities as required.

The accountable partner must

- have a minimum turnover of £100,000 per annum
- have been in operation for a minimum of three years
- be a registered charity, not-for-profit organisation or public sector body legally incorporated in England.¹

2. What is the deadline for applying to the Connected Futures Fund?

The fund will close for applications at midnight on Monday 17th January 2022. Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Please ensure you allow sufficient time to save and submit your application in advance of the deadline.

3. What funding is available?

In phase 1 we expect to award grants of between £75,000 and £125,000 of restricted investment per partnership.

You can apply for less than £75,000. However, this figure is based on our assessment of the effort and cost required in phase 1. We would advise you to think carefully about whether you can achieve what you want to in phase 1 for significantly less than this.

4. What can Connected Futures funding be used for?

We are offering restricted investment for programme costs. If your application is shortlisted, we will ask you for a detailed explanation of how you will use the funding over the next 18 months, why this is needed and how this will support your partnership and young people.

¹ A private sector organisation such as a large employer cannot act as the accountable partner, but a not-for-profit organisation representing employers, such as a Chamber of Commerce or Local Enterprise Partnership would be eligible.

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You may request funding for any activities to help you understand the problem and mobilise people around a shared ambition for change.

- Salaries and staff costs, including existing staff
- Costs of young people's and/or volunteers' time and participation
- Research to understand young people's experiences or how services and agencies currently work with each other
- Exploring evidence or experiences from other places
- Data/cost-benefit analysis or evaluation to make the case for new approaches
- Co-design or prototyping to try out new ways of working at small scale

We are open to your ideas.

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
- Recoverable VAT – if you are not VAT registered, you will need to include VAT costs as part of the funding you request
- Retrospective costs, including any costs incurred in preparing and submitting your application
- Loan repayments

5. How long do we have to spend the funding?

The initial commitment will be for 18 months in phase 1.

However, we advise you to front load your activities into the first 12 months.

6. What happens if you need to contact our organisation?

Should we require further clarification or additional information on your application, you will be contacted by email or phone using the details you have provided. Please ensure that you update us regarding any relevant contact changes by emailing grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org

7. When will I hear back about the outcome of my application?

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All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email in February 2022.

8. Does the largest organisation have to be the lead partner or be the accountable partner? Does the same organisation have to be the lead and accountable partner?

No. Different organisations can act as lead partner (responsible for delivery) and accountable partner (accountable to Youth Futures for the grant). This is so you can make sure that each organisation is playing the most appropriate role.

For example, you may have a small community organisation in your partnership, along with two larger partners. The community organisation might be best placed to engage young people and lead the process of exploration and mobilisation, so they would act as the lead partner, but they might not have time or staff to manage grant accountability, or the turnover to meet Youth Futures's due diligence criteria, so one of the other organisations would act as the accountable partner.

Alternatively, the largest organisation in your partnership might be a public sector body such as a local authority. However, if this organisation acts as the accountable partner (the grant recipient), their internal procurement processes might make it harder for the partnership to operate, so one of the smaller partners could be the accountable partner and make a payment to the local authority partner.

You must make sure that the accountable partner meets our criteria for organisational type, turnover and operating period.

9. What reporting do we need to undertake?

All organisations we work with through this fund will be supported with an independent, externally commissioned learning partner. As part of grant management process, we will arrange quarterly monitoring meetings and require you to provide us with a quarterly financial update.

10. How do I start an application form for a Connected Futures grant?

The online application portal will open on Thursday 4th November 2021. We strongly encourage you to read our prospectus, which will be available on the same day, before deciding whether you should begin an application. If you are applying to Youth Futures for the first time, please click on the 'New Applicant' button on the portal and complete our quiz.

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Please Sign In

Welcome to our online grants portal

For the best customer experience please use Internet Explorer, Edge or Firefox. This system does not work with Google Chrome.

New Applicant?

Please click on the 'New Applicant' button below to register for an online account.

You will be asked to provide an email and password.

Already have an Account?

Please enter your email address and password below.

If you have an account, but have forgotten your password, please click on the 'Forgot your Password?' link found below.

If you are looking to access your part saved application form please click [here](#).

The screenshot shows a login form with two input fields: 'E-mail' containing 'Bryony.livesey@rocketsciencelab.co.uk' and 'Password'. Below the 'E-mail' field is a button labeled 'New Applicant?' which is circled in red. To the right of the 'Password' field is a link labeled 'Forgot your Password?'. At the bottom center is a 'Login' button.

Please note that, for data security reasons, the portal will automatically log you off from your application after **60** minutes of inactivity. To ensure that you do not lose

any information you have input, please ensure that you save your form regularly.

11. Can I save and return to my initial application form if it is incomplete?

Please note that you cannot save and return to the eligibility quiz. If you receive a negative response and you wish to try again then you will be asked to start again.

If you pass the eligibility quiz you will automatically proceed to the next stage of the application process. From this point onwards you can save and return to edit your initial application form at any time until it is submitted. To access your already started form, please ensure that you click on the 'here' phrase where it says 'If you are looking to access your part saved application for, please click here (pictured below)

Already have an Account?

Please enter your email address and password below.

If you have an account, but have forgotten your password, please click on the 'Forgot your Password?' link found below.

If you are looking to access your part saved application form please click [here](#).

The screenshot shows the same login form as above. The text 'If you are looking to access your part saved application form please click [here](#).' is highlighted with a red box. The 'New Applicant?' button is also visible below the 'E-mail' field.

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We will not add VAT to any grant payments that we make. Organisations cannot claim expenditure or use our funding for recoverable VAT because the grant recipient should be able to reclaim these funds back from HMRC. In terms of irrecoverable VAT, as part of their funding bid, organisations can include such costs in their grant bid (as

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they wouldn't be able to claim the VAT back). However, this will have to be evidenced and included in the overall grant amount being requested.

13. What is the rationale for the local authority areas you have selected?

Our focus is on young people, aged 14-24, who face the most discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market. We want the Connected Futures Fund to make a difference to meaningful numbers of young people in each place where we invest. If we want to change the ways that wider systems work, we think it's important to focus on places where there are significant numbers of young people facing disadvantage.

We therefore developed a list of eligible local authority areas with:

- A higher than average concentration of young people facing disadvantage
- A higher than average proportion of young people not in employment, education or training

We used the following datasets and criteria to develop this list:

- Proportion of lower super output areas (LSOAs) in the bottom 10% of the 2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index – all local authorities ranked 1-50 (bottom 15%) are included, and local authorities ranked 51-150 (bottom 50%) were given a weighted score which was combined with the other two criteria
- Proportion of young people not in employment, education or training after Key Stage 3 in the 2018/19 Department for Education statistics – local authorities in the bottom 10% were given a weighted score which was combined with the other two criteria
- Youth claimant count, August 2021 – local authorities with a youth claimant count more than 1% above the England average (bottom 30%) were given a weighted score which was combined with the other two criteria

We weighted the scores on youth employment, education and training slightly lower than deprivation, because the DfE statistics are not current and do not cover young people over the age of 18, and the youth claimant count, although up-to-date, only provides a snapshot of one aspect of youth employment. Areas with lower levels of youth employment, education and training over time were scored under both criteria and were therefore added to our list to create the final list of 83 (approximately 25% of local authority areas in England).

Questions relating to multiple areas

14. Are applications welcome from two or more local priority areas or more, to provide some comparison on what works?

In principle an application covering two or more priority areas would be eligible. However, this would be considered as a single application, with the same funding and timescale as work in a single place. You should consider whether it will be feasible to deliver work in phases 1 and 2 within these parameters. It's also worth remembering that in phase 1, we are funding a process of exploration, development and mobilisation. There will not be any evaluation of outcomes until phase 2.

15. What happens if our place crosses boundaries from the named places in the prospectus?

If you want to work in a neighbourhood or natural / "real-life" community which sits across the administrative boundaries of two (or more) local authorities on our priority list, this is fine. If the community is partly within a priority area and partly in a local authority which is not on our list, please get in touch with us to discuss this further. In any case, you will need to consider how you will manage engaging two different sets of stakeholders, especially if there are political or other differences between the two local authorities.

If your work will cover a large proportion of two (or more) adjacent local authority areas, each one will need to be on our priority list. You should also consider the feasibility of working across such a large area.

Partners and place

16. Is it feasible for a partner to be based outside the area?

Yes, not all partners have to be based inside the area you will work in, but the partnership as a whole needs to be firmly rooted in the place you are focused on. Partnerships with no local organisations involved will be unlikely to be successful.

17. What is the difference in terms of the relationship between the core partners, and relationship with other strategic stakeholders?

Any organisation that receives funding from Youth Futures in phase 1 should be considered a core partner. We are asking partners to provide us with details of your proposed partnership and governance agreements, and how you will ensure equity within the core partnership.

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We hope and expect that partnerships will bring many other stakeholders and relationships to bear in this work. We are asking partners to demonstrate some of these relationships by providing statements of support from other stakeholders.

18. Could we have a core partner which does not receive any funding in phase 1?

Yes, you could include organisations that do not receive any funding as core partners. You will need to consider how your partnership, governance and decision-making arrangements would operate with both funded and non-funded partners. For example, a 'for profit' large employer could be a core partner and not receive any funding (due to being ineligible to receive Youth Futures funds in phase 1).

19. Can a Combined Authority or other body with a larger geographical footprint act as lead partner?

Yes, in principle an organisation with a remit that goes beyond the boundaries of the area you will work in could act as a lead partner. As explained above, you will need to demonstrate how your partnership as a whole is rooted in the place you are focused on.

20. What if we have previously applied unsuccessfully for other Youth Futures funding programmes?

We will consider applications to the Connected Futures Fund on their merits. You should think carefully about the criteria and objectives of this fund, as it is very different from our previous funding programmes.

Employers

21. How could we get involved as an employer?

We welcome involvement from employers in the Connected Futures Fund. This could mean taking part in consultations, exploration or research activities, prototypes or pilot projects, either as a participant / stakeholder, or potentially as a core member of the partnership. If you are a for-profit organisation or do not expect to receive Youth Futures' funding in phase 1, please see the next question.

22. Why does the prospectus specify not-for-profit employers as potential partners?

In phase 1, we are only making funding available to not-for-profit organisations. We are therefore assuming that a for-profit employer would not be a core partner at this stage (although this would be possible if the organisation did not receive any funding in phase 1 – see question 18). However, a not-for-profit organisation with a large workforce (such as a hospital, university or large charity) could act as an employer core partner in phase 1 and receive funding. You are welcome to include statements of support from for-profit employers in your application.

In phase 2, we may provide funding to for-profit organisations, depending on the nature of the work that we invest in (for example, a wage subsidy programme, or training and support on inclusion for employers).

23. Is it a problem that we are working with multiple employers?

No, this would be a strength

Kinds of problem / issue / approach

24. In Phase 1, should we already know what system change we want to achieve, and then use the research to (hopefully) validate our thinking?

We are asking all applicants to tell us about the problem you want to address, and why it matters to young people facing disadvantage. You may already have a good idea of what good would look like, in which case please explain to us how this investment can help you spread that vision and get more people and organisations involved and committed to change. However, you may also have a clear idea of the problem, but much less clarity on how to fix it. This is also fine. Tell us how you will use our investment to develop that understanding, starting with young people and shared as widely as possible with the people and organisations who can make it happen.

25. There can be a tension between a systemic, whole community approach on the one hand, and a more targeted approach for specific young people on the other hand. Is one of these more of a priority than the other?

We recognise this tension between separate, targeted support, and making 'mainstream' support more inclusive. We are open to applications which take either approach, as well as efforts to do both. We will ask you to explain how your approach responds to the needs and aspirations of young people facing disadvantage and discrimination.

26. Can it be a totally new programme, a small project with limited existing evidence, or a development/expansion of more established delivery?

We are open to any of these. We recognise that some great solutions may already exist, but we also know that young people continue to be failed. Depending on how developed your work is already, you are likely to need different things in phase 1. If you and others have been running up against the same problem, but haven't had the time and resource to work out how to tackle it, that's where you should focus your application. If you have been nurturing an idea or operating on a very small scale, consider how you can use this funding to test it out, engage new people or make the case for wider uptake. If you are delivering a model that you think can change how support works more widely, you might want to look at developing new partnerships and links to get others to adopt your model, or an evaluation to demonstrate its potential.

Regardless of where you sit on this spectrum, remember that this funding is an opportunity to put resources into a process to figure out what to do next and build alliances and momentum towards that goal, rather than having to deliver outputs from day 1.

What do you already know?

27. What evidence does Youth Futures have to date?

Throughout 2021, Youth Futures have been engaging with our [Future Voices Group](#), a wide range of other marginalised young people and other important stakeholders to better understand the youth employment system. This included detailed research with three 'common experience' groups of young people: those with experience of the criminal justice system; those with experience of the care system; those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. The result of this research is the first iteration of our [Youth Employment System Map](#) for England, which includes different kinds of evidence (including quotes from young people, and causal loops generated based on their insights) which have helped shape our understanding of the barriers and opportunities within the youth employment system to date. We will continue to update the system map with more insights and evidence over time, including using insights from the Connected Futures programme as well as our other programmes.

28. A lot has been funded - how available is the information on what you've learnt so far?

Learning from the organisations and programmes we have funded so far will be shared with the sector when reports and findings are available, which is not likely to be until 2022. Our intention as a funder is to be transparent with the evidence generated from all our funded programmes. Our website includes details of all the programmes we have funded to date, with a short overview of each programme and its location.

29. Some good things are already happening - what learning can Youth Futures share?

As part of the Connected Futures Fund supporting material on the website, we have gathered some examples of systems change in employment and other sectors. We would also recommend these two reports by the Institute for Employment Studies on (a) what works in youth employment, funded by Youth Futures Foundation, and (b) lessons for partnerships:

<https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/v14-IES-evidence-review-FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/what-works-youth-employment-partnerships>

However, we know that we can't know everything that's going on, and part of this process is about you finding out what else is happening and making the connections that can lead to wider change.

40% requirement

30. How do we manage the requirement for the smallest partner to receive 40% of the funding in phase 1 if we want to have more than three funded core partners?

This requirement reflects our concern to ensure that smaller partners, especially voluntary and community-based organisations, are treated with equity and able to exercise voice and power within partnerships. This is an important value for Youth Futures.

We calculated the 40% on the assumption of 3 core partners and a split of approximately 40:30:30. However, if you want to have more than three funded core partners, we recognise that this may pose challenges. We would still want to see a funding arrangement that reflected our commitment to equity.

It is also possible for an organisation to be a core partner without receiving any funding in phase 1 (see question 18). While this may pose its own challenges, it would obviously make it easier to divide the budget among the remaining partners. If you are able to secure any additional funding towards this work, this would not count in calculating the 40% requirement. For example, if you secure an additional £25,000 on top of Youth Futures funding, this could be allocated to any partner, and we would only require you to allocate 40% of our funding to the smallest partner, rather than 40% of the total budget.

We would also encourage you to consider how widely you want to stretch the funding for this work in phase 1.

31. How do we define 'smallest partner' for the purposes of the 40% requirement?

This should be calculated on the basis of annual turnover. We recognise that for some extremely small local voluntary sector organisations, absorbing this much funding might pose capacity challenges. It is possible to apply for less than the full amount – for example, if you apply for £75,000 in total, then this would represent a total of £30,000 to the smallest partner, or £20,000 per year. It is also possible to put some of this money into core funding for this organisation to help them manage the costs of participating in the process.

If this requirement will still pose a challenge for the smallest organisation in your partnership, please get in touch with us to discuss further.

Other actors

32. How should we engage with JobCentres and other nationally mandated actors with a role in youth employment?

We encourage applicants to consider whether and how to involve JobCentre Plus and other nationally mandated organisations – this could be as partners, as stakeholders or as targets. We hope to see some partnerships working closely with these kinds of organisations and influencing their practice. However, we also recognise that the national policy and funding that shape the work of these organisations can be a major cause of the problems experienced by young people. We will work with partners to draw out lessons and make the case for change at national level. We are already in dialogue with DWP and other policy audiences, and we see Connected Futures as a great opportunity to deepen and develop our influencing work.

33. Can a national organisation be part of multiple partnerships?

Yes. We anticipate that many partnerships will want to work with organisations like DWP/JobCentre Plus or the Careers and Enterprise Company. As outlined above, we see this as a positive opportunity to deepen engagement with these actors. Similarly, there is no problem if one organisation provides letters in support of multiple applications.

An organisation with a footprint that covers multiple places may want to apply for funding as part of more than one partnership. In principle, this is fine. We will assess each application on its individual merits, including the “fit” between problem, people, place and partners. You may want to consider where your organisation can offer the best fit. We would also advise you to read our guidance on partnership arrangements carefully. We will be looking for evidence of equitable partnerships, where smaller local organisations have their share of power and resources.

Other funding

34. How does this fund fit with other funds, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund?

We took the decision to focus our funding on the places that offered the best fit with our mission (see question 13). While there is some overlap with the Shared Prosperity Fund and other levelling up priorities, this was not our primary consideration.

We welcome applications that consider how our investment can be used alongside existing central or local government funding. We hope that in some cases, the work undertaken in phase 1, including the local data analysis and other quantitative research, will help partnerships develop proposals and make the case for support from other funding streams.

We are actively discussing the Fund with other non-statutory funders, and we hope that in some cases we will be able to help partnerships in phase 1 identify additional funding from beyond Youth Futures.

35. How will Youth Futures secure further funding to do this on a bigger scale?

We are very disappointed not to be able to fund more places. We are seeking to influence government to approach funding for employment, levelling up and other large-scale funding in a joined-up way that responds to the needs of young people facing disadvantage. We would welcome collaboration and partnership on this agenda.

Match funding

36. Is there a match funding requirement?

No. We welcome applications where additional funding has been secured, but this is not a requirement.

Co-production and lived experience

37. What role should young people play in the process? What are they getting for their engagement?

We want you to ensure that young people are in the lead and have a meaningful role in decision-making. This could include peer research and other activities to explore the problem, design and development of solutions, and participating in governance or evaluation. We have developed a framework for youth participation which is described in the prospectus. You should demonstrate one of the following levels of participation:

- Adult-initiated, youth share decision-making

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- Youth-initiated, adults share decision-making
- Youth-initiated and directed

You should ensure that young people are appropriately recompensed for their time and engagement. We recognise that for tax / benefits reasons it may not be possible to pay young people, so you may want to provide other rewards / incentives. You should include the costs of these in your application.

How will phase 1 work?

38. What happens to phase 1 projects that are not selected for phase 2 - there will be good ideas, energy and expectations left hanging. Will Youth Futures help manage this?

Yes, we are committed to working with all the partnerships funded in phase 1 to help them find a good “landing” for their work, even if we cannot invest in the next stage. This may involve support with identifying potential sources of funding, developing the business case for future resourcing, brokering introductions, or working with partnerships on other activities such as research or policy influencing, to help them take their ideas forward. We will endeavour to stay in touch with partnerships that are not successful in progressing to stage 2 and will continue to be interested in the development of your work.

39. How much flexibility and trust will partnerships have to react to changes in the context?

We want to fund partnerships to deliver a process which can build momentum for change. This will mean reacting and changing tack during this process, based on what you find out or changes in the context, and we want to work with you to understand and support this kind of flexibility.

Phase 2

40. Do we have to continue with the same partners and partnership / funding arrangements in phase 2?

No. In the run-up to phase 2, we will work with partnerships to agree the scope and structure of our investments and further support. We recognise that different partnerships will develop different solutions and ideas, and these will require tailored funding arrangements.

**** Additional questions amended 06.01.2022**

41. Can Local Authorities or other partners be named in more than one application within an eligible local authority area?

Yes, local authorities or other partners can be named in more than one application within a single eligible local authority area. We would encourage partnerships within each eligible area to work collaboratively and avoid competing applications where possible. However, we recognise that multiple applications may be received from one area focussing on different barriers and/or different groups of young people.

42. Will you fund more than one application in each eligible area?

We expect that we may receive more than one application from an eligible local authority area, however, we will be seeking to fund a diverse portfolio of partnerships and eligible areas through the Connected Futures programme. We envisage funding 6-8 partnerships during Phase 1 and there are 83 local authority areas that are eligible to apply. This means it is unlikely that we will fund two applications from the same area unless both are very distinctive.

43. Can the place we identify in phase one, change or expand in phase two?

In principle this could happen. Phase 1 of Connected Futures is designed to give your partnership the opportunity to explore a problem with how support is organised or delivered that affects young people facing disadvantage. We think that taking time to understand the problem and get more people on board will lead to bigger, more ambitious solutions in the end. Therefore the initial place you select might change, expand or grow, although the available grant amount of up to £1.5m for Phase 2 won't increase. If the place did change or expand based on your learning, it would still need to be within the list of eligible local authorities.

44. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability – How does Youth Futures view this as regards it not being a learning disability?

Whilst it is not a learning disability, ASD can affect learning and has a significant impact on a young person's life and can mean that young people with ASD face disadvantage in accessing employment. We also understand the intersectionality of ASD and the other groups that face particular disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market. Therefore this would be an eligible group of young people to target.

45. Clarification regarding Q6.7 in the application form

In relation to Q6.7 in the application form 'In the area covered by your proposal, what % of young people aged 0-24 are from minoritised ethnic groups you selected in Q5.1?' If you have not identified one or more specific minoritised ethnic groups in Q5.1 we do not expect an answer on the grounds of ethnicity at this stage.

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46. Confirmation letters are these from the lead partner organisation applying?

The confirmation letters / letters of support are to demonstrate that you (the partnership) have relationships across the different sectors identified, and these organisations are supportive of your work on youth employment. Where possible, these letters should explicitly support the work of the partnership as a whole. We recognise that individual organisations may already have established relationships, and in this case letters may refer to only one of the partners rather than the whole partnership.

You must provide at least one document from organisations in at least two of the following categories (a total of at least two documents):

- Schools, colleges, youth skills and training providers or alternative provision
- Significant employers (more than 250 staff employed locally) or employer bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, SME network)
- Voluntary and community partners
- Relevant bodies with a national mandate for youth employment (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, Careers & Enterprise Company, National Careers Service)

If you have any questions about the Connected Futures Fund application process, please call us on 020 7553 4539 or by email at: grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org quoting Connected Futures Fund in the subject line.