

Building Futures Test and Learn Delivery: Frequently Asked Questions

January 2024



Section 1: Timings

Why is the deadline to submit an Expression of Interest so short?

We want to see delivery from the start of the 2024/25 academic year. We recognise that we will need to give the successful delivery partner(s) time to engage and mobilise schools and mentors. This means we need to make the application and award process as quick as possible. We are also keen to minimise the time and effort invested by unsuccessful applicants.

We have therefore designed the EOI form with only 20 questions, most of which are numbers related to current delivery, or Y/N answers. We believe it should be possible for an applicant to complete the EOI in a couple of hours, assuming they have delivery monitoring reports / statistics to hand.

What does “ability to deliver support at scale from September 2024” mean?

We want to reach up to 500 young people during the demonstrator. We recognise that it may take time to recruit and onboard all these young people, and/or the adults who will provide the support. However, we expect that the successful delivery partner(s) will be able to deliver to a significant proportion of this total within the first term of the 2024/25 academic year.

Could we start delivery earlier?

Yes! We expect to announce the demonstrator grant award in April 2024, and we are happy to fund any delivery after this date.

The call for EOIs says there is “the potential to extend to July 2026”. What does this mean?

We want to use the demonstrator to explore different elements of delivery, as part of our work to develop a model of support that can go to a rigorous trial. We recognise that if the demonstrator involves support over a longer duration (e.g. a whole school year), we may need to extend the timeline to allow for a full “test and learn” cycle.

Over the next few months, we will carry out additional research, including engagement with young people, to help us further define the right approach to the demonstrator. By the time of award we therefore expect to have a clearer view of the likely timeframe.

Note that our budget is based on the total number of young people receiving support, and we would not expect to increase the grant amount if delivery went into 2026.

When will the next phase of funding be made available?

We intend to complete the demonstrator and associated evaluation and learning activities, as well as our wider programme of research on the factors associated with effective mentoring and risk of becoming NEET, before specifying the next stage of Building Futures.

We expect this to involve a large-scale impact evaluation of a clearly defined intervention. This will need to be commissioned separately, and we are not yet in a position to specify our funding approach or success criteria in more detail. There is therefore no guarantee that the delivery partner for the demonstrator will be awarded further funding for the trial.



Section 2: Money

What does “a budget of up to £600,000” mean?

We have allocated a budget for the demonstrator based on a total number of 500 young people receiving support. If the successful delivery partner(s) propose an approach which satisfies our criteria while reaching fewer young people, we would expect to award a correspondingly lower grant amount. You do not need to specify a budget at EOI stage.

What costs can we apply for?

Our grant is intended to fully cover all delivery costs, including design, mobilisation and iteration / adaptation. We are seeking a high degree of engagement and “touch” during the demonstrator, with our research, evaluation and service design partners as well as Youth Futures, and a willingness to experiment with different delivery models. We have therefore sought to set a generous budget for the demonstrator. However, you should consider carefully whether you are willing and able to operate in this way.

We cannot fund:

- Activities that generate profits for private gain.
- The practice of religion, or any activities that actively promote religion or particular belief systems.
- Activities that are delivered as part of a statutory duty or responsibility, or that are or have been statutorily funded (see next question).

At EOI stage you do not need to specify a budget.

What does “additionality to statutory duties and funding” mean?

As a distributor of Dormant Assets Scheme funding, Youth Futures must ensure that our funding does not substitute for or duplicate statutory funding and responsibilities. This means that we cannot fund activities covered by a statutory funding obligation on central or local government, or other public bodies. It also means we cannot provide replacement funding for a service that was previously funded on a “like for like” basis by central government or other statutory sources. We are able to fund new services, but we must not duplicate existing or previous statutory provision.

There is no statutory obligation to provide one-to-one support from a trusted adult who is not a teacher, careers advisor or health or care professional, so we do not anticipate additionality to be a significant issue for Building Futures. However, if you are applying on behalf of a local authority or other public body, or a voluntary sector organisation currently or previously in receipt of statutory funding, you should consider carefully whether and how this work is separate from and additional to your statutorily funded provision.

Do we need to provide match funding?

Match funding is not required, and our grant is intended to fully cover your costs. However, we recognise that many applicants will have existing funding streams for their 1:1 support activity that will run into the next academic year. We are therefore happy to consider match or part-funding arrangements, especially where these will enable rapid mobilisation by or before September 2024. You do not need to specify this at EOI stage, although you can use the comments box in the form to do so if you wish.



Section 3: Eligibility

We are not a charity. Can we apply?

We can accept applications from local authorities or other public bodies, although our criteria around pace, scale and flexibility mean that it is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate an onward commissioning round. Applicants should also carefully consider additionality to statutory funding (see above).

We can accept applications from education providers provided they are incorporated and registered as charities, asset-locked social enterprises or mutuals.

We cannot accept applications from organisations which operate for profit.

We want to make a partnership application. Whose delivery should we include in the EOI?

We welcome applications from existing partnerships who can pool their strengths and activities to deliver the Building Futures demonstrator. You should give answers that best reflect what the partnership as a whole will bring. For example, this could mean combined delivery statistics, or coverage of multiple footprints. Where different partners currently have different delivery models (e.g. in relation to payment of adults providing support), you should agree amongst the partners which answer best reflects your likely future application.

You should use the comments box in the EOI form to explain how your answers relate to the different members of the partnership.

We don't operate in one of your preferred footprints / geographies. Can we apply?

Yes. We will consider all EOIs against the essential criteria listed in section 4 of the call:

- Ability to deliver support at scale by September 2024 at the latest
- Existing delivery of mentoring or other one-to-one personalised support to young people
- Established reach to young people aged 14-16 in school or community settings
- Existing provision to young people at risk of becoming NEET, especially those from more disadvantaged backgrounds
- Willingness to test and learn, and commitment to evidence and evaluation

If we receive a large number of EOIs that meet these criteria, we will give preference to those that include activity within one or more of our footprints of interest (the Black Country, Bradford, Leeds, Greater Manchester East and Liverpool City Region).

We operate in more than one of your preferred footprints. Will this improve our chance of success?

Not necessarily. At EOI stage, we will give preference to EOIs which include activity in one or more of our footprints of interest (the Black Country, Bradford, Leeds, Greater Manchester East and Liverpool City Region).

If we receive a large number of EOIs which satisfy both our essential criteria and our geographic preference, we will consider the proportion of current activity that is within these footprints (Questions 4b and 4c) as a further shortlisting criterion.

However, at full proposal stage, we will focus on applicants' ability to deliver at pace and scale. More widely distributed delivery may bring additional challenges in



this regard. In deciding whether to bid, you should therefore consider carefully where and how you would want to mobilise delivery if successful.

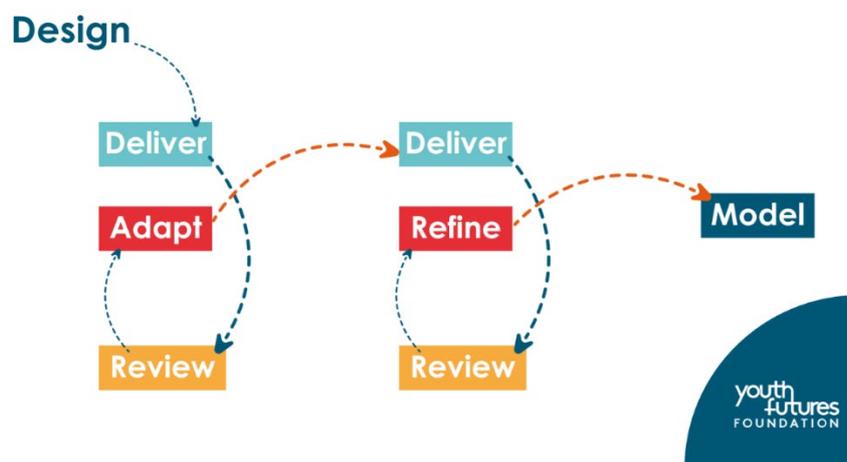
Is delivery in Alternative Provision, Pupil Referral Units or special schools eligible?

Our ultimate ambition is to develop and test a model that can be rolled out in national policy. We want to make sure that our learning from the demonstrator is generalisable. We will therefore start by casting our net wide, and we expect the successful delivery partner(s) to provide support to young people in mainstream secondary education.

However, we are also aware that many young people at risk of becoming NEET may not be full-time in mainstream settings. Except for Question 2a, which is explicitly limited to mainstream secondary schools, you may therefore include support you provide in AP, PRUs, special schools or in the community in your answers. Please use the comments box in the EOI form to give more detail of the range of settings you currently operate in.

Section 4: Test and learn

What do you mean by a test and learn approach?



We want the successful delivery partner(s) to work with us to generate learning about implementation and help develop the model for a future impact evaluation. We expect this to involve an iterative approach, where the initial design is modified in light of feedback and learning from early delivery, and this revised design is further tested and refined through additional delivery.

We expect the delivery partner(s) to work closely and openly with our evaluation and service design partners, who will be independently observing and assessing delivery. In parallel to the demonstrator, we will be commissioning further research and evaluation activity to help us scope the planned trial. We may also ask the delivery partner(s) to pilot new approaches to identify, recruit / refer or retain young people, based on the findings of this wider research and evaluation work.

We recognise that this is a relatively unusual approach to delivery, and this is why we have sought to allocate sufficient budget to cover the costs of ongoing adaptation. You should consider carefully whether you are willing and able to work in this way.

What are your expectations in terms of working with your evaluation partner(s)?



We will commission an independent process evaluation of the demonstrator, with a focus on implementation, as outlined above. This will include review of the intervention theory of change and delivery data (e.g. session attendance, content etc). The delivery partner(s) will need strong activity monitoring systems for the demonstrator. The evaluation will also gather learning and insights on young people's perspectives and experiences.

We expect the delivery partner(s) to work collaboratively and transparently with the evaluator, providing them with free and unfettered access to delivery sites and programme data. The delivery partner(s) will need to be fully committed to our approaches to evidence generation, learning and evaluation as a What Works Centre.

What are your expectations in terms of working with your service design partner?

We will commission a service design partner to explore the perspectives of young people and mentors on the support offer, and to identify potential process and service improvements.

We expect the delivery partner(s) to work collaboratively and transparently with the service designer. We anticipate that they will want to speak independently to young people, mentors and school stakeholders, and we expect the delivery partner(s) to facilitate this. We also expect the delivery partner(s) to take the feedback and insights gathered through this process on board, and work with the service design partner to further adapt and refine delivery.

What is an impact evaluation?

Evaluation involves looking at interventions, policies and programmes in a structured way. An evaluation includes the *systematic* collection and analysis of data related to a policy or intervention and its outcomes. The ultimate aims of evaluation are to understand whether and how a policy or programme improves outcomes for the target group and, more broadly, to add to the evidence base on a particular social issue and the most effective interventions for tackling it.

Impact evaluations seek to estimate the causal effects of a policy, intervention or programme by comparing people who took part in it, or had the option of taking part in it, with a similar group who took part in another option or scenario. The other scenario can be services as usual. By comparing outcomes of individuals or groups, impact evaluations measure whether the intervention, policy or programme made a difference and by how much. Alongside impact evaluation, implementation and process analysis assesses the components and quality of the intervention and assesses to what extent it was delivered consistently in a given context.

What is a What Works Centre?

We are the What Works Centre for youth employment. The purpose of a What Works Centre is to create, curate, translate and share evidence to improve outcomes for target people and places. Youth Futures is a member of the [What Works Network](#). We prioritise projects that will ultimately generate very high-quality, **causal** evidence. Typically, these projects include experimental methods – for example Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) or quasi experimental designs (QED).

