



Strategic Partner for Evidence into Action & Connected Futures Expansion (Capacity Building and Learning) Application Guidance

January 2024



Introduction

Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established with a £110m endowment from the Reclaim Fund to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds. Youth Futures' fundamental aim is to narrow employment gaps by identifying what works and why, invest in evidence generation and innovation, and ignite a movement for change so that all young people have fair access to good quality jobs.

Since 2020 we have launched a number of funding programmes. From supporting delivery and infrastructure organisations during the pandemic to funding organisations to undertake high quality evaluations of their interventions through to place based systems change initiatives, Youth Futures has supported a broad range of organisations with funding for delivery and evaluation activities that will ultimately help us achieve our mission.

We are seeking a Strategic Partner to provide capacity building and learning support to a defined cohort of experience-led organisations funded through Youth Futures Connected Futures and Evidence into Action programmes.

Ethnic disparities

The data that emerged from the Race Disparity Audit in 2017 highlighted employment disparities faced by young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and the Covid-19 pandemic only compounded these barriers. Post-pandemic, the fall in employment was four times higher for young Black people and nearly three times higher for young Asian people. And these disparities persist. Youth Futures recently commissioned Savanta ComRes to survey over 2,200 young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and found that three in ten have experienced some form of workplace discrimination and two in five have experienced it when applying to a job (39%) and/or at a job interview (38%).

Youth Futures is committed to addressing ethnic disparities in employment outcomes and is determined to build the evidence base to highlight what works to support young people from ethnic minority backgrounds to access and remain in good quality jobs.

Our funding approach is aligned to tackling ethnic disparities and we have developed this within specific existing and new funding programmes. We are now seeking a strategic partner to support two of our funding and learning programmes where there is a focus on addressing ethnic disparities.

Connected Futures

Connected Futures is our flagship £20 million systems change fund, supporting pioneering local partnerships to develop new models of employment support. When young people facing disadvantage told us about their experiences, they made it clear that the services that are supposed to help them in their journey from education to employment are failing. Young people at most risk of becoming NEET face multiple barriers, whether due to characteristics such as disability or ethnicity, or adverse experiences such as being in the care system. We launched Connected Futures in November 2021, to stimulate local efforts to reorient the system around young people, so that they get the right support from the right place at the right time to help them into good job.

Our current Connected Futures portfolio includes three partnerships focusing on young people with Black British, African or Caribbean heritage. Since April 2023, we have been working with experience-led organisations from communities with Bangladeshi, Pakistani or other British Muslim heritage, to understand how best to support young people from these backgrounds. During 2024, we hope to announce three new partnerships focusing on these groups. We expect these to include an emphasis on support for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds to access employment and training opportunities.

Evidence into Action

In late 2023 we will be launching a new funding and learning programme, Evidence into Action. As the What Works Centre for Youth Employment, a challenge is putting **evidence**

into action through sharing and translation. Simply providing information about evidence-based programmes or practices is usually insufficient to change what funders, commissioners or practitioners do.

The fund will focus on how evidence based vocational training employment / employability interventions can be delivered to support young people from Black, Mixed Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage. A particular focus will be on how Youth Futures and other can effectively support delivery organisations led by those with experience of similar challenges to the young people this fund seeks to target. Delivery grants of c£75k per year will be available for up to three years to frontline delivery organisations. Youth Futures will invest up to £3m into this fund with the majority going towards funding delivery organisations. *A logic model for Evidence into Action can be found in Appendix 1.*

The fund will launch for applications from delivery organisations in early 2024. Funding decisions will be made in early summer 2024.

Why is this funding for Connected Futures and Evidence into Action needed?

Both Connected Futures and Evidence into Action form part of Youth Futures' efforts to invest in and identify approaches that utilize or add to the evidence base of how to address youth employment challenges. 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. After 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. Although we are experiencing a strong recovery in overall employment levels post pandemic, youth unemployment levels have been on the rise. ONS statistics, as of Q2 2023, show that just over 350,000 16 to 24-year-olds not in full-time education were unemployed – nearly 100,000 more than the figure in Q2 of 2022. Youth unemployment levels have even surpassed those right before the onset of the pandemic, whereby just under 340,000 were unemployed as of Q4 2019.

Why are we investing in strategic partner organisations?

Youth Futures understands the need to invest in strategic infrastructure organisations to strengthen the youth employment ecosystem. Many are already 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. We understand the importance of strategic infrastructure organisations to draw together, champion and respond to the needs of the organisations that are working with young people seeking work; and those focused specifically on empowering young people from specific UK minoritized ethnic backgrounds who face multiple barriers.

Youth Futures recognise through our own research the role played by strategic infrastructure organisations. Through partnering with infrastructure organisations in our existing grants portfolio, we are gaining important insights into effective ways to support youth, community, education, training, and employment organisations to tackle youth unemployment. We commissioned RAND Europe to produce a full report of the findings, which were published in September 2022.

Strategic infrastructure support is a key component of success for any of our current and future funding programmes, where the majority of the frontline organisations will be 'experience led' and serving the needs of young people from UK minoritized ethnic communities. Many such frontline organisations have been severely underfunded and therefore have significant capacity and resource constraints due to their size. A strategic infrastructure partner will play a key role in understanding how best to support these frontline organisations by developing organisational capacity, relevant resources and championing their work across the sector.

Details of the Youth Futures Strategic Partners Funding

We seek to award funding to a strategic partner organisation who can deliver closely to the aims of both our Connected Futures and Evidence into Action programmes.

We expect to make one grant award. However, we are very much open to partnership proposals that enable organisations to pool their resources and skills and bring in specific expertise to deliver this work.

By working alongside a national strategic partner, we aim to build an appropriate infrastructure of support to build the organisational capacity of frontline delivery organisations, share 'what works', invest in evidence and innovation, and support with new ideas to improve practice when supporting young people from specific UK minoritised ethnic communities into the labour market. A strategic partner will need to work closely with Youth Futures to deliver support that aligns with the aims of both our Connected Futures and Evidence into Action programmes.

Intentions of the Strategic Partners Grant for Connected Futures and Evidence into Action:

We are looking for strategic partners that can work in partnership with Youth Futures, to:

- Support in the delivery of current (Connected Futures) and new (Evidence into Action) funding programmes.
- Connected Futures – Working with at least three local experience-led partnerships across London, the Midlands and Yorkshire.
- Evidence into Action – Working with between ten to twenty frontline organisations across 4 areas (London, Midlands, Greater Manchester and Yorkshire).
- Build capacity of delivery organisations to deliver their own organisational plans and engage in evaluation and research evidence to support their delivery to young people.
- Share What Works to a wide range of relevant audiences and stakeholders including funders, commissioners and other frontline delivery organisations in the sector.

The successful strategic partner will support funded organisations across both Connected Futures and Evidence into Action by delivering the following activities:

1. Assess organisational capacity and training needs of funded organisations.
2. Facilitate learning between funded organisations, through a series of regular in-person and virtual events and ensure learning is reflective of peer experience and current evidence base on youth employment interventions, working with external partners where appropriate.
3. Organise bespoke consultancy support and training to funded organisations
4. Manage a dedicated capacity building and training budget, in conjunction with Youth Futures, for the sole use of addressing needs identified with and by funded organisations to support their organisational development and evaluation capacity building needs.
5. Provide guidance and support to help funded organisations appropriately embed youth voice and participation in all their youth employability / employment activity.
6. Disseminate learning about developing the capacity of community organisations to deliver evidence-based youth employability / employment programmes locally. This learning should be targeted at a broader audience of practitioners beyond those funded by Youth Futures.

In addition, the successful strategic partner will support Connected Futures funded partnerships:

7. Facilitate strategic analysis, planning and action to tackle systemic racism and structural discrimination within mainstream services, employers and decision-making processes. We see this as a key focus of peer learning and support for Connected Futures partnerships
8. Support delivery of our Evidence into Action logic model (see Appendix 1)
9. Developing a series of guidance about effective implementation of vocational training interventions (adapted to different practitioner and funder stakeholder audiences) developed in conjunction with research experts and funded Evidence into Action grantees.
10. Iterative dissemination of learning about the development and delivery of vocational based training interventions to broader audience of practitioners and funders.
11. Produce outputs that help Youth Futures understand how the evidence associated with vocational training interventions can be applied to practitioners supporting young people from Black, Mixed Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage.
12. Convene learning sessions for funded organisations to support the understanding of implementation of evidence based approaches associated with delivery of vocational training interventions.

A strong track-record is required in the following areas:

- **KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION:** Sharing learning, evidence and research, to inform, transform and develop practice.
- **MOVEMENT BUILDING & CHAMPIONING:** How they harness evidence, strategically uplift their networks, and lead 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.

What type of organisations can apply?

We will accept applications from registered charities, social enterprises (with appropriate asset lock provisions) and mutuals incorporated in England and registered with either Charity Commission, Companies House, CIC regulator or the Financial Conduct Authority (for mutuals).

Please note:

- We are interested to hear from experience-led organisations, especially those led by people from Black, Mixed Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage.
- We do not require applicants to be engaged in direct delivery to young people (although you may be).
- It is desirable, but not essential, for your organisation to have expertise in youth employment. It is essential that you recognise the importance of this agenda and be willing to champion this work to help improve job outcomes for marginalised young people across England.

Eligibility criteria

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

- Have at least 20 organisations in your network, membership or movement.
 - We are particularly interested in those with networks 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 been operating for at least three years
- Have income of at least £250,000 in your last published accounts and the equivalent of at least three months' operating expenditure in cash reserves
- Align with our mission and target groups of young people

What funding is available?

Restricted investment of up to £150,000, per year for up to three years, to work with strategic partner organisations that:

- meet the criteria set out within this guidance
- are / will be ready to commence delivery of their proposal by 1st March 2024

What can the funding be spent on?

This is a restricted investment to deliver your proposal, and can include the overheads and the core costs to deliver the work.

We will only accept proposals for activities that will exclusively deliver against the aims and activities associated with this funding.

Please note that 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.

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. Developing meaningful relationships with grantees.
2. Simple proportional end-to-end processes.
3. Open, transparent and responsive on who and how we fund and why.
4. Seek out, listen to and act on feedback.
5. Work in partnership with grantees in support of ongoing mutual learning.

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.

How to apply

We are inviting eligible organisations to complete **a short Application form [insert weblink]** and provide relevant due diligence information.

Further information about we will ask for in the application form, the proposal and the required due diligence information is outlined below:

How will decisions be made?

- **Stage 1 - Application / proposal assessment:** Your online application will be assessed against the purpose and criteria of this Fund as outlined in the Guidance document. Applicants will then be notified on the outcome of your application/proposal by email
- **Stage 2 - Meeting (ideally in person):** If your application progresses, as above, we will invite you to meet with us for a visit to support the assessment of your application. Meetings will take place towards the end of January. Ideally, we would like to meet with the project lead, a member of your senior leadership team or committee / Board
- **Stage 3: Final Decision:** Final decisions will be communicated by email after our Grants & Evaluation Committee has met in late February 2024.

Further information about we will ask for in the application form, the proposal and the required due diligence information is outlined below:

Organisations will be asked to provide the following information in the short application form:

- The name of the organisation applying for funding
- The legal structure of the organisation
- Contact details for the organisation and for proposed activity
- Their charity (and any other) registration number
- The name of the project for which you are applying funding for
- Confirm that any previously supplied due diligence information is accurate and remains relevant and up-to-date (by doing so, you do not need to provide the same information again)

Applications must also clearly explain by answering the following application questions (Maximum 300 word limit for each answer)

1. Please describe your network/membership and your previous experience of identifying and developing capacity needs of experience led frontline delivery organisations.
 - What activities, outputs and outcomes did you deliver and achieve?
 - If you have examples of delivering this support as part of a broader funding programme please explain how you worked with the funder/s?
 - Why your organisation is well placed to deliver?
 - In what way(s) have you provided opportunities for 'youth voice'? (i.e. opportunities for young people to influence local/regional/national decision-making?)
2. How would you propose to identify the needs of and build the capacity of 'experience led' organisations to develop both their organisational and evaluation capacity to engage with funded organisations from both our Connected Futures and Evidence into Action programmes. What would be your approach to delivering this support?
 - How does your proposal meets the intention and activities required for this piece of work?
 - Detail your approach to these activities, being clear on how or if you would differentiate between support offered to Connected Futures and Evidence into Action programmes.
 - How would you manage a defined bespoke capacity building and training budget of c.£200k for funded organisations?
 - In what way(s) will this project provide opportunities for 'youth voice'? (i.e. opportunities for young people to influence local/regional/national decision-making?). For example: How have you/do you plan to involve young people in the design/development and delivery/implementation of this project?
3. How do you propose to resource and manage this project and do you intend to form any delivery partnerships?
 - Who will be responsible for the delivery of the project?
 - How many staff will contribute to the delivery of the project and what are their roles?
 - Do you already have the required staff to deliver the project? If not, what is your recruitment plan?
 - Do you plan to outsource or form and partnership to deliver any of the activities? If so, please provide details including how suitable partners will be sourced and managed?
 - What are the risks associated with your proposal? How will your organisation mitigate and manage the risks?
4. What is your approach to generating and sharing learning from this piece of work for the benefit of stakeholders across the Youth Employment sector (including but not limited to Connected Futures / Evidence into Action funded organisations, Youth Futures Foundation, your own network/member, philanthropic funders, commissioners, other frontline delivery organisations and policy makers)
 - What learning outputs will you generate of value to your network/membership and the wider youth employment ecosystem?

- How will you influence and / or support other organisations to act on the information received?
 - What organisations will you reach and what is their relevance? How and when will you reach them? How many organisations and how many individuals will be impacted by the proposed work?
 - How will you measure the effectiveness of disseminated learning? What does 'success' look like for this piece of work?
 - How would you work with commissioned research experts to translate evidence and produce relevant guidance for a range of stakeholders?
5. You will also need to attach the following financial information to your application:
- A **full budget for the project** broken down into key headings for the duration of the project
 - Your organisation's income and expenditure budget for the **current** financial year
 - Your cash-flow forecast for the next 12 months and / or Your profit and loss forecast for the next 12 months or financial year

Please note that you do **not** need to attach information that is publicly available such as your latest annual report and accounts. As part of our due diligence check, Youth Futures will review the available information as appropriate.

If your organisation has not already supplied the following to Youth Futures, you will also need to provide:*(if you have not supplied to Youth Futures within the last 12 months):

| Information |
|--|
| a. Your membership criteria and a full list of your members |
| b. Contact details for two organisations from your membership or network as your referees |
| c. 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) |
| d. A bank statement in the name of the organisation listing all transactions (that is dated within the last 3 months) |
| e. Short biographies of your management team and board members / trustees |

How do I apply?

The application form will be available [here](#). **The deadline for receiving all applications is 10am Wednesday 24th January. If you submit your application after this deadline it may not be assessed.**

Further information

If you have further questions, or need help, please contact us if by calling on 020 7553 4539 or emailing grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org

Appendix 1: Evidence into Action Logic Model

LOGIC MODEL - Evidence into Action Phase 1:



