youth futures FOUNDATION

Themed Funding Round: Pre-employment Vocational Training

Application Guidance for Delivery Organisations

June 2025

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the 'pre-employment vocational training' themed funding round. We recommend that all applicants read through this guidance document, FAQs and other supporting materials before submitting your application.

About Youth Futures Foundation

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people.

We want to see a society where every young person can achieve good work. Our work has two overarching objectives to bring about systems change for marginalised young people:

- **To find and generate high-quality evidence** to better understand England's youth unemployment and inactivity challenge, and most importantly to learn what solutions work to address this.
- **To put evidence into action** with policy makers and employers who have the means to make direct impactful change for young people. We do this through translating the evidence practically for stakeholders to use and understand, and through partnerships and engagement to influence, inform and support them as decision makers to back evidence-based interventions that work.

Glossary of technical terms

- **Impact evaluation:** a type of evaluation which aims to determine whether an intervention has a causal effect on an outcome, or a set of outcomes. Typically, impact evaluations are concerned with answering the question: does this intervention work? Youth Futures' impact evaluations will also always include implementation & process evaluations (IPEs) which answer other important questions, such as: how, for whom, and under what conditions does this intervention work?
- **Randomised Controlled Trial:** An evaluation method used to assess the impact of an intervention. Individuals eligible for the intervention are randomly assigned to one of two groups: the intervention group, who receive the programme, or the control group, who do not. Because this allocation is random, the two groups are expected to be equivalent, on average, in characteristics that might influence outcomes (e.g. motivation, qualifications, networks). This allows us to attribute any differences in outcomes directly to the intervention. RCTs are considered the most rigorous form of impact evaluation and are often referred to as the 'gold standard'.
- **Scale:** The total number of young people who receive your intervention over a defined time period. Sufficient scale is needed to ensure the evaluation has enough statistical power to detect impact.
- **Outcomes:** The changes in young people's circumstances that your intervention aims to bring about - such as entering employment, education, or training. These are what the evaluation is designed to measure. Outcomes are different from outputs, which refer to the delivery milestones of a programme (e.g. the number of young people who completed the intervention).
- **Business-as-usual (BAU):** The support that young people in the control group may continue to access while not receiving your intervention. This could include existing services such as Jobcentre Plus, local authority provision, or national employability schemes. In most cases, BAU is not a specific named programme but reflects the typical support available in a young person's local area.
- **Statutory provision:** Support that certain young people are legally entitled to or required to receive - for example, education or care services provided under statutory duties by local authorities.

Programme overview

Youth Futures Foundation aims to build a stronger evidence base to improve national understanding of what works to support marginalised young people to access good work. We do this by finding promising interventions that we believe can support young people to achieve better employment outcomes, and **commission high quality evaluations to evidence their impact.**

This funding round is specifically focused on **pre-employment vocational training** interventions. Pre-employment vocational training takes place outside of the workplace and aims to develop vocational skills for specific jobs and sectors. We are also very interested in pre-employment vocational training interventions that incorporate **basic skills training** components. Basic skills training seeks to help young people develop literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills that are needed for work and learning but are not specific to a particular occupation.

Our Youth Employment Toolkit suggests that further evaluations of pre-employment vocational training, especially when combined with basic skills training, would be highly valuable, particularly for young people facing additional barriers.

What we'll invest in

We are interested in proposals from both:

- **Delivery organisations** currently delivering a pre-employment vocational training intervention (with/without basic skills training)
- **Intermediary organisations** who will partner with delivery organisations currently delivering a pre-employment vocational training intervention (with/without basic skills training). *In these cases, the intermediary organisation should apply as the lead delivery organisation with input from other delivery organisations.*

We will invest in organisations that can commence delivery of their intervention as part of a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) in Q3 2026 and meet our **eligibility requirements.** The full eligibility requirements are summarised below. Please ensure you meet **all** these requirements before proceeding with an application.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Your organisation:

- must be registered and operating in England as a: *Cooperative Society, Limited Liability Partnership, Private Company Limited by Guarantee, Private Company Limited by Shares, Statutory Body, Registered Charity, Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Community Benefit Society, Community Interest Company limited by Guarantee, Community Interest Company limited by Shares (with appropriate asset lock) Excepted or exempted charity, Charitable Company (limited by guarantee), Other not for profit organisation, or College/University.*
- must have been registered and operating for at least 36 months
- must have an income in the most recent financial year of at least £250,000

2. Intervention: currently delivering a pre-employment vocational training intervention (as defined on page 8) with or without a basic skills training component. If the pre-employment vocational training intervention is part of a wider programme of activities, it should make up at least 50% of the overall contact hours.

The Youth Futures funded intervention **must not:**

- be longer than 12 months in duration
- be delivered as part of the universal education system in England or as part of any other statutory requirement

3. Location: the intervention must be delivered in England.

4. Young people: the intervention must support young people aged 16-24 (16-25 for those with SEND support needs). Some of the young people you support must be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or at risk of becoming NEET prior to enrolling on your intervention.

5. Outcomes: we're interested in interventions that improve employment outcomes by supporting young people to develop vocational skills for specific jobs and/or sectors.

6. Scale: the intervention must be able to reach enough participants to support a robust and meaningful impact evaluation. We estimate this to be at least 200 young people per year.

7. Willingness to engage in a Randomised Controlled trial (RCT): Youth Futures exists to better understand what works to improve youth employment outcomes. To help us achieve this, you will need to work with an evaluation partner to facilitate an RCT of your intervention. Please see the *How we measure the impact of our interventions* section for more information.

8. Readiness for evaluation: we are looking for interventions that are ready to be evaluated via an impact evaluation. To assess this, we will collect information about your intervention, your onboarding and referral processes, and the data you collect. Please see the criteria in the section *Readiness for Evaluation*.

9. Track Record: since we are aiming to identify interventions that are ready for an impact evaluation, it is important that the intervention is stable and already established. For this reason, your organisation must have previously delivered the intervention to young people aged 16-25 over the last 24 months.

Intervention

We are looking to fund organisations that have a track record of delivering pre-employment vocational training interventions to young people aged 16-25 in England. We are also interested in pre-employment vocational training interventions that incorporate basic skills training components. The intervention delivered to recipients should not be longer than 12 months in total, and we will favour shorter interventions to evaluate where possible.

What do we mean by intervention?

An intervention is a coherent set of activities with a defined structure, target group, and intended outcomes. An intervention could also be referred to as a 'programme'. We are open to interventions that offer a wider programme of activities (for example mentoring, on-the-job training, life skills). However, if the pre-employment vocational training intervention is part of a wider programme of activities, pre-employment vocational training should make up at least 50% of the overall contact hours with young people.

What do we mean by pre-employment vocational training?

Pre-employment vocational training takes place primarily outside of the workplace and aims to develop vocational skills for specific jobs and sectors. Content is typically classroom, workshop (or equivalent) based curricula that leads to the development of practical skills (i.e. not basic or life skills) of relevance to employers within the specific jobs or sectors that participants are looking to enter/ progress in. If delivered in a work premises, training mostly happens in a separate part of the work premises from where people normally carry out their work. It could contribute towards the achievement of a certificate or qualification. An example of an intervention including pre-employment vocational training could be a Skills Bootcamp designed to support individuals to become a HGV driver.

For this definition it **does not** include:

- On-the-job training (training for employees that takes place as part of their work)
- The vocational training element of an apprenticeship or traineeships
- Learning that primarily focuses on the development of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and/or only focuses on life skills (sometimes called 'soft skills') such as communication, team-working, workplace behaviours etc, over and above vocational sector specific skills.
- Pre-employment vocational training undertaken in schools and college that young people do as part of the universal education system in England. For example, a Level 1 construction skills course delivered by a further education college / training provider and funded by the Department for Education (formerly Education and Skills Funding Agency)

Please refer to our Youth Employment Toolkit when assessing whether your intervention meets our definition of pre-employment vocational training (referred to as 'off-the-job training' in our toolkit).

What do we mean by basic skills training?

Basic skills training seeks to help young people develop literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills that are needed for work and learning but are not specific to a particular occupation.

The following are **not** considered as basic skills training:

- Learning that focuses on enhancing young people's capabilities in areas such as communication, interpersonal and team-working skills, self-regulation etc. These are defined as life skills training. Basic skills training can indirectly help young people to improve their life skills. For example, communication and team-working may be enhanced by gains in literacy.

Please refer to 'basic skills training' in our Youth Employment Toolkit when assessing whether components of your intervention meet our definition.

Delivery funding details

Scale of delivery

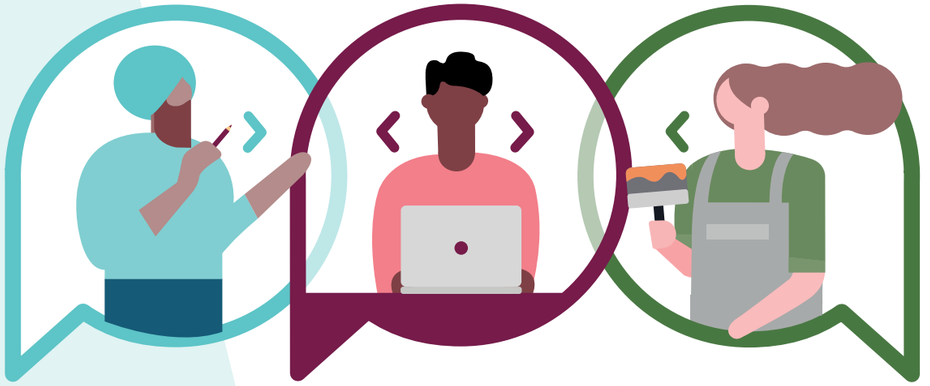
As part of this funding call, we are looking to support interventions that can deliver to **at least 200 young people within a 12-month period** or have a credible and well-evidenced plan to scale to this level within 6 months of funding. This threshold is essential to enable a high-quality evaluation via a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT), which is the evaluation approach we plan to use.

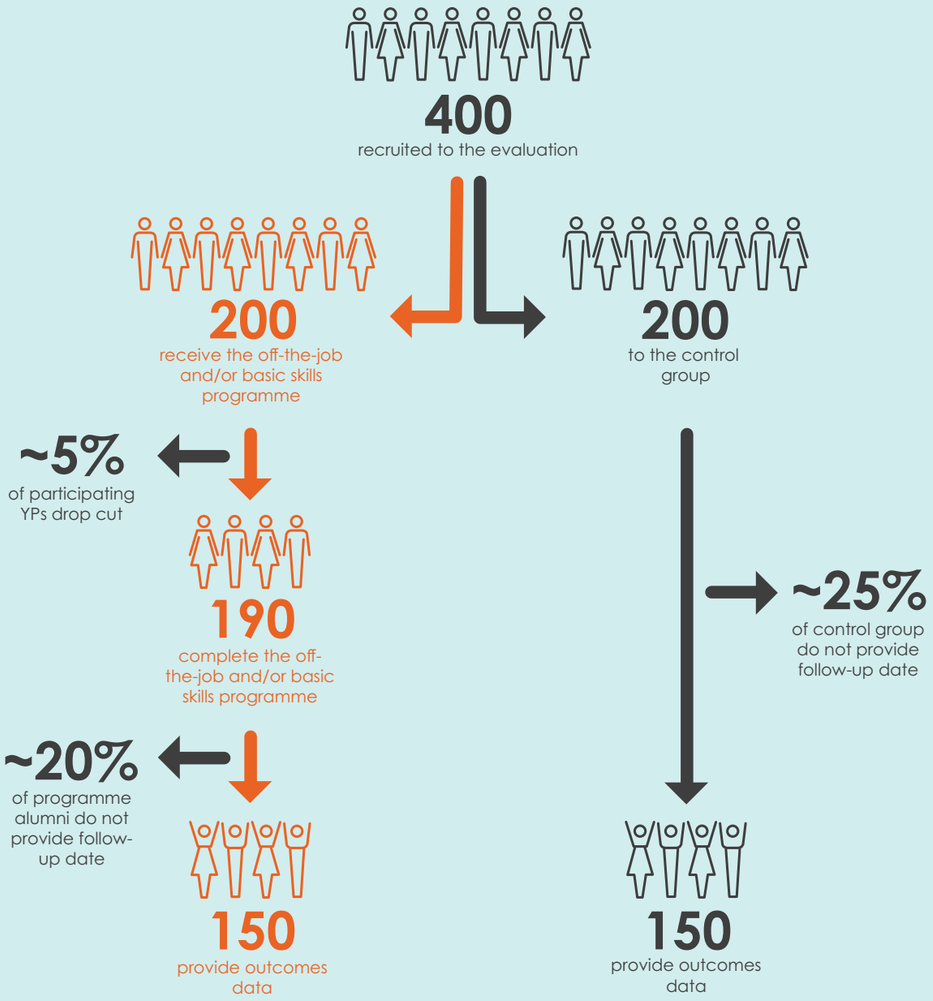
RCTs create directly comparable groups by randomly allocating participants to either receive the intervention (**the 'intervention' group**) or not receive it (**the 'control' group**) - see our *How we measure the impact of our interventions* section below for more information. Our evaluation needs to measure outcomes of enough young people in each group to be confident that differences are attributable to the intervention, and not to other differences between individuals in each group.

We will review your application to assess both the scale of your past delivery (*Eligibility Criterion 9 – Track Record*) and your ability to reach the required delivery scale in future (*Eligibility Criterion 6 – Scale*). These factors should help determine if you are fit for a robust evaluation and the feasibility of a control group. See the *Assessment Process* section for how we assess these elements.

The required **scale of delivery** should also account for the **real world challenges** of delivering an RCT. That might include young people dropping out from the intervention, or loss of data before a young person starts on the intervention (e.g. a mistake when completing the registration form) or when following-up to capture the young person's outcomes (e.g. the young person has changed address without providing contact details).

The diagram on page 10 shows an example of the difference between the number of young people recruited at the start of the intervention, and the number of young people who can be included in the evaluation.





Who we are looking to support

We are looking to support young people aged 16-25 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or who are at risk of becoming NEET. Your intervention must reach some young people who meet these criteria, and we will favour interventions which support high numbers from this group.

We're particularly interested in interventions that successfully and appropriately support young people who are disproportionately represented among those who are NEET for extended periods. This includes young people with:

- Black, Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage
- experience of the care system
- experience of the justice system
- a learning disability
- autism
- mental health challenges

Delivery costs

The budget available for your intervention will depend on several considerations, including duration, intensity, sector focus, accreditations provided and caseload per staff member of your intervention. As part of stage one, we will ask you to give an estimate of the unit cost per young person to deliver your intervention. If your application proceeds to stage two you will be required to break down your unit cost in detail. We expect the average cost of interventions to be between £2k to £3k, but this is just a guide and not a minimum or maximum figure.

The budget for your intervention will depend on how many young people we estimate will be required for a viable RCT. For example, if your intervention unit cost is £2,500 per young person and we determine that 300 young people would need to receive your intervention as part of the 'treatment' side of an RCT, the delivery budget for delivery of your intervention would be roughly £2,500 x 300 = £750,000 (plus any additional costs to support the RCT such as internal capacity or costs associated with the 'control group').

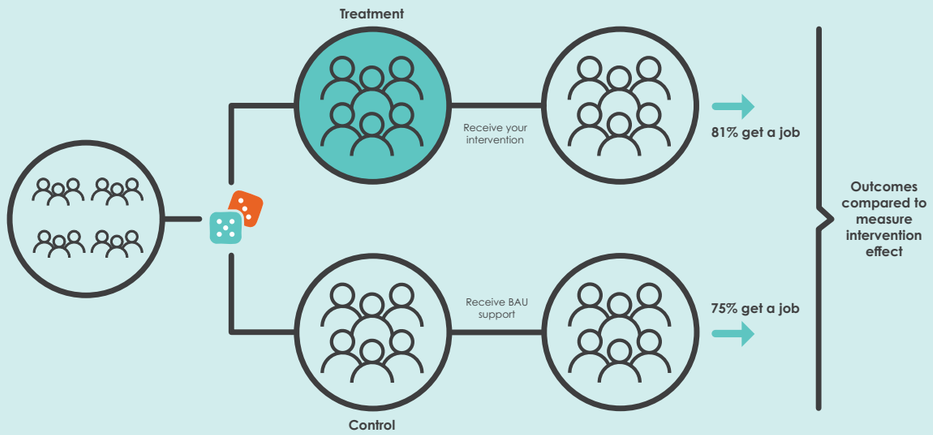
How we measure the impact of our interventions

We are only interested in funding interventions that can be evaluated via an RCT.

RCTs are preferable to other evaluation designs because they **create two equivalent groups** to compare. By that we mean that they are, on average, the same in the characteristics which might influence their employment outcomes, such as their motivation, educational attainment or personal networks. Because the groups were randomly assigned, we can be confident that both groups contain very similar young people, and we can therefore be sure that we are measuring the true effect of the intervention rather than other factors that might influence someone's participation in a programme or their response to it. By comparing the outcomes for the two groups before and after you deliver your intervention, we can see what impact your intervention has had on employment, compared to not having received it.

The standard of evidence produced via RCTs is therefore very robust, meaning Youth Futures and grant holders can make the strongest case possible for further funding or policy focus.

The image below shows how this comparison could be made. By creating two groups using random allocation, we can confidently measure your intervention's impact by comparing the outcomes of both equivalent groups.



Control groups in RCTs

In an RCT, it is essential to **create a valid control group** so that the outcomes of those who do not receive the intervention can be fairly compared with those who do. We are committed to ensuring this is done ethically, transparently, and in a way that works for delivery partners.

You do not need to design a control group yourself at this stage. If your programme is selected for funding, you will be matched with an independent evaluator who will work closely with you to identify the most appropriate trial design. Evaluators on our panel are highly experienced in delivering robust RCTs in real-world education and employment settings and will support you to embed a fair, practical, and proportionate approach into your referral or onboarding process. All trial designs will also be submitted to an independent ethics committee.

Suitable conditions for creating a control group

The most common condition that makes randomisation possible is **oversubscription or limited delivery capacity.** If your programme receives more eligible referrals than it can realistically support – whether that's formal oversubscription (e.g. a waitlist or intake cap) or informal rationing (e.g. caseworkers triaging based on readiness, or only having staff capacity to work with a subset) – randomisation can provide a fair and transparent way to allocate places. In these cases, the control group would be drawn from eligible young people beyond those your programme is able to support. This allows us to measure impact without reducing overall delivery.

If your programme is not oversubscribed, evaluators may work with you to explore whether other approaches - such as comparing different formats or intensities of support - could offer a feasible basis for randomisation.

Design options for a control group

Once an evaluator has worked with you to understand your delivery model and referral process, we will agree the most appropriate way to structure the control group.
The most common and preferred approach is a conventional RCT design, where we compare your intervention to a control group that continues to access any existing support available in their local area. However, other approaches may be considered where appropriate.

Examples of control group designs include:

- **Business-as-usual or statutory services only:** This is our preferred and most common approach. The control group does not receive your intervention but may access existing support - such as Jobcentre Plus, local authority services, or other national skills programmes. This helps us assess the added value of your intervention compared to what young people would otherwise receive.
- **Light-touch support offer:** If your organisation provides (or could provide) a lower intensity version of your intervention, or some basic support (e.g. CV writing or job search workshops) to some eligible young people, this could be used as a control group to compare this against your full offer. This design ensures all participants receive some support, while testing the additional impact of the full intervention.
- **Waitlist design:** Where your intervention can accommodate rolling intake, we may be able to randomise participants into two groups - one that receives support immediately, and one that waits a defined period before starting. This is only feasible where a delayed start would not disadvantage participants and where outcomes can still be measured within the evaluation window.
- **A/B testing:** In some instances, we may consider comparing two versions of an intervention via an A/B test (e.g. such as digital-only vs in-person training), rather than using a control group who receive no additional support.

In all cases, young people in the control group will remain eligible for, and can be directed to, statutory support and services. Where other local support offers change

during the trial, we will work closely with partners and evaluators to consider how to manage this to ensure the comparison made to the control group is meaningful and can capture the effectiveness of the intervention.

Other research questions we will answer

Alongside the RCT aspects of the evaluation, which focus on how well the intervention has 'worked' overall, the evaluation will also collect data to help us answer different types of questions to help Youth Futures (and grant holders) understand more about how their programme might work.

To do so, evaluators will also capture qualitative and process-level data to understand how interventions work and for whom, which will generate valuable additional findings, and which grant holders can use to refine the delivery of their intervention after the evaluation.

Ethics and transparency

Independent evaluators

To ensure evaluations are conducted with impartiality and transparency, we commission independent evaluators from our Evaluation Panel to conduct evaluations with grant holders. We will run a competitive call for proposals and select evaluators whose experience and expertise best places them to deliver the trial.

This commissioning will take place in January 2026, and appointed evaluators will start work with partners from March 2026. There will then be a trial development phase

where evaluators work with partners to fully understand their model and how the trial should be designed to evaluate it. We aim for the trials to launch in summer 2026.

Ethical considerations in trial design

We are committed to ensuring all impact evaluations supported through this programme are conducted to high ethical standards and will work with partners to ensure participation does not reduce the support which is available for eligible young people. Independent evaluators appointed by Youth Futures will submit all trial designs, including the control group options described above, for review by an appropriate independent ethics board, and we will work closely with grant holders to ensure young people are recruited and supported in a fair and transparent way.

Readiness for evaluation

Successful grant holders will have time to work with the independent evaluator to build capacity and processes before the start of the evaluation, but we are looking for interventions that are already sufficiently ready to be evaluated as part of an RCT from the summer of 2026.

The following criteria will be used to assess **the readiness of your intervention for an RCT:**

- The intervention is sufficiently well-established and stable, with activities and components that are in line with Youth Futures' definitions of **pre-employment vocational training** and/or **basic skills training** (please see sections above for guidance).
- The intervention has clear eligibility criteria and/or a target recipient group, or these could easily be created. We are particularly interested in interventions which deliver to a high volume of young people from our priority groups, but interventions for NEET young people more generally are also encouraged.
- The intervention has clear and plausible mechanisms through which it aims to positively impact its primary outcome of **employment, education or training.** This could, but does not have to, include an existing Theory of Change.
- The intervention is clearly distinct from statutory provision.
- **The intervention is clearly defined and delivered in a consistent way.** It should be possible to describe how it works in practice - for example, by outlining its key components, how practitioners are trained to deliver it, and any materials or guidance used to support consistent delivery.
- A randomisation process could feasibly and ethically be incorporated into existing referral or onboarding processes to create equivalent treatment and control groups. For example, whether the intervention is oversubscribed or whether young people could be placed on a 'wait-list'.
- Any existing data showing changes in recipients' outcomes before and after the intervention.

Delivering an RCT requires substantial time and resources from your organisation. Therefore, we also assess your organisation's ability to work with Youth Futures and an independent evaluator to deliver a high-quality trial, which may include adaptations to existing processes to facilitate the design. The following criteria will be used to **assess your organisation's readiness and suitability to participate in an RCT:**

- Your organisation has a record of using data or evidence to inform practice, or experience of taking part in research or evaluations.
- Your organisation is able to track a participant's journey through your intervention using data.
- Your organisation has established and stable partnerships with any referral organisations that you work with, and who would also be willing and able to participate in an RCT.
- Your organisation can demonstrate financial and staffing sustainability.

Scope of funding

What we will fund

- Delivery staff costs to support the delivery of a pre-employment vocational training intervention (with or without basic skills training)
- Direct project delivery (non-staff) costs to support the delivery of a pre-employment vocational training intervention (with or without basic skills training)
- Contribution to core costs of your organisation that are associated with the RCT
- Staffing costs associated with working alongside our independent evaluators to prepare for and deliver the RCT.

What we will **not** fund

- Delivery of an entirely new pre-employment vocational training intervention with limited or no track record (with or without basic skills training)
- Activities that do not support young people aged 16-25
- Activities that are not delivered in England
- Costs that have been incurred in the past

Application process

The application process for this funding round will be in two stages.

- **Stage one** – You must complete our initial application form, confirming details of your organisation and answering our stage one questions. Stage one questions are focused on what and how your organisation delivers interventions, in line with our definition of pre-employment vocational training (with or without basic skills training). The **deadline** for your stage one application is **23:59pm on Thursday 31st July 2025.**

An assessment team will review your stage one application and some initial due diligence checks will be conducted, which will also include a request for some financial documents. We will confirm outcomes with all applicants in **early September.**

- **Stage two** – Applicants invited to the stage two submission will complete a follow-up application form and will be invited to interview. You will also be required to submit a detailed project budget and additional documents as part of due diligence checks. The deadline for your stage two application is **23:59pm on Tuesday 30th September 2025.**

An assessment team will review your stage two application and we will confirm an interview date with all applicants by **Friday 3rd October 2025.**

- **Interviews** – Applicants invited to interview will meet with Youth Futures staff to discuss their application in more detail, focusing on their answers given across the process so far. Interviews will take place between **13th to 24th October 2025.**

KEY DATES	ACTIVITY
25th June	Stage 1 applications open
31st July	Stage 1 applications close
Early September	Stage 2 applications invited, by selected request
30th September	Stage 2 applications close
13th to 24th October	Interviews take place
By 19th December	Funding decisions communicated

Youth Futures will appoint an external evaluator to work with successful grant holders starting in early 2026. There will then be a mobilisation period where grant holders work with Youth Futures and the evaluators to prepare for the start of the RCT delivery in summer 2026.

Assessment process

Eligibility Criteria

We will assess all stage one applications against our eligibility criteria (outlined on pages 6 and 7). If an application meets our eligibility criteria, it will progress to the next stage of assessment.

How we'll assess your application

Applications will be assessed on the assessment criteria outlined below. Please note that not all assessment criteria will apply equally to all delivery models. For example, while strong referral partnerships are important, the need for referral partner engagement in an RCT may depend on your delivery structure. If your intervention already experiences oversubscription or operates a waiting list, this may support a viable RCT design without requiring active referral partner participation. We encourage you to outline your model clearly by answering all the relevant questions, and we will work with selected applicants and evaluators to finalise a suitable trial design.

Track Record

We are looking for organisations that have a track record of delivering pre-employment vocational training (with/without basic skills training). We want to understand how established your intervention is and how well it meets the definition of pre-employment vocational training in our toolkit (referred to as 'off-the-job training' in our toolkit). If relevant, we also want to understand how the basic skills element of your intervention meets the definition of basic skills training in our toolkit. Where a pre-employment vocational training intervention is part of a wider set of activities, we will prioritise interventions where pre-employment vocational training makes up a higher proportion of total contact hours. At stage one, we will use your answers to questions **1, 2, and 4** to assess track record. At stage two, we will ask you to provide further information or evidence.

Scale

We're trying to assess whether your intervention can work with enough young people so that we can conduct an RCT. We estimate this to be at least 200 eligible young people starting your intervention per year. We are looking for interventions that are well established and will give priority to interventions that are currently operating at the required scale. Interventions that have a credible and well-evidenced plan to scale to this level within 6 months of funding will also be considered (i.e. by summer 2026).

As well as your intervention reaching the required scale, it is important that your intervention works with the young people that we're looking to support (see page 11). Priority will be given to organisations that deliver pre-employment vocational training (with/without basic skills training) to a high percentage of young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET **and** reach a high volume of young people from our priority groups.

At stage one, we will use your answers to questions **3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 16** to assess scale. At stage two, we will ask you to provide further information or evidence.

Readiness for a Randomised Controlled Trial

We are looking for organisations with the ability and genuine willingness to participate in an RCT. At stage one, we will use your answers to questions **1, 2, 12 and 16** to assess whether some of the conditions necessary to undertake an RCT in an ethical and robust manner are met.

At stage two, we will assess your ability and interest in supporting an RCT, including buy-in from senior leadership. We will also continue to explore whether your organisation is RCT-ready, using the indicators described on page 15.

Referral Pathways

We are looking for organisations that have established, stable, and efficient referral pathways in place to recruit participants to the intervention. At stage one we will use your answers to questions **8, 10 and 11** to understand your existing referral pathways, referral partners (if applicable) and referral processes. Priority will be given to organisations that have a manageable number of high-volume referral pathways. At stage two, we will assess the willingness among any key referral partners to participate in a trial.

Data collection

We're trying to assess your organisation's existing ability to track a participant's journey through your intervention or services. At stage one we will use your answers to questions **15, 17 and 19** to assess the following:

- how effectively an individual can be identified and tracked on their journey from referral to participation to outcome measurement
- your ability to capture a range of outcome measures that could be used to evidence the programme's impact in an evaluation

At stage two we will ask you to provide further information or evidence, and will also assess:

- how easily an individual's record can be linked across datasets that capture the different stages of their journey
- the coverage of key datapoints (e.g. completion rates)

Impact

It is also important that your intervention has prior evidence of, or reasonable promise of, positive impact on the primary outcome(s) of interest (employment, education or training). At stage one, we will use your answers to questions **13 and 17** to assess this. At stage two, we will ask you to provide further information or evidence and will also ask you to share a Theory of Change or logic model for your intervention if you have one.

Value for Money

We would expect there to be a clear link between the unit cost of your intervention (required at stage 1) and the intensity, complexity as well as the level of barriers faced by the young people your intervention targets. This is so that we can assess value for money both at stage 1 and 2 of our assessment process.

For example,

Intervention A – Is a one-week intervention that consists of 25 hours of delivery to a medium sized group of young people that are at risk of becoming NEET but do not face severe barriers to entering the job market.

Intervention B – Is delivered over three months, every week for 20 hours per week to a small group of young people facing significant and clear barriers to entering the job market that require additional support. This intervention is also aligned to a job sector that requires specialist equipment, facilities and accreditations as part of the training offer.

If the unit cost per young person for intervention A and B were the same, we would assess intervention B as better value for money unless intervention A could strongly justify its unit cost or we had significant concerns with the quality of intervention B, for example.

Organisational Financial Sustainability

We will assess your organisational governance and financial health to ensure that we have confidence that your organisation can sustain operations for the period before and during the RCT evaluation (likely to end Q2 2028). We will also consider the proportion of funding the requested Youth Futures grant would contribute towards your organisation's annual income. As a funder, we can take on a reasonable level of financial risk, however, we would only provide a yearly grant that is more than 30% of your annual income if we are satisfied that there are good mitigations in place for that level of reliance on one source of funding. This will initially be assessed at stage 1 and in detail during stage 2.

Replicability and Scalability

We are interested in trialling interventions that could be scaled to other delivery partners if the RCT is successful and demonstrates a positive impact on young people's outcomes. To assess this, we will consider how clearly your intervention is documented; the complexity of your intervention; and how easily new practitioners can be trained to replicate it. We will also consider factors such as geographical reach; target population size and demand; and relevance to public policy. This criterion will be assessed at stage two only.

Youth Inclusion

We want to understand how well youth voice is embedded across your work. We are interested in knowing:

- How young people are involved and supported in your organisation and how this influences your planning, design and delivery approach
- The diversity of young people represented across different levels of your organisation and their decision-making power and impact
- If, and how young people who have been supported can stay connected and/or involved with your organisation

This criterion will be assessed at stage two only.

Priority Criteria

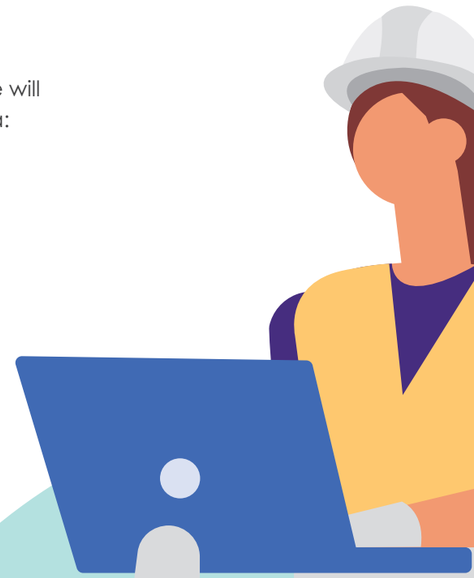
If we receive a high number of high scoring applications, we will prioritise applications that score best on the following criteria:

- Track Record
- Scale
- Readiness for a Randomised Controlled Trial

Summary

Applications that meet our eligibility criteria will progress to stage one assessment. Applications successful at stage one will be invited to stage two.

The table below outlines the criteria that applications will be assessed against at stage one and stage two assessment.



CRITERIA	ASSESSED AT STAGE 1	RELEVANT STAGE 1 QUESTIONS	ASSESSED AT STAGE 2
Track record	Y	1, 2 and 4	Y
Scale	Y	3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 16	Y
Readiness for a Randomised Controlled Trial	Y	1, 2, 12 and 16	Y
Referral pathways	Y	8, 10 and 11	Y
Data collection	Y	15, 17 and 19	Y
Value for Money	Y	1, 2, 3 and 20	Y
Financial Sustainability	Y	20 and 21	Y
Impact	Y	13 and 17	Y
Replicability & Scalability	N	n/a	Y
Youth Inclusion	N	n/a	Y

Step-by-step guidance on how to respond to each question at stage one can be found in the *Support with your application* section.

Applicants invited to stage two will be provided with additional guidance to support them to complete their application and prepare for the interview.

Decision

Final decisions will be made in early December 2025 by our Grants and Evaluation Committee. All applicants invited to stage two, including those that are unsuccessful, will be notified by 19th December 2025. If your organisation is invited to stage two but is not awarded funding we will provide detailed feedback.

How to apply – Stage 1

Once you've read through this guidance, you can start your stage one application online. Click 'apply' to open the stage one online application form.

Please note that applications are managed through the 'Blackbaud Grantmaking System (BBGM)' which uses the 'Your Cause Applicant Portal'.

If you already have a Blackbaud Account, follow the on-screen instructions to log in – and from there you can apply.

If you do not have a Blackbaud Account, click 'Apply' and then click 'Create Account'. Once your account is created, follow the on-screen instructions to log in and apply.

Additional guidance for applicants

- Guidance on how to create a Blackbaud Account is available here.
- Guidance to assist with starting your application is available here.
- A downloaded MS Word document of the application form can also be found by clicking this link.

The **deadline** to complete the Stage 1 application form is **23:59pm on Thursday 31st July 2025.**

We aim to notify applicants whether they have been successful to stage two in **early September.** If you are successful, we will provide guidance on how to access the stage two application at this point.

If you have any technical questions related to your online application, please contact us by calling 020 7553 4539 or emailing grants@youthfuturesfoundation.org

Support with your application

How to respond to our questions – a step- by-step guide

Please click here for a step-by-step guide on how to respond to our questions for stage one.

Webinars

If you would like to know more about this funding round and ask questions, you can register for our upcoming webinars taking place during July. We will be running the same webinar on three different dates. Please click on the links below to register for a webinar.

- Wednesday 2nd July 2025, 11:30 – 12:30
- Wednesday 9th July 2025, 14:30 – 15:30
- Tuesday 15th July 2025, 10:00 – 11:00

Working with us if your application is successful

We will require that funded organisations are committed to taking part in an impact evaluation, as well as delivering high quality pre-employment vocational training that supports young people aged 16-25.

If your application is successful:

- We will pay our grant holders quarterly, in advance.
- We will assign a dedicated grants officer as point of contact during the funding term, and your evaluation will also have a specialist Evaluation Manager to coordinate work with the external evaluator.
- We will arrange quarterly monitoring meetings, ideally in person.
- You will be expected to engage in an impact evaluation and work collaboratively and transparently with an independent evaluator to agree a finalised trial design and agree feasible processes to facilitate the RCT. We will pay for your organisation's time to engage with us and the independent evaluator. This will involve:
  - One or two workshops with evaluators to understand and refine your intervention Theory of Change
  - Weekly or fortnightly meetings with Youth Futures and the evaluators during the set-up of the RCT to agree key elements of the design, including how the randomisation procedure will be incorporated into onboarding and referral processes, and data collection.
  - Fortnightly or monthly meetings with Youth Futures and the evaluators while the trial is live. These may reduce in frequency depending on trial progress, for example in recruitment and completion rates, and data collection. Your organisation will be expected to fully engage in the evaluation activities, and this should be factored into your budget. It will be a condition of our grant agreement with your organisation.
- All trial designs will be developed in collaboration with you and reviewed by an ethics board to ensure they are appropriate and fair to the young people you support.
- We aim for evaluations to launch in the summer of 2026, and end by 2028.
- As a What Works Centre, Youth Futures is committed to publishing all results from our evaluations regardless of findings.

youth futures FOUNDATION

Get in touch:

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