COMMUNITY CHEST SCHEME

VCS SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY FUND SPECIFICATION

For more information, please contact: communitychest@northumberland.gov.uk

The aim of the Community Chest Skills & Employability Fund is to to support VCS organisations currently delivering support to the skills and employability sector to adapt to new digital delivery demands, and address digital exclusion on service users.

Grants are supported with funds from the North of Tyne Combined Authority as part of its Inclusive Economy ambitions.

Purpose of the Grant Funding

Northumberland County Council, working with the North of Tyne Combined Authority, is responding to the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic and effects on the labour market by supporting our businesses and communities to adapt.

The Northumberland voluntary and community sector (VCS) is playing a key role in supporting the resilience of communities and residents in the face of an economic downturn. Discussion with the sector has identified the need to adapt services to deliver by digital and remote means to continue giving residents the employability and skills support needed as the labour market changes. The Community Chest - Skills Employability and Skills Fund will allow organisations to become more digitally agile in the services they can deliver, and by raising the digital skills and access of residents to engage with them.

The grant funding is available to any Northumberland VCS organisations delivering a broad base of employability and skills services to residents. This can include any activities which help residents improve the skills and attributes needed to enter the labour market, training, jobsearch, advice and guidance, and general support for progression in work.

The focus of the grant fund is to assist organisations to develop or convert services to be delivered digitally to those who would normally require face-to-face delivery. This can include services or equipment needed to support residents in the lockdown and post-lockdown period, and to raise digital ability to short labour market resilience in the longer term. A 'digital divide' has been identified as disadvantaging some communities and cohorts of people in their labour market prospects, particularly those in deprived areas and people who are unemployed or experience insecure employment. The fund should be used to demonstrate closing of digital divide in longer term

The fund can support where additional capacity for digital delivery is required as demand increases from existing unemployed or economically inactive people who need support, along with responding to the needs of those newly displaced in the labour market.

All project activity must commence after 1st August 2020 and be completed by 31st December 2020.

Eligible Activity

Eligible costs can include a range of delivery and/or equipment demonstrating conversion or development of services to be delivered digitally.

This following list identifies examples but is not exclusive, and innovative proposals which meet the specification are invited.

- Digital conversion of existing learning and support packages
- New, or development of, software packages
- Webinar packages
- Online support platforms delivering guided and advice
- Consultancy or advice for design of products
- Costs of increasing social media communications.

- Cost of IT equipment to enable digital learning and support delivery packages
- Delivery costs of IT skills training and support
- Cost of equipment for participants to access services (e.g. tablets, laptops, iphones etc.)
- Data or broadband costs (This may include an increase of data allowance for participants to access services through smart phones or other devices).

Grant Details

- Minimum Grant £2,000
- Maximum Grant £10,000
- Total funding available £200,000
- 100% intervention rate (no match funding required)
- Grants are available for both equipment and day to day running costs related to the project
- Closing date 30th June 2020
- Projects can not start before 1st August 2020 and must be completed by 31st December 2020

Eligibility

- Applicants must be a not for profit Voluntary Community Sector organisation, Charity or Social Enterprise
- Applicants must show they are **CURRENTLY** delivering Skills, Employability or Inclusion services
- Beneficiaries must be domiciled in Northumberland although the delivery organisation does not need to be.