LEP Meeting Agenda

17 September 2025

Apologies: Gerry Lawrie, NHS Grampian

Note of last meeting

Aberdeen City Hydrogen Hub - Support for Economically Inactive People – Tom Thayer, bp

ETPF Update – Anne Kain

Procurement Update Report – Paul Charlton, Catherine Georgeson

Child Poverty Plan – Angela Taylor

2025/26 Conference

Frequency of LEP Meetings

AOCB

Jobs Fair Update

Future Agenda Items

Other Funding Streams
Contract Updates (confidential)

SES - SUSE report – October
Health Determinants Data
Delivery Plan Refresh

Developer Obligations
Action Plan Timelines

Child Poverty Accelerator
Lived Experience
Paid Work Experience

LEP Meeting Agenda

17 September 2025

Apologies: Gerry Lawrie, NHS Grampian; Louise Mitchell, DWP; Anne Kain, ETPF

Present: Kathryn Mitchell, DWP; Miranda Aitken; Maggie Hepburn, ACVO; Iain Cocker, Nicola Graham, SDS; Aimee Maitland, DYW-NE; Christine Macaulay, Laura Shibuya, Catherine Georgeson, Paul Charlton,Angela Taylor, ACC; Kirsty McLaughlin, Business Gatewat; Chris Smillie, ACHSCP

Note of last meeting

Aberdeen City Hydrogen Hub - Support for Economically Inactive People – Tom Thayer, bp

Tom has been leading the skills agenda for h2 hub about 3 years ago and looking after the community benefits element of that. The hub is a joint venture between the Council and bp and is doing some great work on a small budget across education, employability and skills, including the schools H2 challenge, sponsorship of the skills hub at Offshore Europe the ETZ/NESCol skills vehicle, as well as around the training and skills agenda. Tom has found that the training and skills piece of packageof work needs a bit of a supercharge and so is attending the LEP to ask how the JV ensures we are mutually complementary, aligning with initiatives already taking place in the region, but also looking at potential volunteer support from the contractors including Hydrasun, Robertsons and FES. Tom is looking to re-engage with DWP on economically inactive people to identify opportunities for that demographic.

Tom suggested aligning with a sub-group for economically inactive people and other LEP projects which may benefit from volunteers, contract, support, etc.

Tom explained that a pot of money was agreed for 5 years of delivery and the JV is now in year 4. The money is proportional to the size of the project, but that as long as it hits certain milestones in operation the community benefits work will continue as a lasting legacy of the Hydrogen(h2) Hub, supporting activity.

Tom explained he is wearing two hats – h2 hub money custodian, but also bp. He said he would like to hear varying scales of things the LEP has the ambition to lean into. Some may be appropriate for the hub and some may be ideas that Tom can take back to bp oil and gas team and say there are opportunities in the region. Everything has to go through board approval.

DRAFT

Miranda (ETPF) asked if there is a spreadsheet of all community benefit opportunities available. Tom meets with contract partners every couple of months and will take that as an action.

ACTION – Tom to seek to get a menu of activities to share wiht the LEP, and the LEP to then bring forward additional ideas that it would like to see the JV offer in future.

Miranda asked for a list of jobs associated with the hub. Tom said there were 18in the construction phase and then about half a person per week thereafter.

Iain (NESCol) stated that the college is partnered with civil contractors and has created a bespoke programme for the NE. WM Donald, Leith, JKR, and CHAP have come together to recruit 16 apprentices annually to make the course viable and share info on salary levels to ensure they are all in line with each other. New apprentices have come into the system and feedback is that apprentices are coming out at the end of much more job ready.

ACTION – Angela to speak to Iain MacDonald and Stuart Calderwood about attempting to create a network of referrals/wider employability activity amongst contractors and sub-contractors to ensure referrals come through and potentially guaranteed interviews for those who have participated in community benefits activities when jobs open up

ETPF Update – Anne Kain (Miranda)

Met on 1/9 bulk of discussion was about two main areas: Providing update to everyone on last consortium event. Next meeting 6/10.

Stuart Bews was invited and provided an overview to the Action Plan following IS report. That will be further discussed and see if there's any actions the ETPF can help support and collaborate on to take forward.

Mention of jobs fair on 30/9.

Summary of SSEN discussion at previous LEP. Everybody who sits on the ETPF should be aware of this.

Consortium building – seems to be an appetite for it. How do we take that forward and as ETPF members how do we get together and take that forward.

Offshoot of initial SSEN meeting has seen some providers come together to discuss options and to do a mapping exercise on who is doing what in which schools and if there is any work ongoing or common themes in schools.

Nicola suggested the ETPF they should hook into the LEP Young People sub-groups as it would link with the work ongoing there and prevent potential duplication.

DRAFT

ACTION: Angela – check with education as to whether or not there is central knowledge of all the activities ongoing in secondary schools across the city. Build a form and ask Mark Jones to circulate across all city DHTS – which external agencies are working in your schools and what are they doing?

Procurement Update Report – Paul Charlton, Catherine Georgeson

The LEP noted the report and Angela clarified that the total spent on external provision is in line with the AIP and the amounts stated in the report.

Kirstie (Business Gateway) complimented the layout of the report, particularly the table identifying requests and actions which shows the willingness to work with providers.

Child Poverty Plan – Angela Taylor

Angela introduced Laura Shibuya, the newly appointed senior project officer with a remit for child poverty, and Christine Macaulay, who is providing maternity cover for Lori. They will be developing a Child Poverty Employability Plan, which will require meetings with multiple groups, including parents across the city, employers, support agencies, the LEP and training providers. Regular updates will be provided to the LEP.

2025/26 Conference

The LEP agreed that the Employer Conference should take place ahead of the Employability Conference, and that the outputs from the former should inform the latter.

Two short-life working groups were created for this

Employer event first – subgroup is Kathryn, Kirsty, Aimee, Angela (chair). Iain, Kerry Wylie (ACC employer engagement officer), Christine. Event will take place in late October.

Employability – subgroup is Nicola (chair), Anne, Miranda, Ishbel, Angela, Kathryn. Dates will be sought for late November.

Frequency of LEP Meetings

DRAFT

The LEP agreed that meeting frequency should be reduced from four-weekly to six-weekly.

ACTION _ AT circulate blank report template.

AOCB

Jobs Fair Update

Angela updated on the times of the jobs fair and range of employers secured to exhibit. She asked all LEP members to share information about it with their networks and to encourage anyone they were supporting to attend. Providers are welcome to attend with the people they are supporting.

ACVO Development Post

Maggie provided an update on the TSI Employabilty Development Officer post and advised that a member of the ETPF would be on the interview panel. Maggie welcomed an ask from Angela for a LEP representative to also be on the panel.

Future Agenda Items

Other Funding Streams	Developer Obligations
Contract Updates (confidential)	Action Plan Timelines
SES - SUSE report – October	Child Poverty Accelerator
Health Determinants Data	Lived Experience
Delivery Plan Refresh	Paid Work Experience

DRAFT

Aberdeen Local Employability Partnership

COMMITEE	Local Employability Partnership
DATE	17 September 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Commissioning Update
LEAD OFFICERS	Angela Taylor
REPORT AUTHORS	Catherine Georgeson and Paul Charlton
REPORT DATE	12/09/2025

1:	Purpose of the Report

i. To provide the LEP with an update on commissioning of employability provision in 2025-2026.

2:	Recommendations for Action

i. To note the approach taken by the managing authority to procurement, with the LEP sub-group, including consultation and post-procurement feedback

3:	Summary of Key Information

i. In preparation for the 2025-26 financial year, the Council, as accountable body for No One Left Behind monies, delivered a number of events and opportunities for feedback on the procurement process. This has included a number of in-person sessions including the LEP conference and a follow-up training providers session. Through these events a number of action points were agreed by the Council as managing authority and implemented into the 25/26 procurement exercise.

ii. Utilising these changes, the LEP Procurement Sub-Group, consisting of Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, and Aberdeen City Council, agreed that 16 new employability contracts should be awarded, alongside 12 contract extensions, providing 1581 training opportunities for eligible Aberdeen residents.

iii. Following the procurement exercise, the Council gathered additional feedback from organisations registered on the dynamic purchasing system to evaluate the changes made and look at further improvements that could be made.

iv. The Council arranged two sessions to promote Consortium Building. These included an online information session hosted by, and with input from, the

3:	Summary of Key Information

Supplier Development Programme, and an in-person Consortium Building Networking event.

4:	Finance and Risk

i. 16 new employability contracts were awarded for the year 2025-26, offering 1113 places at a total value of £1,440,611.49. These contracts are for 12 months with +12 months + 12 months extension clauses built in, subject to funding and performance.

ii. 12 contracts were extended from 2024-25, offering a further 468 places at a total value of £576,099.20. These contracts were issued in 2024/25 for 12 months with a +12 months extension clause built in. That extension clause has been exhausted and the contracts will expire on 31 March 2026.

iii. Mitigation to tackle potential performance risk is built into the contracts. Reputational risk is also mitigated by clauses in the contract, as is compliance with the terms of the No One Left Behind funding in regarda to the eligibility of individuals to be supported.

iv. The model adopted this year removes financial risk from contractors with monthly payments made to contractors to the total value of the 80% of contract worth and 20% of the total contract value based on outcomes.

Aberdeen City Council, as the managing authority and lead accountable body for No One Left Behind, is responsible for procuring employability services. It does this in partnership with the Local Employability Partnership (LEP). Employability services are procured through a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which was co-designed with the LEP and providers at the end of 2022 and has been refined throughout its lifespan.
The managing authority, with input from the LEP Procurement Sub-Group has endeavoured since 2022 to continuously evaluate and improve the procurement process through lessons learned exercises, post-procurement feedback from providers, and consultation.

The Council invited training providers registered on the procurement framework to a procurement-focused session in early January 2025 to discuss potential short- and long-term actions which could be implemented or explored amend the commissioning process.

Requests from Providers	Response from Managing Authority	Outcome
Longer lead-in time to procurement exercises	Doubled the bidding timeframe from two weeks to four.	Improvement in standard of bids, with more offered in proposals
Advance notice of types of activity we might seek to procure	Breakdown of the types of activity to be procured was issued two-and-half weeks ahead of the procurement exercise opening.	Improvement in standard of bids, with more offered in proposals
Extend the timeframe for returning bids	Bidding timeframe doubled from two weeks to four, with the advance notice issued – effectively tripling the time providers have to collate bids	Improvement in standard of bids, with more offered in proposals
Reduce the number of small contracts and instead offer larger, multi-stage contracts with more places to create greater consortia bid opportunities	Five multi-stage contract opportunities and fewer small-scale contracts offered. Early-stage feeder courses and sector specific training courses to provide a pipeline structure of support also offered as tendering opportunities.	No consortium bids were received
Take a hybrid approach, offering both large consortium-type opportunities and smaller contracts suited to individual organisations	Five multi-stage contract opportunities and fewer small-scale contracts offered. Early-stage feeder courses and sector specific training courses to provide a pipeline structure of support also offered as tendering opportunities.	No consortium bids were received. 16 contracts were issued in total, across 12 tender opportunities.
Publish the total value of each tender opportunity	Budget published for each opportunity.	Most bids came in close to the total budget published, with variability in the level of

		additionality offered in the Quality Statement element of the bids. This was reflected in the scoring.
Provide a contract as close to 12 months delivery as possible	Lobbied Scottish Government for early confirmation of grant funding and timeous delivery of the Grant Offer Letter. Started the procurement process earlier, on the basis on contracts being awarded subject to funding being in place. The Letter was received on 31 March.	New contracts were live on 14 April, enabling early start of provision. Contract extensions were in place from 1 April.
Offer longer-term contract opportunities	Previously 12 month extension clauses were built into contracts, subject to performance and funding. An additional 12 months have been built-in, effectively creating a three-year potential.	The initial contract extensions gave contractors and their staff greater stability, albeit subject to Scottish Government funding being made available on time. It is too early to say what the outcome of an additional 12 months will be.
Amend the payment schedule to allow for upfront costs, more security in delivering a high-quality programme, and a simplification of the invoicing procedure	Amended the payment schedule to award monthly payments totalling 80% of total contract costs, as well as retaining an element of outcome-based payments.	This has been very well received by contractors, however there is some concern about delivery of some contracts and ongoing payments which will be managed via the terms of the contract.
Provide advanced notice of whether existing contracts would be extended.	Contacted providers to notify them of the intention to extend existing contracts during the live procurement phase. This was to ensure there was provision available from 1st April 2025 and to allow providers to prepare for the coming year.	No break in delivery (NB as a result of timely issuing of the Grant Offer Letter by Scottish Government) and security for providers and their staff.

Sixteen contracts, offering 1113 places at a total value of £1,440,611.49, were secured. Twelve contracts, offering 468 places at a total value of £576,099.20, were extended.

Some providers submitted multiple tenders, while others issued lower numbers of bids. The table below demonstrates the number of bids and success rate, alongside contract extensions for each bidder.

	Bids	Successful Bids	Contract Extensions	Total Contracts
Provider A	12	6	3	9
Provider B	2	1	1	2
Provider C	3	2	0	2
Provider D	1	0	1	1
Provider E	1	0	0	0
Provider F	5	4	1	5
Provider G	4	1	0	1
Provider H	4	0	0	0
Provider I	2	2	0	2
Provider J	1	0	1	1
Provider K	1	0	0	0
Provider L	2	0	3	3
Provider M	0	0	1	1
Provider N	0	0	1	1
Total	**38**	**16**	**12**	**28**

Looking ahead to the 2026-27 financial year, we anticipate, subject to satisfactory performance and the availability of funding, extending the majority of the new contracts. The contracts issued in 2024/25 had 12 month extension clauses built in. These will expire on 31 March 2026.

A Lessons Learned exercise was carried out by the LEP Procurement Sub-Group after the close of the 2025/26 procurement exercise (see Appendix 1). Additionally, a survey seeking feedback on the process was issued to training providers on 27th June 2025 (see Appendix 2). Overall, the feedback from providers regarding the changes made was generally positive, particularly in regard to the longer bidding window. There was no common theme arising in terms of potential improvements or changes for consideration. The Employability Training Providers Forum submitted a letter to the LEP outlining their views (see Appendix 3).

The LEP Sub-Group identified a need for support to providers to better enable them to understand and form consortia. This was echoed by some respondents to the survey and by the ETPF in its letter to the LEP.

The Council, on behalf of the LEP Procurement Sub-Group, worked in conjunction with the Supplier Development Programme (SDP) and the Council's Commercial and Procurement Service to deliver a consortium building webinar to organisations, including at grass roots level, which deliver employability training. This event took place on 29 July and was attended by 25 people. It was followed by an in-person Consortium Building Networking Event on 28 August 2025 which included presentations from the Council's Employability and Skills Service, ABZWorks as accountable body, and on behalf of the LEP, ACC Commercial & Procurement Service, the ACC External Funding team, followed by a networking lunch. It was attended by 22 people, not including the Council staff.

There was some concern about the level of detail the SDP suggested would be required to build a consortium. This was addressed by the Council, with reassurances that the very formalised approach suggested would not be required.

The slides and links to videos of the consortium events are available at Appendix 4.

Conclusion

Overall, the changes made have been positively received and have resulted in better opportunities for the people of Aberdeen. It is only six months into the financial year and so it is too early to accurately measure the long-term impact of changes made. Ongoing discourse will be required to ensure continuous improvement.

Unless there is a significant uplift in the amount of funding available through No One Left Behind, there will be a lower level of contracting opportunities in the coming financial year than in previous years, given the longer-term contracts in place which provide more stability to the sector and employability programme participants.

What worked well?	Why?	What did we do?	What have we learned?	What could we do differently?	Next steps	Owner
Gave providers more time to submit bids	Feedback from providers suggested that two weeks was not an adequate timeframe to get approvals and create bids	We extended the time frame from two to four weeks, we also sent out an email two weeks before releasing Mini comps to prepare providers on what was coming	Although this requires more preperation from our end, this allows for more comprehensive bids. We generally saw an uptick in bids and providers have fed back that they had more time to create bids for all that they wanted rather than prioritising.	4 weeks is probably the maximum time we could allocate to bid writing. Giving the providers notification 2 weeks in advance allows providers to start preparing for the bids whilst the Council works on the rest of the process. We could consider giving them more than 2.5 weeks notification time.	Continue this for next round of provision	Managing authority
Contracts were able to start earlier (14th April)	We started the process in January, with contracts to be awarded subject to funding, enabling us to start the process earlier and minimising any break in provision. This also allows us to run programmes for longer.	We started the process in January, which allowed us to release tenders mid Febuary for contracts to start mid-April	This minimised the time taken to get contracts started following the start of the new financial year, it gave providers peace of mind that there was funding for next year. Being able to prepare for a full year of provision rather than 6 - 9 months meant that longer term interventions can be put in place	Determine what provision we are going out for earlier. Whilst this generally worked well, it also clashed with a period of increased workload associated with contracts ending, requirements of financial year end, and reports being due to Scottish Government. This coincided with providers asking questions related to the live procurement exercise. There were some situations in which contract managers were asked by providers, in front of staff employed to deliver contracts, whether or not they would be awarded a new contract. This put project officers into a very uncomfortable and difficult situation.	Start collating data and evidence to help inform what next year's provision requirements may be. Consider performance of current contracts to determine which we may, or may not extend, subject to funding.	LEP sub group
Scottish Government gave us an indicative allocation and a letter of comfort	As above	As above	The Finance chief officer was more inclined to allow us to continue ahead of receiving the grant letter	Nothing, this is dependant on SG	Continue to push SG for early release of letters of comfort, early indicative funding and continue to lobby for multi year funding and grant letter on time	Managing Authority
Consulted with providers ahead of beginning the procurement process and made positive changes	We ensured providers views were taken into consideration and that we were able to receive different opinions on what gaps there were in provision	We held our LEP conference in late 2024 to gather information and feedback. We also had a small provider session to discuss this with providers on the framework. A survey was issued to employability participants to gather their views. Keyworkers and partner agencies were also consulted.	We implemented changes, detailed elsewhere in this document, many of which have positively impacted the process, including additional extensions, a mix of larger multi-stage provision along with sector based skills, publishing the budget, extending the window for completing bids, etc. This also helped improve relations with providers	Earlier collation of information and data would allow us more time to prepare to release the mini-competitions. Ensure the voice of service users is embedded in this process.	Continue the dialogue with providers, assess the changes and use the lessons learned to assess the impact on these changes. Review changes after 6 months of implementation (October 2025).	LEP sub group
Introduced multi stage employability programmes contract opportunities	When we were looking at strategies for the coming year, it was felt internally that the number of contracts had become too unwieldy and that a multi-stage approach would be beneficial. In consultation with providers, they told us that multi-stage tenders would be preferred to single pipeline stage opportunities and would allow them to more easily build consortium approaches. Multi-stage provision was utilised for a number of reasons; it allowed us to: provide a more joined-up approach; create larger contracting opportunities; create more flexible long-term person-centred opportunities, enabling providers to work at the participants' pace and offer more wraparound support.	The framework was built to, and has in past years attracted consortia bids. This year we released a number of multi-stage mini competitions for different groupsto encourage consortia bids.	Multi-stage provision allows for greater flexibility and fewer contracts, reducing the lessening the administrative burden on the managing authority and providers, while simplifying the landscape and offer for referring agencies and participants. Participants also get to better know the providers and build a connection with them and progress through the pipeline stages which encourages them to reach a positive destination. Multi stage provision should also reduce keyworker caseload, enabling them to spend more time with those in greater need of support. No consortium bids were submitted.	Monitor how the multi stage programmes progress this year to see if this has been a good change (participant numbers/contract spend/participant outcomes). Understand from speaking to providers why there were no consotium bids.	Review how the multi-stage provision has gone, during and nearer the end of the contracts. Deliver consortium building events to encourage providers to build consortia	Managing authority and LEP sub group
Introduced a new payment schedule	The outcome based model was confusing. This caused a lot of admin burden and providers would often make mistakes in their invoices. It was also noted that the previous payment structure did not account for upfront costs. Feedback from some providers was that they were operating at risk.	We moved to a hybrid model where providers obtain 20% on successful progression of participants but would be paid 80% of the total contract value split monthly over the contract lifespan. We added stipulations on the ITMC's to ensure that contract payments could be paused on the basis of poor performance.	The new payment structure eases the admin burden for both providers and the manahing authority. Providers feel more secure in delivering their courses.	It's too early to say at this stage, we need time to monitor and review.	Review payment structures and stipulations to ensure we are getting the best value from contracts. Introduce quarterly LEP sub group meetings to monitor and review activity - PC/CG to set up.	Managing authority
Published the budget in the ITMC	Previously a budget was decided upon internally, but this was not indicated to providers meaning we were frequently getting bids which were below what we had budgeted and expected providers to bid. It appeared that providers tried to undercut each other to win the contract.	We published the indicative budget within the ITMC's allowing providers to judge their quality at a given price and offer a programme that matched the budget we had envisioned it at.	Having the budget allows providers an insight at the level of cost we are willing to spend on the provision and amend the quality and wrap around support on the basis of this. Most bids came in close to the total budget published, with many, but not all, offering additionality in the Quality Statement element of their bids. This was reflected in the scoring. This approach has been welcomed by providers.	This has also been posted in the next section and addressed there (see line 27).	Review how we can provide the best quality/price ratio and if this is by continuing to publish the budget in future submissions or by other means. Consult with procurement colleagues over best practice. Await outcome of findings from Action Plan linked to IS report.	LEP sub group
Amended the performance management criteria in the ITMC to more effectively deal with any contract management issues	To ensure the smooth running of contracts we have improved the wording around performance targets, which enables us to pause payments or cancel contracts that are not performing as expected.	We updated the terms in the statement of requirements to clarify this.	This is important especially considering the new payment structure that allows us to quickly assess and stop contracts that aren't performing	Expand this to include standard baseline requirements.	Review to see what changes could be made in future. Agree what the standard baseline requirements are.	Managing authority
Created a "pipeline structure" of utilising early stage support to flow into multi-stage with sector specific off-shoots	To ensure a joined up approach we developed a number of "feeder" contracts to go into multi-stage activities. This is to allow people who aren't ready to go into multi-stage activities the chance to have more focused support with activities that they are interested in as a way to ease the transition into more employability activity.	We issued a number of early stage tenders focusing on different activities such as active outdoors, creativity, and mental health to encourage participation and help remove barriers before individuals were ready to progress into the multistage support	From experience we have seen that feeder activities help support participants who may not be ready or may be intimidated by larger scale support.	Too early to tell at this point, a review of participants enrolling and progressing will help us develop a future plan going forwards.	Review if these courses are popular and working as intended with referrals onto our multi-stage support once they have completed said course. Seek participant feedback from providers. Incorporate user voice. Seek provider feedback as to impact	Managing authority
Extensions were released early for appropriate courses ensuring that we had provision ready to go from April 1st (see line 4).	To ensure we had a joined up approach whilst securing new contracts and to ensure there was no gap in provision.	We evaluated performance on previous contracts that we could potentially extend and for the well performing and relevant courses we offered extensions.	This was a good strategy to allow us to continue support whilst we procured new courses.	It has worked well and we should continue to do this	Continue this next year	LEP sub group
Amended the extension rules to allow for a 1+1+1 approach as per Grant Letter approval	Following feedback from providers, we amended the extension clause in the Invitation to Mini-Competitions (ITMCs) to ensure we were able to continue courses that were working well for longer periods. We would be able to extend this for the following two years, on a yearly basis.	We amended this in the tender	This allows us to continue courses that are going well for longer periods of time and expand the number of participants on contracts working well within the extensions, subject to availability of funding	This works well and we should continue this.	Review courses and extend accordingly.	LEP sub group and managing authority

Contract Variations vs Contract Extensions	Contract variations allow us to add up to 50% more places on a contract while it is still running. This is a good way to continue a contract running if it is performing well but has filled all the spaces before the end of the contract, if funding is available. Contract extensions allow us to extend a contract for a further 12 months once the contract has finished. This is a good way to run the contract again if it has been performing well. There are no restrictions on number of places on contract extensions.	We utiliesed both contract variations and contract extensions this last year. We were able to add more places to several contracts to ensure courses kept running and we were also able to extend well performing contracts April 2025.	Officers are now more confident in utilising contract variations and contract extensions. Utilising contract extensions and variations allows courses to continue/start up again, saving time on lengthy procurement processes.	This works well and we should continue this.	Continue this next year if contracts are performing well	LEP Sub-group
What needs to be improved?	**Why?**	**What did we do?**	**What have we learned?**	**What could we do differently?**	**Next steps**	**Owner**
We could hold a session on Fair Work & Community Benefits for providers to help them improve their understanding	Many providers appear to not understand that they need to include additional community benefits beyond the programme they are bidding for - ie what additional things will the organisation provide as a direct result of securing a contract.	We ask for community benefits outwith the programme they are offering.	Many providers identify the outcomes of the contracts as community benefits rather than additional benefits realised as a result of winning the contract.	Hold a session on Fair Work & Community Benefits to help providers improve their knowledge of what is expected. Add more information on scoring fair work and CB's to Feedback template letter.	Discuss internally with procurement colleagues A session for LEP sub group would also be helpful.	Managing authority
Make the word count limitation clearer in Method Statement 1 of ITMC and encourage bidders to closely read the instructions to ensure they fully understand	Single stage contracts had a word limit of 1,000 for the General Requirements, and 500 words for each of the other sections. This was clearly stated twice on the ITMCs. Multi-stage had a word limit of 2,500 for the General Requirements, and 500 words for each of the other sections. This was clearly stated twice on the ITMCs. However, a few providers asked questions during the live procurement to query the word count for method statement 1. Some providers did not realise they had an expanded word count for multistage bid.	We added a line in to the ITMCs to explain that for multi stage or consortia bids the word count would be higher than for a single stage bid/single provider.	While we did clearly state this twice in the ITMCs, a few providers seem to have missed this and were unsure of what the word count was.	Encourage bidders to closely read the instructions to ensure they fully understand the requirements and limitations, and note this in the email correspondence issued ahead of tendering opportunities going live.	Encourage bidders to closely read the instructions to ensure they fully understand the requirements and limitations, and note this in the email correspondence issued ahead of tendering opportunities going live.	Managing authority
Do we need a word limit on clarifications during group scoring meetings?	During the group scoring meeting we had to clarify points with some providers.	We emailed providers clarification requrests giving strict deadlines to respond by.	Providers varied in their word counts in their responses.	Decide upon an upper word limit ensure clarification responses are fair and ensure providers understand they do not need to meet the upper word limit, but cannot exceed it.	Consult with LEP sub group to decide on word count limit. Is it necessary?	Managing authority
Make it clearer in the ITMC Method Statement 1 that we require detailed information on participant outcomes within bids	Some providers submitted general outcomes in their bids, but did not specify number of starts/completions/progressions and this then made it difficult to score fairly and resulted in some not scoring as highly`	In the ITMC method statement 1 we stated: "The provider will detail how they will source referrals, what outcomes they expect from this project and how they will measure progression throughout the project."	Providers did supply expected outcomes but some were more general than others e.g. "increased confidence, upskilling". However, we would require more detail around no. starts/completers/progressions as well as soft outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative outcome information is required	We could be more explicit in the ITMCs on the outcomes we would require to submit quantitative and qualitative outcomes in bids.	Review the ITMC. Consult the LEP subgroup and procurement colleagues	managing authority
To support bidders to understand that multi-stage provision covers all stages of the employability pipeline, state the pipeline stages which need to be covered - ie 0-5 and that providers need to support new participants at all stages	Some providers did not offer the full pipeline stages in their bids and did not offer stage 5 support to new participants, but only to those they had previously worked with, which limited the support available to new participants.	In the ITMC we asked for multi stage support, but didn't specify 1-5 although it was clear throughout the statement of requirements by providing examples of what was required from each of the programmes - ie activity at all stages of the pipeline.	Some providers perhaps do not understand the definition of multi-stage and may need support with this. We should encourage bidders to closely read the instructions to ensure they fully understand the requirements and limitations, and note this in the email correspondence issued ahead of tendering opportunities going live.	We should encourage bidders to closely read the instructions to ensure they fully understand the requirements and limitations, and note this in the email correspondence issued ahead of tendering opportunities going live. We should encourage consortia bids and partnership working.	Arrange consortium building events. Build additional wording into the advance notice emails to ensure all providers understand the importance of closely reading the instructions and ensuring their bids meet the requirements of the tender.	managing authority
Check with procurement again around using past experience to score bids	Some providers have fed back that the procurement process is unfair because established programmes with good outcomes are not winning	We are following the procurement process/guidance	Some providers are unhappy they have not won all the contracts they bid for. However no one is guaranteed a contract, all bids are rigorously scored by the panel. A consortium approach may have resulted in contract wins for some of these providers who were unable to meet requirements e.g. no. places/stages offered/range of activities offered. See line 24. The panel can only score based on the information which is put in front of them. Bidders must not assume that the panel has prior knowledge of their activities or previous delivery. It is for the bidders to demonstrate the value of their proposals to the panel.	Check again with procurement if we can include something about past experience in delivery into the method statements. This would require some form of balance for new providers or providers bidding for activity they have not previously delivered. Find out what other LAs are doing on this.	Follow up with procurement team, continue to encourage consortia bids	managing authority
We need to allow more time in between contract signing and contract start date. There has been some delays sending out unsuccessful letters and feedback to providers due to busy time of year and limited time and staff resource	Due to other pressures (including end of year/reporting/spend, and not being able to send out unsuccessful letters until all call off agreements were signed) it took us longer than we would have liked to issue unsuccessful and subsequent feedback letters.	We followed the process, however resource challenges caused this to be later than we would have liked.	Within the process providers need an early as practicably possible indication as to whether they have funding for the following year.	Obtain and collate feedback at the point of scoring to save some time and add in an extra scoring day to focus on feedback gathering. Allow more time between contract award date and contract start date. To manage bidder expectations, provide an anticipated timeline and communicate any delays arising.	Determine a reasonable timeframe for obtaining call off agreements to allow us to send unsuccessful letters as quickly as practically possible. Organise dedicated time for feedback in scoring sessions	managing authority
There were no consortia bids	The framework was built to, and has in past years attracted consortia bids with less time given. This year we released a number of multi-stage mini competitions for different groups to encourage consortia bids. Providers stated that there was not enough time to utilise consortia bids within their contracts.	We gave provider 2.5 weeks adavnce notice of the types of activities we would be procuring across the lots, and doubled the amount of bidding time available - effectively tripling creation time.	Providers would like support to develop consortia bids.	We can run sessions with the Supplier Development Programme to provide information of how to set these up for next year. We could also run a networking event to help providers strengthen their networks	Arrange this with SDP for a session in the summer	managing authority
Add a third day to group scoring for feedback	Feedback was delayed due to external pressures on members of the LEP Procurement Sub-group. This meant issuing feedback took longer than we would have liked.	Drafted feedback letters on the basis of notes made by the panel members, and shared these for approval prior to issue. We have previously written feedback letters during the scoring session alongside the panel.	We need a dedicated feedback session built in to our scoring sessions	Build in dedicated "feedback time" into our quality scoring sessions.	During our next scoring session we add a day in for feedback.	managing authority
Acknowledgement of emails asking for feedback	Providers did not receive emails acknowledging their requests for feedback.	We received emails and responded to them once feedback was released	Providers would like some acknowledgement that they would receive feedback at some point	Send an email acknowledging receipt of feedback requests within five working days of receipt and provide an anticipated timeline. Communicate any delays arising.	Create a template "You will receive feedback" email	managing authority
Published the budget in the ITMC	There is a question hanging over this as most of our bids hit the budget amount, but in some bids the additional value was not clear	We added the value to the ITMCs to try to ensure that providers knew the indicative price range and would build a proposal in accordance with the value published.	That whilst the benefits of this are good, there is a question over how effective this is due to questioning the added value we are getting from some providers	Await information about IS recommendations.	Await information.Discuss with the LEP sub group	LEP sub group

If submissions do not meet the statement of requirements, they will not be scored as highly as those which do meet the statement of requirements, this includes the number of places to be provided. Failing to meet the statement of requirements may result in bids being unsuccessful.	The statement of requirements clearly states what is required for the contract. However some providers appear not to understand that if they cannot meet all of the general requirments then they are not meeting the brief.	Providers told us they wanted a lower number of contracts and a hybrid approach with both opportunities for individual and consortium bids and multi stage contracts. We put this in place. The ITMCs were explicit in the requirements and the panel scored accordingly, and in accordance with the scoring matrix. In the ITMC we have included the wording "The Council may elect to vary the number of spaces and utilise more than one provider". The panel chose to do so on the basis of local need and scoring.	Whilst the LEP Procurement Sub-Group may choose to vary the number of spaces and use more than one provider, this is at the Sub-Group's discretion and based on the same criteria of 70% quality and 30% price. The panel determined that if the proposed numbers did not meet the Statement of Requirements then this would be marked accordingly. Taking a consortium approach may support providers to meet the general requirments. If bidders do not meet the general requirements they cannot be scored as highly as bidders who do.	We could review the wording and try to make it clear that providers will be marked down if they cannot fulfil the general requirements including stages offered and number of spaces. During further consultations with providers, we can ensure this is communicated clearly again to avoid any doubt, and build this into the advance notice email alongside the elements detailed in line 19.	Review wording and ask procurement for support. Further consultation with providers and Meet the Buyer. Build information into the advance notice email.	managing authority

Which of the Lots is your organisation registered for on the DPS framework?	Did your organisation submit a bid/s during the recent procurement exercise?	How many bids did your organisation make?	How many of your bids were successful?	Which mini-competitions did your organisation submit bids for?	What went well?	What could be improved? Please note: Elements of the process are dictated by Procurement Legislation, but we are keen to seek feedback and, where possible, to incorporate changes.	Did your organisation request feedback on unsuccessful bids?	Why not?	As part of the consultation process, we made various changes to the procurement process based on feedback, such as extending the bidding window from 2 weeks to 4 weeks, publishing an indicative budget
Lot 1 - Pre-Stage 1/Stage 1;Lot 2 - Stage 2;Lot 3 - Stage 3;Lot 4 - Stage 4;Lot 5 - Stage 5;Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;Lot 8 - Grassroots;	Yes	5	4	Lot 6 Employability Provision For Basic IT Skills;Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For People Aged 25+;Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For Young People;Lot 9 Employability Provision With A Focus On Volunteering;Lot 9 Employability Provision With A Focus On Creative Activities;	The overall format for bidding was the same as previously, which eased the bidding preparation. A short outline of the proposed tenders was circulated with a general timeline as to when they would be released. This helped to collect information and gather ideas and research as to what the tender would look like. The fast turnaround of outcomes.	I think the process is straightforward and easy to understand. There can be no conditions or qualifications added, which makes it fairer for everyone. The invitation to tender is based on the shortfall of provision in the city. Where providers cannot meet all the statement of requirements they have the option to work alongside another provider. The feedback on unsuccessful tenders is constructive.	Yes		The extended bidding window was appreciated. As we are a small organisation there is only one person writing and submitting the tender. If this person is on holiday, the process is rushed. The multi stage lots are excellent as it allows people to get to know their provider and build trust. This allows providers to understand their clients on a deeper level, making the learning experience more effective for everyone. New payment schedule is much easier and I think this is a good way moving forward. It allows the provider a bit of security with regular payments, although it includes provision for performance. Whilst there might be a need for shorter testing periods for new provision, the longer extension periods are helpful. The multi-stage allows providers to input their own testing periods. For instance, our creative course and multi-stage levels 1 and 2. We have a range of workshops to find out which ones are most popular. Or we could target a specific group of people. The provision would remain the same, however people often like to mix with people facing similar barriers, 50+, people where English is not their first language, people with disabilities etc.
Lot 3 - Stage 3;Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;Lot 9 - Innovation/Catch all Lot;Lot 2 - Stage 2;Lot 4 - Stage 4;Lot 5 - Stage 5;	Yes	Three	Two	Lot 6 Employability Provision For Basic IT Skills;Lot 3 Employability Provision For Sector Specific IT Skills;	The paperwork and the ask was not overly onerous and was clearly set out. The timescale for being able to submit was fair, andthe speed of response was helpful. having a indicitive vale for the training was beneficial	We must have missed that the lots were to be allocated to singular organisations. If this was advised, it may need to be clearer as we anticipated a share of the lots being applied.	No		All the mentioned was helpful as already mentioned in my response to Q9
Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;Lot 7 - Health/Disability/Recovery Interventions;Lot 9 - Innovation/Catch all Lot:	No							The contracts were too comprehensive for my organisation. I'm unable to support individuals with the entire process of readiness for employment. I deliver an education fit for the workplace.	There were no multi stage lots in the most recent process. This was my barrier to making an application.
Lot 1 - Pre-Stage 1/Stage 1;Lot 3 - Stage 3;Lot 2 - Stage 2;Lot 4 - Stage 4;Lot 5 - Stage 5;Lot 9 - Innovation/Catch all Lot;	Yes	2	1	Lot 3 Employability Provision For Construction Training;Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For Young People;	Information supplied heads up of the official LOTS, also LOTS offering multi-stage provision.	Allowing more time for completion of bids. Also, the funding allocated per LOT didnt seem to take into account that the nature of the LOT e.g. multi-stage was funded at similar level to construction. Funding allocation announcement could be made earlier in the year based on indicative funding amounts provided by Scottish Government or go ahead subject to funding letter being received e.g. ask for bids in Feb, and advise subject to x and y.	Yes		Extending bidding window = very useful. Indicative budget very helpful, although note comment re funding allocations per LOT. New payment schedule - 80% and 20% , this provides at least a cushion of 80% funding to ensure for funding staff for projects. Welcomed the funding being made for almost one year, this helps with financial profiling and service delivery planning for the year. Also, thought the briefing process after being unsuccessful worked better and provided us as a provider to ask questions. Overall an improvement from previous years, however would be welcome in discussion involving looking at the overall procurement process design.
Lot 1 - Pre-Stage 1/Stage 1;Lot 2 - Stage 2;Lot 3 - Stage 3;Lot 4 - Stage 4;Lot 5 - Stage 5;Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;	Yes	1	0	Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For People Who Require Justice Support;	N/A	Please refer to the extensive feedback we have already provided.	Yes		Yes, however as stated please refer to the feedback we have provided which outlines serious shortcomings in the decision making process.
Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;Lot 9 - Innovation/Catch all Lot;Lot 1 - Pre-Stage 1/Stage 1;Lot 2 - Stage 2;Lot 3 - Stage 3;Lot 7 - Health/Disability/Recovery Interventions;Lot 4 - Stage 4;Lot 5 - Stage 5;	Yes	2	0	Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For Young People;Lot 9 Employability Provision With A Focus On Creative Activities;	We welcomed the inclusion of multi-stage contracts in this round, which more closely reflect the reality of participants' journeys and open the door to wraparound, relational support. The early publication of contract values and extension of the submission window were both positive developments and represented progress on previous rounds (although this was still too short, especially when considering consortia building). The tone of communication was professional throughout, and we appreciated the offer of feedback, even for unsuccessful bids. The use of the online portal was smooth and efficient.	While some positive steps were taken in this round, several areas require improvement. In particular, from our experience: a) Misinterpretation of Multi-Stage Provision We were surprised that our preference to support participants across all stages of our multi-stage programme was used as a reason to mark us down. When asked to clarify whether we could take referrals at Stage 4 or 5, we confirmed we could, although we explained that our model is designed around supporting progression through the full journey, not parachuting in at later stages without context or continuity. This exchange reflects a misunderstanding of the purpose of multi-stage commissioning. It appears to have been treated as a way to cherry-pick stages (particularly later ones), rather than to enable more joined-up support models or multi-agency delivery aligned to progression pathways. b) Lack of Transparency and Consistency In Assessment The feedback documents reference criteria not clearly stated in the tender documents, such as being penalised for not bidding for the full number of places, even when our delivery model was targeted, realistic, and place-based. Age bands, pricing, and even references to a "pick and mix" structure in Lot 9 appeared to be interpreted rigidly and without sufficient recognition of what the model offered in	Yes		We recognise and appreciate that changes were made in response to provider feedback, and several of these adjustments were indeed positive: - Extending the bidding window to four weeks was helpful and certainly an improvement on previous rounds, though it was still insufficient to allow for meaningful consortium development or partnership-based submissions, which take longer to coordinate. - Publishing an indicative budget added transparency and helped us plan and structure our proposals more effectively. - The introduction of multi-stage contracts was a welcome step; however, as reflected in our feedback on Lot 6, there appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding of how multi-stage models should operate - as coherent journeys with shared support, rather than modular services to dip in and out of. - The new payment schedule and longer extension periods offer more stability, though it remains unclear how these are applied in practice (e.g. on what basis extensions will be granted, or what reporting/performance expectations are attached). In short, these changes represent welcome progress, but without a clearer strategy for co-design, implementation clarity, and sector readiness (especially around consortia and stage-based referrals), their impact is limited. We would be keen to see these improvements built upon and embedded as part of a longer-term commissioning framework redesign for
Lot 6 - Personal Development/Multi-stage;	Yes	2	2	Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For Care Experienced Young People;Lot 6 Multi Stage Employability Provision For Young People;	The process was clear and unambiguous. Guidance was clear and supported our applications in both cases. Communication from ABZ Works was consistent and clear and we felt able to develop both applications within a fair timescale.	I think that co-design is a very worthwhile exercise as this really places local people at the heart of what services can look like in communities. This, of course, has to be done meaningfully for it to have the desired impact, and that takes more time to facilitate. I would definitely support this approach going forward however.	No		These changes were definitely beneficial. Increased time within the bidding window helps organisations massively when developing a clear ask. The new payment schedule was also very welcome, as was the widening out of lots - particularly multi-stage.

Employability Training Provider Forum Strategic Group
Response to ABZ Works Commissioning Process 2025–26

The 2025–26 commissioning round represents an important moment to reflect on how we design and deliver employability services in Aberdeen. This collective response from the Employability Training Providers Forum (ETPF) Strategic Group brings together shared observations, concerns, and recommendations following discussion at our meetings and analysis of the awarded contracts. It is offered in the spirit of constructive challenge, with the aim of supporting improvements in future commissioning processes and ensuring alignment with the principles of co-design, inclusion, and sector-wide collaboration.

Acknowledging Improvements

We recognise and appreciate that several positive changes were made in response to provider feedback:

- A longer lead-in time with an overview of activity types and lots (although this is felt to still be too short, especially when considering consortia building)
- Extended bidding timescales (although again, this still didn't leave enough time to consider consortia building)
- Introduction of multi-stage contracts, which align better with the real-life needs of participants
- Greater transparency in published contract values
- Potential for longer-term contracts, subject to funding and performance

These are welcome steps and represent a move toward a more mature commissioning process. However, several serious concerns remain that we believe must be addressed to ensure future commissioning rounds are inclusive, strategic, and aligned with the principles of *No One Left Behind*.

Concerns About Overall Service Design

However, when stepping back to consider the full portfolio of commissioned services in this round, significant concerns remain. As a collective of employability providers in the city, the Strategic Group reflected on whether this round, if approached as a true service design process centred on user needs and sector expertise, would have resulted in the programme that was ultimately commissioned. The consensus was that it would not.

The current allocation raises serious questions about:

- Balance and diversity of provision
- Transparency of decision-making
- Fair access to delivery opportunities for the broader provider community

It's important to stress that this is not a criticism of those organisations who were successful in securing contracts. The issue is structural; rooted in the design and execution of the commissioning process.

Key Issues Raised by the Strategic Group

1. Over-Concentration of Delivery

Our analysis of the services commissioned shows that more than half of all contracts were awarded to just two organisations. While these organisations are valued contributors to the landscape, such concentration risks reducing system resilience, narrowing innovation, and underutilising the strengths of the wider sector.

2. Lack of Meaningful Co-Design

While one workshop was held prior to the commissioning round, there is no ongoing or structured mechanism for co-design, despite this being a core principle of the Scottish Government's *No One Left Behind* strategy. A single engagement session does not equate to co-production.

3. Specialist Providers Disadvantaged

Members reported that:

- Service specifications were too broad, making it difficult for specialist providers to compete
- Some bids were penalised for not bidding the full contract value, even when delivery models were realistic and impactful
- Scoring criteria (e.g. Fair Work, management sections) were unclear in how they influenced decisions, with the suggestion that these sections could be pre-approved or verified at the point of entry to the DPS, rather than being repeatedly assessed at mini-competition level
- A small panel of assessors (only three individuals) created concerns about the breadth of perspective in funding decisions

4. Transparency and Learning
There was little visibility of how final decisions were made, and no published summary of:
- Which bids were received and assessed
- The rationale for successful or unsuccessful awards
- Any lessons learned from the process

This absence of transparency undermines trust and limits opportunities for collective improvement.

5. Consortium Delivery Remains Under-supported
While multi-stage contracts were welcomed, the process did not meaningfully support the development of formal consortia or joint bids. This is a missed opportunity. Other areas (e.g. Argyll & Bute) have facilitated successful collaborative models, and we believe the LEP could play a role in enabling similar approaches in Aberdeen.

Recommendations
To improve future commissioning rounds and ensure the full potential of our sector is realised, we recommend:

1. *Establishing a standing co-design group*, involving ABZ Works, LEP representatives, and sector providers, to shape future commissioning collaboratively and in line with No One Left Behind principles.
2. *Using 2026–27 as a transitional year,* to pilot improvements in process, with a view to informing a full redesign of the commissioning framework for 2027 and beyond.
3. *Providing time and resource to develop consortium bids,* including guidance, facilitation support, and opportunities for joint development.
4. *Improving transparency and learning,* by publishing anonymised summaries of funding decisions and scoring rationales, and hosting bidder feedback sessions and post-round learning reviews
5. *Diversifying delivery*, by commissioning a balanced mix of large and small-scale provision, and creating space for specialist, community-led, place-based and innovative services that meet specific needs.
6. *Clarifying scoring and assessment processes,* particularly where mandatory sections (e.g. Fair Work or management) are included but may not influence outcomes. Consider pre-approving or verifying these standard criteria as part of the DPS registration process to reduce duplication and ensure consistency. Additionally, increase the number and diversity of assessors involved in bid evaluation to reflect a broader range of perspectives and expertise.

A Shared Commitment
The ETPF Strategic Group is united in its commitment to building a fairer, more inclusive commissioning system - one that reflects the diversity of need in our communities and the breadth of expertise across our sector. We are committed to working collaboratively with ABZ Works and the LEP to help shape a more balanced, transparent, and forward-looking approach to employability provision in the city.

We would welcome the opportunity to explore these reflections further and to contribute meaningfully to the design and development of future commissioning rounds.

Submitted by the Employability Training Providers Forum Strategic Group

ABZ WORKS

Your route to skills, training and work



What is ABZ Works?

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



ABZ Works is Aberdeen City Council's Employability and Skills service.

We support people to plan their future and help them build knowledge and skills to achieve their goals in work, education, volunteering and training.

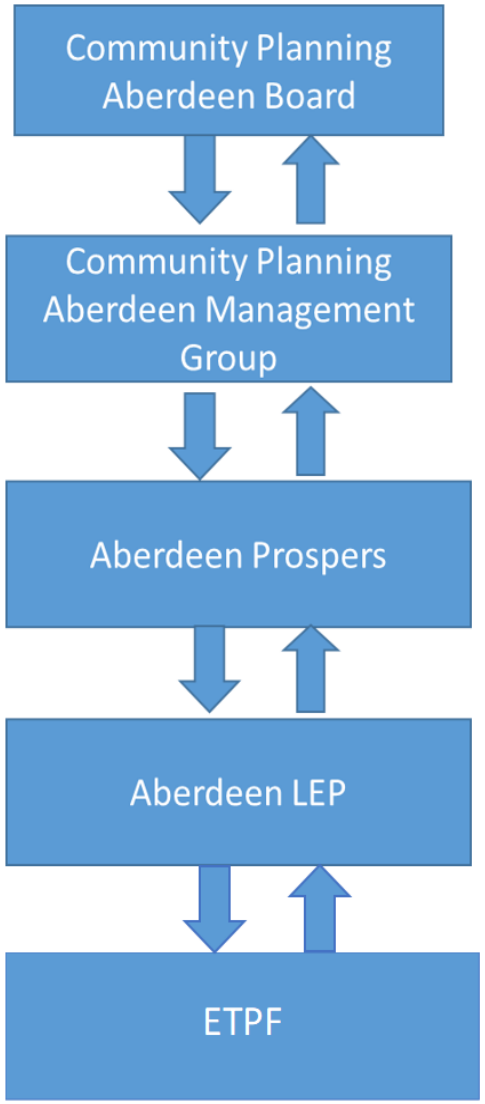
BON ACCORD
ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

Our role

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work

- Accountable body for delivery of the Scottish Government's No One Left Behind funding, which seeks to declutter and strengthen the employability landscape, making employability support more accessible and person-centred.
- Responsible for the processes associated with distribution of No One Left Behind monies to ensure it meets the needs of the city, as determined by the Local Employability Partnership (LEP).
- Commissioning body for No One Left Behind Funded activity.
- The LEP consists of a number of partner organisations. It determines the strategic approach to No One Left Behind-funded employability activity in Aberdeen and identifies the priority groups for support.
- The Employability Training Providers Forum (ETPF) brings information to the LEP and vice-versa

LEP Reporting Structure



The LEP, via the ABZWorks team, also reports to Aberdeen City Council and to the Scottish Government as the funder.

Priority Groups

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- Young People
- Care experienced young people
- Parents – either unemployed or experiencing in-work poverty
- Over 50s
- Redundant/those facing redundancy
- Minority ethnic people
- People at risk of homelessness
- People in recovery from substance use
- Resettled people (New Scots)
- Disabled people
- People with long-term physical or mental health conditions
- Long-term unemployed

Employability Pipeline

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work





So what?

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- Since 2022 we have used a dynamic purchasing system, through Public Contracts Scotland, to procure employability services.
- We have refined that over the years in consultation with the LEP and training providers.
- The DPS has been set up to enable consortium bids.
- Earlier this year, some training providers asked us to take a more hybrid approach, offering both large and not-so-large contracts to enable them to build consortia to bid for contracts.
- Consortium building is new to many of the organisations operating in Aberdeen.

Why a consortium approach?

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- We know there are large and small organisations operating in Aberdeen, delivering fantastic activities to city residents.
- We also know, from what we've seen and heard, that there is an appetite to work together and to enhance Aberdeen's employability capacity and offer, but some support is required to help organisations build consortia.
- Today is our first step in supporting the formation of employability consortia in Aberdeen.

Future opportunities

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- This year awarded a number of one year contracts with +1 +1 extension opportunities, subject to performance and funding.
- Anticipate further opportunities next year, subject to funding.

Why build a consortium?

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- We want to support the growth, strength, capacity, diversity, and security of the local employability landscape.
- More out there than just No One Left Behind - look wider
- Forming consortia can put your organisation into a stronger position to secure funding from other sources:
  - Public and third sector funding is getting ever tighter
  - Brings strengths, flexibility, diversity, and expertise of different organisations together.
  - Opens up new opportunities for your organisation

What do we want from consortia?

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- Diversity and strength of offer
- Ability to engage the hardest to reach people in our city as well as those who are easier to reach
- A range of support under one umbrella, so people can get what they need, when they need it *and* make progress towards, into, and sustain a positive destination – education/training/employment/volunteering
- Grass roots organisations involved. This is not just about the big players, we want the wee guys to be part of it!
- All stages of the employability pipeline covered
- Relevant to the local job market and economy

Contracts ending

ABZ WORKS
Your route to skills, training and work



- 1-2-1 early-stage support
- Early Learning and Childcare training
- Warehouse Skills training
- Hospitality & Customer Service training
- Employability Skills Workshops (CV building, interview skills, job applications)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages
- Digital/Media Skills
- Support for Ethnic Minorities
- Supported Employment

ABZ WORKS

Your route to skills, training and work



abzworks@aberdeencity.gov.uk

www.abzworks.co.uk

No One Left Behind: employability strategic plan 2024 to 2027 - gov.scot

BON ACCORD

ABERDEEN

CITY COUNCIL



EMPLOYABILITY DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM

August 2025

INTRODUCTIONS

Who has created this, and who is it for?

- Commercial and Procurement Shared Service
  - **Aberdeen City Council (Lead)**
  - Aberdeenshire Council
  - The Highland Council
- Employability Team

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM (DPS)

What is it, and why are we using it?

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

- What is a DPS?
  - Similar to a Framework Agreement
  - Split into Lots
  - Mini-Competition for our actual requirements
- Advantage of using a DPS:
  - Local focus
  - Flexibility in a changing landscape
  - Perpetually open
  - Collaboration opportunities
  - No obligation
  - 5 years in length

TIMELINES

- **Stage 1: Initial 30 days (ONBOARDING)**
  - To advertise for 30 days then notify
- **Stage 1: Post-Cleanse (ONBOARDING)**
  - Instantly Uploaded
  - LIVE NOW!
  - Will now be open for remainder of 5 years
- **Stage 2: Mini-Competitions**
  - Recommend live for minimum 2 weeks

* Any dates are indicative and may change at the discretion of the Council

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

MINI COMPETITIONS

What are they, and how will we do it?

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

- What is a Mini-Competition
  - For individual requirements
  - Evaluated on Price and Quality
  - Advertised for 2-3 weeks
  - Generally for one year
- How we will advertise the opportunity:
  - On Public Contracts Scotland (NOT PCS-T)
  - Quick Quote
  - Email alert
  - Complete docs and upload to postbox

CONSORTIA ARRANGEMENTS

What are they, and how will we do it?

- Definitions
  - Why use consortium bidding?
- Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations
  - What the Council will accept
  - Establishing a Consortium

1) Identify potential partners
2) Define the Consortium's purpose and structure
3) Establish governance arrangements
4) Develop a joint bid strategy
5) Seek legal and finance advice

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

ABZWorks Employability Consortia Building Networking Event

Funding opportunities and support for Aberdeen

Organisation: Aberdeen City Council
Team: External Funding Team
Speakers: Iain Macdonald & Mitchell Donald
Date: Thursday, August 28, 2025

BON ACCORD
ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

Agenda

- Introduction from the ACC External Funding Team
- Funding Opportunities
- Funding Enquiry Submission Process
- Useful Funding Resources
- Q&A Session

Aberdeen City Council
External Funding Team
Introduction

Who’s in the team?

1) Iain Macdonald - Funding Support Officer

2) Mitchell Donald - Funding Support Officer

3) Laura Paterson - Team Leader – External Funding

4) Agata Kowal - External Funding and Policy Officer

5) Gill Begbie - External Funding and Policy Officer

6) Charlotte Farquhar - External Funding and Policy Officer

What can we offer?

- Funding Identification: We assist in identifying suitable funding sources tailored to your project needs.
- GRANTfinder Access: We leverage an online funding search engine to streamline the search process and enhance efficiency. We can provide tailored grant searches and reports for you.
- Application Support: Subject to availability, we offer constructive feedback on draft funding applications to improve your chances of securing external funding.
- Eligibility Guidance: We provide detailed information regarding eligibility criteria for various funding opportunities.
- Strategic Alignment: We help align your projects with key policy documents and funding priorities to maximise impact.
- Proven Success: Our efforts have resulted in securing over £90 million in grants since 2012, demonstrating our effectiveness in funding acquisition.
- Contact Information: For further assistance, please reach out to our team at externalfunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Funding Opportunities

Summary of Funding Opportunities

1. Rayne Foundation – Open Grants Programme
2. The Robertson Trust (combined: Core, Community Spaces, Wee, Transport)
3. A B Charitable Trust (ABCT) – Main Grants
4. Triangle Trust 1949 Fund – Criminal Justice (Autumn 2025 focus on young women and girls)
5. Scottish Children’s Lottery Trust – Medium Fund; Small Fund; Bright Futures Fund
6. SafeDeposits Scotland – Community Fund
7. Motability Foundation – Support for Travel Training Schemes
8. Charles Hayward Foundation

Rayne Foundation

- **What it is**: Grants are available to charities in the UK working to bring clear and direct benefits to vulnerable and disadvantaged people in its areas of special interest.
- **Objective**: Fund innovative, collaborative work in three areas: older people/carers; children & young people's mental health; opportunities for refugees/asylum seekers.
- **Amount**: Typically £10k–£30k per year (often multi-year).
- **Deadline**: Rolling (typical 4–6 months).
- **Who can apply**: Voluntary, statutory and for-profit orgs (incl. CICs/CIOs) UK-wide; match funding expected.
- **Key uses**: Innovative approaches with potential to scale; salaries/project costs; some core costs; collaboration/learning.

Robertson Trust (Wee, Small, Large, Transport, Community Spaces) – combined

- **What it is**: Grants are available to registered charities in Scotland that are working with communities experiencing poverty and trauma; Community Spaces supports running costs of community hubs in deprived/trauma-affected areas; Wee Grants support small charities/groups addressing poverty and trauma.
- **Amount**: Wee up to £5k (1 yr); Small £5k–£20k/yr up to 5 yrs; Large £20k–£50k/yr up to 5 yrs; Transport £5k–£20k/yr up to 3 yrs; Community Spaces £5k–£20k/yr up to 3 yrs.
- **Deadline**: Rolling (typical decision time 10–12 weeks).
- **Who can apply**: Registered Scottish charities (Wee also for constituted groups).
- **Key uses**: Unrestricted or project costs; advice/advocacy, skills and learning, employability, childcare/digital access; community hub running costs; transport vehicles/running.

A B Charitable Trust

- **What it is**: Grants are available for small to medium-sized charities registered and working in the UK that defend human rights and promote respect for vulnerable individuals.
- **Objective**: The Trust aims to support charities that promote human dignity and defend the human rights of marginalised and excluded people in the UK.
- **Amount**: £10k–£30k per year for 1–3 years.
- **Deadline**: 24/10/2025 (next round; quarterly thereafter).
- **Who can apply**: UK-registered charities; income £150k–£1.5m (each of last 3 years).
- **Key uses**: Core or project funding; legal advice/representation; rehabilitation; policy/narrative change; sector strengthening.

Triangle Trust 1949 Fund

- **What it is**: Grants are available for charities, not-for-profit social enterprises and community interest companies in the UK that are working to support young people with criminal convictions or young people at high risk of offending for the first time. In 2025, the focus is specifically on young women and girls who have been in the criminal justice system or who are at a high risk of being drawn into it.
- **Objective**: Reduce reoffending and first convictions among young women/girls (11–30).
- **Amount**: £10k–£80k over 12–24 months (max £40k/yr).
- **Deadline**: Autumn 2025 round 16/09/2025–28/10/2025.
- **Who can apply**: UK charities, not-for-profit social enterprises, CICs; orgs exclusively for women/girls; average income <£1.5m; strong gender/trauma-informed track record.
- **Key uses**: Scale/develop targeted CJ programmes; direct support for high-risk or convicted young women/girls.

Scottish Children's Lottery Trust

- **What it is**: Grants are available for registered charities in Scotland to support projects and activities that benefit vulnerable children, young people, and families most at risk of poverty.
- **Objective**: Alleviate impacts of poverty, exclusion, deprivation, disability/illness on children/YP/families.
- **Amount**: Small Fund up to £5k; Bright Futures Fund (max TBC); Medium Fund up to £10k (2025 round closed).
- **Deadline**: Small & Bright Futures open 15/09/2025 (noon) – close 03/10/2025 (noon); decisions mid-Nov 2025.
- **Who can apply**: Scottish registered charities/CIOs; match funding expected; working beyond statutory duties.
- **Key uses**: Practical family support; daycare/play; disability support; after-school/holiday learning; IT/kit; mentoring; youth/leisure; employability/skills.

SafeDeposits Scotland – Community Fund

- **What it is**: Grants are available for organisations across Scotland to deliver projects and activities that enhance local communities by addressing issues such as sustainability, the environment, employability, and social and digital inclusion.
- **Objective**: Enhance local communities across Scotland through targeted, practical projects.
- **Amount**: Up to £5,000 (up to three grants per round).
- Deadline: 29/08/2025; 28/11/2025; 27/02/2026.
- **Who can apply**: Community-benefit groups in Scotland; provide recent accounts/annual report where applicable.
- **Key uses**: Play areas; tree planting; social opportunities to reduce isolation; digital inclusion; employability prep.

Motability Foundation – Support for Travel Training Schemes

- **What it is**: Grants are available for not-for-profit organisations to deliver and grow impactful travel support programmes for disabled people within the UK.
- **Objective**: Deliver immediate and future impact in travel confidence for disabled people, incl. in deprived/underrepresented areas.
- **Amount**: £50k–£1m over up to 3 years (full cost recovery allowed).
- **Deadline**: 15/12/2025 (Stage 1 EOI; then Stage 2).
- **Who can apply**: UK incorporated charities, CLGs, CICs, Community Benefit Societies; ≥3 years active; income ≥£50k (last 3 yrs); reserves ≥3 months; boards ≥3 (unrelated majority). DDPOs encouraged.
- **Key uses**: Travel training; buddy schemes; classroom training; mentoring; pilot/new approaches; staff/volunteer costs; indirect costs.

Charles Hayward Foundation

- **What it is**: Grants are available to UK registered charities for projects in the following categories: Social and Criminal Justice; Overseas; and Older People.
- **Objective**: Early intervention, prevention, and creative solutions to entrenched issues; improve older people's quality of life.
- **Amount**: Small (Older People) up to £7k (rolling); Social & Criminal Justice £15k–£25k p.a. for 1–3 yrs; Overseas one-off up to £15k.
- **Deadline**: Main Grants Stage 1: 19/09/2025 (for Nov trustee meetings); Small Grants rolling.
- **Who can apply**: UK charities (SCJ income £350k–£4m; Overseas £150k–£4m; Older People <£350k).
- **Key uses**: Early intervention/diversion; rehabilitation/alternatives to custody (esp. women/young people); DA victim support; Africa: water/sanitation, sustainable livelihoods, farming/income gen; Older People: isolation, dementia, volunteer-led practical help.

Scan here to download the GrantFinder Report



bit.ly/GrantFinderReport

Funding Enquiry Submission Process

Submitting a Funding Enquiry to our team

1) Your Name and Contact Details

- Full name
- Email address
- Phone number (optional)

2) Organisation Details

- Type (sole trader, limited company, charity, etc.)
- Registration number (if applicable - useful for OSCR)

3) Project Overview

- Brief description of the project and its details
- Purpose and objectives
- Project Location: Where the project will be based/implemented

Submitting a Funding Enquiry to our team

4) Funding Requirements

- Amount required
- Proposed timeline for execution

5) Additional Information

- Relevant details or supporting documents
- Specific requirements or criteria

6) **Email us**: **ExternalFunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk**

Useful Funding Resources

Aberdeen City Council
External Funding Newsletter Signup



bit.ly/ACC-External-Funding-Newsletter

Aberdeen City Council
Grant Funding Support

bit.ly/ACC-Grant-Funding-Support

Aberdeen City Council External Funding Team

Questions?

ExternalFunding@aberdeencity.gov.uk

BON ACCORD

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL