

Trailblazer Provider Briefing Session: Questions and Answers Log

Wednesday 11th June 2025

	Date received	Question	Answer	Input from
1	02.06.2025	Can a current UKSPF provider apply?	There are no restrictions on who can apply and the Open Call Application Guidance gives further detail on who can apply and the expectations from applicants.	
2	02.06.2025	Can a current Connect to Work provider apply?	There are no restrictions on who can apply and the Open Call Application Guidance gives further detail on who can apply and the expectations from applicants.	
3	02.06.2025	Can you apply for more than one Call?	Yes, providers can apply to multiple Calls if they meet the criteria for each one.	
4	02.06.2025	Can providers partner with other organisations?	Yes, providers are encouraged to collaborate if this is deemed the best way to deliver a high-quality service. However, there must be a lead partner responsible for the full application and delivery co-ordination. Contact details of attendees at today's session will be shared to support networking and partnership building.	
5	02.06.2025	Do the projects have to be new / innovative?	We're seeking new and different types of activity - projects should aim to test new ways of working across the North East CA. However, proposals can build on proven approaches, existing knowledge and successful delivery models, whilst stretching and challenging current thinking around provision.	
6	02.06.2025	Is there an accessible application process for neurodiverse individuals?	If you require additional needs, please contact ei.trailblazer@northeast-ca.gov.uk	
7	02.06.2025	Do projects need to be delivered across the whole North East CA region?	Projects can focus on specific local authority areas within the North East CA region where support is most needed. Full regional coverage is not required, but providers should clearly identify the intended delivery areas.	

8	02.06.2025	Is there a minimum number of participants we need to support?	There is no fixed minimum. However, providers are advised to estimate targets based on dividing the total expected outputs for each strand by the number of projects expected to support.	
9	02.06.2025	Regarding the total target of 250 young adults – is this per project?	No, 250 is the total target across all projects.	
10	02.06.2025	When will more information about Priority 1 and Priority 3 be available?	Information will hopefully be shared within the next four weeks.	
11	02.06.2025	Does starting a new business or becoming self-employed count as an outcome?	Yes, this is considered a valid outcome measure.	
12	02.06.2025	How will you ensure that successful applicants work effectively with existing local provision?	There will be a robust monitoring and feedback framework that includes feedback from participants and partners to ensure that projects remain aligned with local priorities and provision	
13	02.06.2025	When will the tender documents be available?	Open Call for Priorities 2.1 and 2.2 will be available by the close of day Monday 2 nd June 2025.	
14	02.06.2025	Is there a minimum age for participants (excluding young people-specific call)?	Yes, the minimum age is 18.	
15	02.06.2025	Can we have an informal conversation before submission?	<p>All questions should be submitted via the Q&A process so responses are visible to all providers.</p> <p>Please send all your questions to ei.trailblazer@northeast-ca.gov.uk</p>	
16	02.06.2025	Is there guidance on the minimum turnover for the applicant organisation?	<p>There is no minimum turnover for applications to the open call priorities. However, we encourage organisations to review the North East CA payment terms and consider whether, in conjunction with the minimum application value, it is feasible to manage the cash flow and/or associated risk.</p> <p>The North East CA acknowledge that the minimum contract value may not be accessible to all organisations. Concurrent to the open call process, the North East CA will be launching a VCSE grant fund designed to offer smaller, inclusive funding opportunities to support our regional efforts to tackle economic inactivity. Further detail will be released in due course.</p>	Finance

17	02.06.2025	In Priority 2.1 (Subsidised Work Placement), who is the subsidy for?	This is primarily for the employer to incentivise work placements with the intent of later becoming permanent. Budgets may also include participant costs (e.g. travel).	
18	02.06.2025	Would remote delivery solutions be considered?	Yes - remote, hybrid and face-to-face delivery solutions will be considered. Providers should consult with participants and adapt their delivery method to suit individual needs and preferences.	
19	02.06.2025	Some of the organisations that are delivering the most innovative and high impact employability work may struggle to mobilise within the timeframe or to take on a project of this size and scale within the timeframe. And also innovation & experimentation takes time. Will there be future pots with a longer lead in time? Or pots that don't have the size of minimum spend on it?	While no guarantees can be made, additional funding may be made available in the region, potentially with different timelines or requirements.	
20	02.06.2025	Will asylum seekers (> 6 months' stay) be eligible?	Please refer to the Open Call Application Guidance – Right to Work	
21	02.06.2025	This is a call specifically for this financial year. How does this call out link into long term strategic development of this type of work in the region? When will you know what the plan is for this work for subsequent financial years? Without this info, we all risk being in the same position of having to respond with very little notice again next year... that's an impossible way to work for any organisation being "innovative".	This is a financial-year-specific call. Further strategic direction and plans for future years are still being developed. The concern around short notice and sustainability is noted.	
22	02.06.2025	Surely if this starts in July people need to have an existing flow of referrals?	Projects starting in July will need to be ready to mobilise quickly, including having access to potential participants.	
23	02.06.2025	Given that much of the evidence about why people end up not in work makes it clear that causes emerge / take place pre-18 years old... are there any plans to flex age eligibility for this type of work in the future so we can innovate in more of prevention context - as is being done in health, education etc?	DWP guidance on minimum age for current Trailblazer is 18. A full evaluation will be undertaken and feedback on specific barriers for access will be shared with DWP	

24	04.06.2025	<p>Following the presentation Webinar yesterday we have taken a look through the document on the NE CA website and noticed a difference in criteria.</p> <p>The slides and Open Call Guidance state "there would be up to 3 projects using the £300 000 – £950 000 allocated costs and projects could select areas"</p> <p>However the Youth Employment Specification Document states "min is £500 000 and it is 1-2 projects covering the whole NECA region"</p>	<p>We are seeking up to three projects with a minimum value of £300,000 and a maximum of £950,000.</p> <p>Projects can submit applications for specific areas – however we will commission up to three providers to ensure full coverage of the North East CA region.</p>	
25	04.06.2025	<p>3.4 Basis for Calculation</p> <p>In relation to this question, is the 100 word count applicable per line/item of output/outcome?</p> <p>For each output/outcome, please outline the basis for your calculation.</p> <p>Short Explanation: 100 words</p> <p>It would be hard otherwise to outline our basis for calculation in 100 words total, for all project outputs and outcomes.</p>	<p>We would accept an explanation of a maximum 100 words for outputs and 100 words for outcomes given the no. of specified outputs/outcomes for this Call. A table format would be acceptable.</p>	
26	04.06.2025	<p>Regarding Priority 2.5 (Call 3 women)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any age restriction? • Are referrals into other funding streams such as UKSPF supported? 	<p>The specification for Call 3 will provide further detail.</p> <p>Publication of Call 3 will be 20 June</p>	
27	04.06.2025	<p>On reading the briefing note I can see on page 3 of the briefing note there is a paragraph that refers to a VCSE Small Grants Programme, with a total value of £950,00. This will fund community projects intended to support those further from the labour market.</p>	<p>We are still developing the Commissioning Process for this element of the Trailblazer Delivery Plan and will release further detail when we have it.</p>	

		<p>I've read the remaining (released) specification and guidance documents and can't see specifically when this fund will go live.</p> <p>Are you able to confirm when the VCSE Small Fund will be released for tender please?</p>		
28	04.06.2025	<p>Apologies to have missed the trailblazer event earlier this week. Might you be able to add me to the mailing for follow on recording and slides, please?</p> <p>At Earlybird, we're increasingly collaborating with local governments using our innovative technology to significantly reduce admin, boost compliance, and free up caseworker time on employment programmes, enabling greater impact and increasing ROI.</p> <p>With Get Britain Working Trailblazer and Connect to Work initiatives underway and as grant agreement deadlines are ongoing, we're keen to collaborate further.</p> <p>We work on a bespoke and low-cost basis to help Local Authorities leverage AI and innovative technology in their employment support programmes.</p> <p>We've developed a simple £10k package for local authorities that includes everything needed to get started - with cost effective upgrade paths for scale and easy setup in only 5 days.</p> <p>Would you be open to a brief 20-minute chat to explore how this could support your delivery? It'd be great to share with you how we're collaborating elsewhere.</p> <p>How is your 17th or 19th PM? Else, we can align a time here.</p>	<p>Yes, we can add to mailing list.</p> <p>Any questions/queries you may have regarding the Open Calls must be submitted to ei.trailblazer@northeast-ca.gov.uk</p>	
29	04.06.2025	<p>Could you please add North East Enterprise Agency Ltd (NEEAL) to any mailing lists regarding North East Economic Inactivity Trailblazer Programme, as a potential Provider. Email address is sue@neeal.co.uk</p>	<p>Yes, we will add you to mailing list.</p>	

			All details for the priority two open call are now published on our website here . This includes the briefing PowerPoint slides and recording .	
30	04.06.2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the presentation on slide 20 it states that the 2.4 Social Housing tenants strand has a min/max of £200-300k but in the guidance document on page 5 it states the min and max is £200-250k. Can you confirm which is correct amount? For 2.4 Support for Social Housing tenants strand the output is '190 social housing tenants' – can you confirm if this is 190 engaged or 190 into work? For 2.4 Support for social housing tenants there us a specific focus on those over the age of 50. Can you confirm what number/percentage of the 190 social housing tenants need to be over the age of 50 to deliver against this requirement? 	<p>To confirm – min £200,000 - max £300,000</p> <p>Please refer to refined specification for requirements on outputs and outcomes expected which was published on 10.6.25</p> <p>Please refer to specification – no specific targets have been set for tenants over 50+, however we are particularly interested in proposals which focus on this age group</p>	
31	04.06.2025	<p>We are currently reviewing the Inactivity Trailblazer Programme for Neurodiverse and Youth Employment, in the tender response and the pricing document there is reference to Match Funding:</p> <p>Tender response – Match funding – Public Funding, Private Funding, Other</p> <p>Pricing document – Funding sources – Recipients funds capital/revenue, other capital match, other revenue match</p> <p>We were wondering if match funding is essential to the project and if so, is there a minimum you are expecting to see.</p>	<p>Match funding is not a compulsory requirement, however, if possible, we recognise the benefits of match funding which could maximise the impact of this programme.</p>	

32	04.06.2025	I wanted to follow up to see if you are planning to facilitate any networking opportunities among the attendees. Additionally, will you be sharing the email addresses of Monday's attendees to encourage potential partnerships? I recall it was mentioned that emails would be shared, but I wanted to clarify since I have not yet received any communication regarding this.		
33	04.06.2025	<p>I understand from the webinar that there are only going to be one or two projects in the area of supported placements for Neuro divergent individuals, which has a minimum funding level of £440k which would mean helping 100 people over a nine month period, is that correct?</p> <p>This is a video of one of the young people who started on one of our current programs</p> <p>https://youtu.be/8ZKXmiKF8ZU?si=R66h3c4zStE-Ztqg</p> <p>We have successfully worked with around 160 people over last 2 years and provided 8 week supported work experience placements consisting of 2-4 days in various real work situations.</p> <p>This has proved to be very beneficial and our outcomes have ranged from full time employment for some people and overcoming anxiety around work for others.</p> <p>Up to now we have been. Funded by using Access to Work and have a regular stream of referrals, mainly from Gateshead DWP.</p>	<p>To confirm – Min grant is £450,000 and Maximum is £875,000 - total number of participants expected is 200</p> <p>As this is an Open Call we cannot have any discussions with individual projects.</p> <p>Please send all your questions to ei.trailblazer@northeast-ca.gov.uk</p>	

		<p>We have also started to form the North East Association of Supported Placements over the past 12 months- something which the funding could help us firm up and market properly.</p> <p>I have ADHD and find the process of the application to be overwhelming and very time consuming to get right.</p> <p>Please could I have a phone chat with a member of the team to discuss the feasibility of us applying for this?</p>		
34	04.06.2025	<p>Economic Inactivity Trailblazer 2.2 below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does learning disability qualify under neurodiverse conditions? ○ Is the participant criteria strictly for those without a diagnosis? ○ Can incentives be offered to participants to engage, for example a gift voucher? ○ Can employers be based outside of NECA area e.g. Darlington, for example if an opportunity comes up that is a good match for the participant, or if it's easier for them to travel to, as long as the participant is a resident in the NECA geographical area? ○ Can bidders be the lead applicant in a partnership bid and separately bid on their own? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No – participants with diagnosis are eligible • No – Incentives are not an eligible spend • As per guidance - Employer location: Employers may be based outside the North East, provided their location falls within a reasonable commuting distance for residents • Yes, however we would expect full disclosure of all relationships/resources in each bid and the justification for separate bids 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can you confirm the funding amounts - the webinar said a minimum award of £450k, but the spec says minimum £500k and up to 2 projects will be funded? If 2 projects are funded that would take the total amount over the maximum available of £875k. ○ Is there an expectation for match funding? ○ The specification notes a target of 180 employers offering placements, assuming one placement per employer. However, it also states that supported placements can be delivered in small groups, with tailored support such as an on-site support worker. Could you please clarify whether the target of 180 employers refers to 180 <i>individual employers</i>, regardless of how many participants they support? For example, if one employer offers a group placement for 4 participants, is the expectation that this still counts as one employer — and the overall target remains 180 — or would this be expected to count as 4 towards the employer engagement total? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To clarify, the indicative total funding allocation is £875,000. However, we reserve the right to review and adjust the final funding amounts based on the quality and scope of the submissions received. This means that while the specification outlines a minimum award of £500,000 and the potential to fund up to two projects, the final number of awards and their values may vary to ensure the best outcomes from the competition. • Match funding is not compulsory, however we recognise the benefits of match to maximise the impact • In terms of counting placements, we are primarily interested in the number of distinct employer engagements and the variety of placement types offered. If 180 employers each offer one placement, that would be counted as 180 placements. However, if placements differ significantly in duration, format, or intensity (e.g. a 3-hour taster session vs. a multi-day immersive experience), we may consider these as different types of experiences, and we encourage applicants to clearly describe these distinctions in their proposals. This helps us build a richer understanding of what works across different models and contexts. We are particularly interested in learning from a diverse mix of placement types, so applicants offering a range of formats are encouraged to explain how each contributes to the overall aims of the programme. 	
35	05.06.2025	Please can you add me to the mailing list for these. (referring to Powerpoint Slides)	Yes – we will add you to mailing list	

		Edward Pickering CEO / Chief Officer Telephone: 07384814883 Website: citizensadvicecd.org.uk		
36	05.06.2025	<p>Can the Combined Authority please confirm whether they consider these contracts are subject to VAT? If so, will you pay any VAT invoiced by the successful provider over and above the agreed contract price, which can then be reclaimed by yourselves?’</p>	<p>You will be entering into Grant Funding Agreements and therefore you should be recovering actual costs of delivery. There can be no VAT added to these costs.</p> <p>Transactions should be claimed net of VAT. This is because most organisations should be able to recover VAT from HMRC. Therefore, you cannot claim VAT from the North East CA as you would be receiving it twice.</p> <p>If you are unable to recover VAT from HMRC then you need to include an explanation as to why this cannot be recovered as part of the application.</p>	Finance
37	06.06.2025	<p>In the Priority 2.1 Youth Employment specification it states that this is expected to be for 250 participants. The suggested maximum wage subsidy is £,6000 over six months. If every participant was to have the maximum expected work placement this would exceed the total funds available, without any other costs. (£1,500,00). Even at the minimum of two months / £2,000 each this is still more than half of the overall budget (£500,000) not including the administration costs. Is this correct?</p> <p>Also, under outputs in the specification it says 250 young people to be recruited on pg 9 and on pg 6 under the summary it says 220. Please can you clarify.</p>	<p>To inform the North East evidence base we are seeking a range of person centred work tasters and placement opportunities for young people to learn from the difference in impact. Not all tasters and placement attract the wage subsidy.</p>	
38	06.06.2025	<p>The business case document for Youth Employment will not allow me to type in the boxes.</p>	<p>Please ensure the document is saved and that the access mode is set to 'Editing' rather than 'Viewing'.</p>	

39	06.06.2025	In question 2.3 on the response document for Priority 2.1 there is only room for 3 objectives – is this limited to 3 or can more rows be added	More rows can be added.	
40	09.06.2025	I was reading through the guidance for the Trailblazer programme and noticed the reference for small grants (under £100k) for VCSE orgs. Where can I find details of that please?	Procurement exercise will be undertaken to appoint a Grant Manager for this particular element of the trailblazer – further details to be confirmed	
41	09.06.2025	<p>Priority 2.1 Young Adults:</p> <p>In the ‘Business Case’ provider response forms, it states in section 3.4 Basis for Calculation, “For each output/outcome, please outline the basis for your calculation. Short Explanation: 100 words”. Could you clarify is this means 100 words overall, or 100 words for each output/outcome.</p>	We would accept an explanation of a maximum 100 words for outputs and 100 words for outcomes given the no. of specified outputs/outcomes for this Call. A table format would be acceptable.	