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# Highland Green Skills Challenge Fund



## Overview

The UK Govt, following the exit from the EU, has made a commitment towards levelling up across the UK. The focus is stated as levelling up opportunities and prosperity as well as overcoming deep-seated geographic inequalities.

In Highland, as part of its Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, the Council wishes to support new green skills training that fill training gaps and adds value to existing skills training. It also has funds available to invest in new green training facilities that are not otherwise provided in Highland.

The Challenge Fund has two aspects to it:

### Challenge Fund – Green Skills

This will support Green Skills including technical and vocational qualifications at all levels up to SVQ 5, and potentially beyond, including training for vocational licenses relevant to local area needs and high-value qualifications with a focus on 'green skills'. This greening focus will help to ensure we have a skilled workforce to support a Just Transition to a net zero economy and climate resilience.

Subject to funding availability, a second phase of the Challenge Fund will be launched, providing identified training to support and service confirmed needs in other key sectors or activities which are not available from existing sources.

### Challenge Fund – Training Infrastructure

This will support investment in training facilities, be that for expansion of existing or new facility investment to enable green skills provision to be provided for in Highland that otherwise is not currently available.

Any training infrastructure investment provided is conditional on green skills training being provided alongside delivering an associated Green Skills Challenge Fund programme.

## Challenge Fund Approach

The aim of the Challenge Fund – Green Skills is to help as many businesses as possible introduce training or development for employees which is not currently available from mainstream sources. To help achieve this – as well as secure best value from the training provided, the first phase of the Challenge Fund is open only for joint applications from consortia of 2 or more businesses. These joint applications can be made by a lead business, or representative organisations or between a training provider and the proposed beneficiary businesses.

If the applicant businesses require specialist training, out with Highland, this will only be considered by exception.

The Challenge Fund for training infrastructure is open for individual applications by training providers however, given the nature and timing of the Shared Prosperity Fund, any application for training provision must also be linked to a Challenge Fund Green Skills application.

## Green Skills Defined

Green jobs in Scotland are defined as either new and emerging, subject to significant changes in work or worker requirements, or increasing in demand. Appendix 1 gives further details of green skills and eligibility which should be seen to be incorporating or supporting a Just Transition to a net zero economy.

## Skill Outputs and Outcomes

The Highland Green Skills Challenge Fund application process and forms detail the outputs and outcomes to be achieved from the green skills investment made in the application, you will be asked to estimate the number of people:

- receiving support to gain a vocational licence
- supported to gain a qualification or complete a course
- in employment, including self-employment, following support
- in education/ training, following support

It is anticipated that the majority of the trainees will be existing employees however if considering new employees please summarise intent in the application form submitted.

Please do not over-estimate the number of trainees committed to participate in the programme. Progress reporting will assess against forecast and grant payment will be linked to actual numbers achieved as progressing.

## General Eligibility Criteria

1. Business beneficiaries must be Highland based and the employees benefiting must operate from a Highland based location;
2. Business beneficiary to be a micro or small business;<sup>1</sup>
3. Applicants must demonstrate that no other existing green skills funding is currently available to support the training sought;
4. Fair Work commitment: Payment of the Real Living Wage and Employee Voice arrangements are anticipated, and support will only be provided to businesses that have already implemented or have a clear plan and timeline in place to meet the commitment;
5. Training provision will be accredited up to Level 5 although applicants may already exceed this level of qualification;
6. Training providers – to be Highland based or setting up facility in Highland. By exception only, where provision in Highland is not possible e.g. due to specialist nature of training or facilities, will funding be able to be used to access training with providers out with Highland.

## Funding Package

The **Challenge Fund – Green Skills** is for training activity to be completed by 31 March 2024. An opportunity also exists, for applicants to apply for additional training activity that extends beyond March 2024 but is to be complete by the end of December 2024. Support for such activity, will only be given if the applicants have first successfully delivered their 2023/ 24 activity i.e. by March 2024.

The **Challenge Fund – Training Infrastructure** is for investment that is completed alongside its associated training activity in Challenge Fund – Green Skills.

The expectation is that Green Skills grants awarded for activity to be delivered by March 2024 will be in the range of £5,000 to £50,000 per project with businesses expected to contribute towards the project. The Council recognises that this could be provided in-kind, for example, based on the staff costs incurred, if releasing staff for training.

The training facilities fund is anticipated as <£100k towards capital spend with applicants expected to provide 50% match funding.

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<sup>1</sup> Micro business (9 people or fewer and turnover less than €2 million) or small business (10-50 employees and turnover above €2million but below €10million).

## Application Process and Timeline

It is proposed that an on-line Q&A session to address specific questions will be held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 10.00. Please email [ukspf@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ukspf@highland.gov.uk) if you would like to participate in the briefing which will be online with participants invited via MS Teams to participate.

Opportunities will be subsequently open for prospective applicants to have one to one discussions to address any queries they may have before applying.

Applications to the Highland Green Skills Challenge Fund will be accepted until **10:00 on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023**.

Applications received after that time/ date will not be considered and early submissions would be encouraged to support assessment process.

Following receipt of proposals and initial eligibility check on their completeness, an Assessment Panel will meet to assess and recommend projects to be funded. Appendix 2 indicates the outline assessment criteria against which projects will be measured.

Projects will be notified of decisions mid October 2023. A summary of the timeline is shown below.

Date	Action
19 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 10:00	Information Q&A
19 <sup>th</sup> September to 29 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2023	1:1 discussions if/ as required
29 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	Latest date for questions submitted seeking response
4 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 10:00	Deadline for submission of applications
4 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 onwards	Assessment process
9 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 onwards	Offers issued and delivery agreed
Project end date	Projects should schedule outputs and outcomes in line with your Challenge fund submission.

## Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to submit monthly updates on progress. Commencing from the date of the offer letter sent, a quarterly update report and monitoring return will be required. A template will be provided for this purpose.

Where applicable and, as determined by the Council, monitoring meetings will take place during and prior to completion of the project. If progress is identified, at any stage, as not being in line with agreed Project Delivery Timeline, steps will be taken to reduce project outputs and grant paid.

A final report will be required on completion of the project with a template provided for this purpose.

## Payment of Grant

Payment of grant will be retrospective, based on spend and completed training provision or facilities investment as will be agreed. As detailed above grant will be reduced if project outputs are not realised.

By exception, and in discussion and agreement with the Council, grant may be part released in advance on receipt of confirmed bookings or special need for funds.

## APPENDIX 1

### GREEN SKILLS DEFINITION

Green jobs in Scotland are now being defined as either new and emerging, subject to significant changes in work or worker requirements, or increasing in demand. It is also emerging as key within the Just Transition to Net Zero commitment.

It is recognised that whilst Green Skills are assumed to be applicable to core business activities, they are in fact seen as falling within 3 primary areas or groupings<sup>2</sup> defined as;

- a. New and emerging - the need for unique work and worker requirements, which results in the generation of new occupations e.g., energy plant operatives.
- b. Enhanced green skills and knowledge - essential purposes of the occupation remain the same but tasks, skills, knowledge, and external elements have changed, or credentials altered. e.g., architects, plumbers, and heating engineers
- c. Increasing in demand - the work context may change but the tasks do not. e.g., IT (Information Technology) technicians and electricians.

Academic debate into the definition of Green Jobs is reflected in the paper on Green Jobs in Scotland (Nov 22)<sup>2</sup> with consideration required as to impact from type of job being process or product and whether a job contributes towards Net Zero. This resulted in identification that simply assessing green based on sector alone was too narrow, resulting in recognition of there being four types of jobs to consider as to eligibility:

Eligible	Ineligible
Green Jobs in green industries	Non-green jobs in green industries
Greening jobs in non-green industries	Non-green jobs in non-green industries

The assessment of applications will interpret eligibility, firstly, against internationally recognised definition of 'green jobs' as those falling within those classified as eligible above. This allows consideration for all sectors as they may have green skill requirements rather than simply considering 'green industries'<sup>2</sup> using the standard SIC definition which may not reflect the needs of businesses.

Complexity is likely to exist with applicants over eligibility. The above will, hopefully, help clarify and enable applicants to specify and provide evidence in support of their approach towards the Highland Green Skills Challenge Fund. Applicants are strongly advised to contact the Council via [ukspf@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ukspf@highland.gov.uk) to discuss any concerns and confirm eligibility before they apply.

The report on Green Jobs indicated that the proportion of all green job vacancies in Highlands & Islands is c11.2% however it is believed that this may well be understated and be higher in sub-region 'hot spots' e.g., Inner Moray Firth and Caithness for renewable sectors but also reflects limited data availability. It is worth noting that the geography of Highlands and nature of land-based activities may provide opportunities or needs not fully accounted for in the report as with research by Nature Scot<sup>3</sup> identifying opportunities in green skill needs.

The report on Green Jobs in Scotland Nov 22 does provide several interesting and useful commentary on green jobs and trends. These shall prove useful in inviting and subsequent assessment of applications. It would be anticipated that applicants may reference this document, if applicable or required.

<sup>2</sup> Green Jobs in Scotland: An inclusive approach to definition, measurement and analysis (Nov 22)

<sup>3</sup> Nature Scot – research report 1257 – Supporting a Green Recovers; an initial assessment of nature-based jobs and skills.

There are many examples of green skill needs, some obvious and others less so, with some examples shown in the following table.:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Electrician/ roofer in solar panels</li><li>- Architects/ professionals in new techniques</li><li>- Heating engineer/ plumber in new formats of green heating e.g. ASHP</li><li>- Motor mechanic moving into electric vehicles</li><li>- Estates and land based in peatland reclamation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Construction operative and new insulation methods</li><li>- Administrator needing environmental understanding of green skills</li><li>- Diversifying skills e.g. the hydrogen/ carbon capture sectors may need enhanced project management, health and safety or engineering skills typically found in oil &amp; gas<sup>4</sup></li></ul>
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<sup>4</sup> A blueprint for green workforce transformation – IEMA & Deloitte 2022 Monitor Europe

## Appendix 2 Assessment

### UK Shared Prosperity – Highland Challenge Fund – Green Skills

A fair and open process has been considered for assessment of submissions. The following seeks to clarify the process and intent for applicants to be scored by the assessment panel for this Challenge Fund.

Each application will be given a score for each section which will be scored 0 to 4 as shown;

0	1	2	3	4
No answer	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good

All elements are important, but each has a weighting (shown below), indicating the importance of the information in relation to the others.

Element	Score 0-4	Weighting (1-3)	Total (Score x Weighting)
1: The Project		3	
2: Target evidence & risks		3	
3: Capturing evidence		1	
4: Ability to deliver & past experience		2	
5: Budget		2	
6: Outputs & Outcomes		3	
7: Sustainability & recruitment		1	
8: Other funding		1	
<b>Total out of 64</b>			

- Finally, the score and the weighting for each section is multiplied together to give a total out of 64.
- Please note that every section of each application must achieve a score of at least 2 i.e. satisfactory to have met the minimum standard.
- Applications will then be ranked highest to lowest, with funding allocated in that order until funds are fully utilised.
- As the Council wishes to ensure that businesses and employees from across Highland benefit from these funds, its final decision on grant awards will reflect the scoring achieved but also the location of the business/employee beneficiary.

### The Challenge Fund – Training Infrastructure

A similar scoring methodology will be adopted when scoring the Training Infrastructure applications. The locational aspect of the beneficiaries will be addressed in the assessment of the Challenge Fund- Green Skills application.

If no complementary application has been made for Challenge Fund – Green Skills activity or evidence provided that training will immediately commence with businesses already engaged, the Training Infrastructure application will not be scored with no grant awarded.