



## Future Projects Fund: Frequently Asked Questions

### Match funding

**Q1: Can the match funding be spent after the grant expires?**

A: Yes, it can. The grant spending needs to be spent by January 2020, whereas the deadline for match funding to be spent is January 2021.

**Q2: Are there any restrictions on the source of match funding?**

A: Yes, as stated on the FPF webpage (under Funding and Eligibility) loans from private sources and funding from other government sources will not qualify as co-investment. Funding will be allocated on the basis that bidders have secured matched funding from other sources. This means that for every £1 from the Institute of Coding funds, there should be a matched £1 invested. We will give priority to those applications that demonstrate this through cash investment. Interested bidding groups are also encouraged to familiarise themselves with the rules around state aid, which would apply to FPF funds, if awarded: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid>.

**Q3: Can we have match funding/partnerships in government, local authorities, and public organisations?**

A: As above, funding from other government sources will not qualify as co-investment. Engagement with local authorities and public organisations in the work proposed is permitted.

**Q4: Is match funding from non-UK based organisations acceptable?**

A: Yes. However, the decision to fund/not fund will be made based on demonstrable benefits to the UK.

**Q5: Can match funding come in cash or in kind?**

A: Yes, match funding can be in cash and/or in-kind benefits such as the provision of time/effort by experts and access to facilities. As noted in Q2, above, we will give priority to those applications that demonstrate this through cash investment. Full details on permissible sources of match funding can be found in the briefing document at <https://instituteofcoding.org/futureprojectsfund/>.

**Q6: What is the level of commitment required from an investor/funding partner at the time of bid submission?**

A: At the point of submitting a bid, a firm commitment of matched funding needs to be demonstrated. When bids are awarded we expect bidding groups to be in a position to complete the paperwork and start the project straight away.

**Q7: We know that match funding has to match the grant monies at least pound for pound - would it be acceptable if 100% of the match funding came from partners (i.e. if there was no contribution to match funding from the lead HEI)?**

A: Yes, it is acceptable to propose that the Higher Education Institution will use the grant funds and the match funding will be provided by partners in the bid group. Match funding must be from allowable sources and the bid should be clear on who is providing what. (See Q2 for further information on acceptable sources of match funding.)



**Q8: In order to reach the match funding targets of large bids, it may be necessary to involve many SMEs. Is there a limit on the number of SMEs per bid?**

A: No. Bids will vary in size from those asking for larger sums of money to those requiring smaller amounts. A large grant sum does not necessarily mean that the match funding has to come from multiple SMEs. It is important that each bidding group identifies and includes a manageable number of partners who will be involved in the work proposed, should their bid be successful.

**Q9: Is venture capital in match funding acceptable?**

A No, venture capital would not be acceptable match funding because it would be predicated on some kind of pay back. It would either be returned with interest at a future date (so not matched funding but a loan) or as shares in any resulting enterprise. The OfS would not want any resulting products that they invest in to be commodified in this way.

## **Learners and level 6/7**

**Q10: How tight is the definition that activity must be delivered at level 6 and 7? Is encouraging under-represented groups towards these levels acceptable?**

A: Successful bids will impact upon level 6 (undergraduate) and/or level 7 (postgraduate) digital skills provision. Bidders may include, but are not limited to, activity which demonstrably increases participation in education and training at levels 6 and 7. Projects that focus exclusively on education and training at other levels are out of scope.

**Q11: When you talk about returners, are you expecting qualifications to be achieved at level 6 and 7 for this group?**

A: The terms of both the fund and the wider IoC grant require that all partners demonstrate impact at level 6 and/or 7. This does not mean that all projects must include full BSc and/or MSc certification but bidders will need to demonstrate that the education and training delivered is at an appropriate level.

**Q12: If we are talking to industry to build these pathways to employment through MSc etc. the depth of learning and the timescale is often a barrier, how do we address this?**

A: Innovative courses and delivering education in different ways is central to the project. Bids can include ways to deliver CPD requirements on shorter courses and/or longer BSc/MSc courses as long as the education/training provided is demonstrably at levels 6 and/or 7.

**Q13: Is your primary target enhanced provision for student's already receiving level 6 or 7 digital skills education at university?**

A: No, proposals can include the provision of skills to those already at university but may also include the encouragement/preparation of new learners and/or learners at the end of their courses looking for employment.

**Q14: Who are the target learners that we are trying to reach?**

A: Projects that propose support for any learners choosing, completing and gaining employment from level 6 and/or 7 digital skills education fit the brief for this call. A key objective for the IoC is to widen participation in level 6 (undergraduate) and level 7 (postgraduate) digital skills education and training. The digital skills gap is increasing, and we need more people with the skills to compete in the digital economy. This will mean that we need to reach beyond groups that are currently well-represented within the digital sector.



**Q15: Can proposals include the provision of digital skills to learners beyond those with a primary interest in computer science (i.e. provision of digital skills to non-computer scientists)?**

A: Yes

**Q16: How will bids be viewed that include education at levels 4/5 to deliver people into level 6 pathways?**

A: Although the IoC has been set up to improve digital skills at L6/7, the OfS is happy for L4/5 to be included as an element of a bid if it is part of a pathway route into Level 6 (FD/Bachelor degree top up, for instance), with bidders demonstrating this can lead to improved outcomes at L6 in digital courses, in line with IoC objectives.

**Q17: Would modular programmes that demonstrate level 6/7 skills (but do not necessarily provide certificates) be acceptable?**

A. Yes, some of the current planned IoC activity is developing uncertified provision at this level and this is acceptable. The OfS suggests that the IoC considers the balance of the curriculum being developed in terms of HE programmes that are certified and lead to awards, versus CPD/uncertified provision.

## General questions

**Q18: Does it have to be new investment received by the organisation?**

A: We will not support activity that would take place irrespective of this call, and will seek evidence through the bidding process that the proposed activity is additional to that which would otherwise be undertaken.

**Q19: If the proposal generates revenue, will this be considered as part of the bid?**

A: All bidders must demonstrate the ways in which their proposed projects will be sustainable beyond the initial funding period. Any bids that generate on-going revenue will be welcomed, and indeed, encouraged. Revenue generated as part of the bid may not, however, be counted towards match funding and should be described separately.

**Q20: Are individual organisations allowed to bid?**

A: Yes, all organisations are welcome to bid; however, all bids must be submitted by groups that include at least one Higher Education Institution and one industry partner.

**Q21: Where does the IP for any system/content created as part of the project sit?**

A: The Background IP remains with the original owner, the preference for Foreground IP is for sharing and we have some rules in the central contract that expand on this. A sample contract document has been provided on the FPF webpage for information. Everyone receiving grant funding must sign up to the central consortium agreement.

**Q22: Is there a preference for a national programme?**

A: Yes, we're looking for scalability, something that addresses the problem on a national scale. A local or regional proposal will be considered as long as it can demonstrate how it could be scaled to a national level in the future.

**Q23: Does the fund cover buildings/physical space and somewhere permanent for the IoC?**



A: Only recurrent funds are available. Capital expenditure cannot be funded.

**Q24: Will there need to be a university lead? \*UPDATED 16/10/18 based on feedback from the OfS\***

A: **Yes.** Each bidding group must contain at least one Higher Education Institution partner, and one HEI must be the lead for the bidding group. Everyone receiving grant funding has to sign up to the central consortium agreement and must comply with state aid funding rules (available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid>).

**Q25: As a private company, do I need a university to partner with me?**

A: Bids will only be considered from bidding groups (groups involving more than one organisation). As a minimum a bidding group must include at least one Higher Education Institution (HEI) and at least one industry partner. Bids are welcome from groups involving multiple HEIs and/or industry partners.

**Q26: Can you clarify how many bids the IoC is looking to award? It feels like a big project for one year.**

A: All bids received will be considered on quality and guided by the objectives of the project and the fund and awarded accordingly. The IoC Industry Advisory Board has recommended that 2 or 3 larger bids are funded but may consider the possibility of awarding 2 or 3 smaller grants.

**Q27: How will you consider new partners/providers?**

A: We actively encourage bids involving new partners (i.e., partners not currently involved in the IoC). 50% of the fund will be awarded to groups that contain new partners. All new partners must still be part of a group containing at least one Higher Education Institution (HEI) and one industry partner.

**Q28: Is the IoC going to establish some facilitation to help?**

A: We will organise a networking session at the Manchester event (16th October) to support the development of bidding groups. Please email [cphc@bcs.uk](mailto:cphc@bcs.uk) if you would like to attend.

**Q29: Is there a list available of all current IoC partners (particularly industry partners) with named individuals? This would be helpful for new people getting involved and avoid duplication.**

A: GDPR prevents us from sharing individual contact details. However, we will publish a list of IoC partner organisations on the IoC website. We can share written interest to collaborate within the existing consortium. All questions and interest will be released publicly for transparency and to avoid favouritism. The Council for Professors and Heads of Computing Services have also agreed to facilitate communication with members via their website.

**Q30: How do people develop ideas that haven't already being considered by the IoC/form part of the existing work?**

A: Details of the work being undertaken by the current IoC consortium is available on the website.

**Q31: Are we inviting expressions of interest?**

A: No, we don't require expressions of interest.



**Q32: How many success criteria are you expecting a project to tick?**

A: At a minimum, each bidding group must meet at least one success criteria. Any bids meeting more than one will be reviewed favourably. It is likely that most bids will contribute to at least 2 or 3 success criteria.

**Q33: One year is a tight timeline to deliver disruptive technology, can you clarify what outcome is acceptable during the funding period?**

A: We recognise that the deadlines on this project are tight. We would note, however, that expenditure against grant funding can be proposed up to January 2020 with matched funding to be provided before the end of January 2021. This means that successful bidders will have two years to deliver successful outcomes as long as the second year of their projects are exclusively supported through matched funding.

**Q34: Is there a limit to how many bids an organisation can be in?**

A: No, we can accept multiple bids from a single organisation.

**Q35: Is it an English project or a UK project?**

A: English, due to the regulations governing the original IoC call and its Office for Students' funding stream. Separate funding arrangements apply to education in Wales and Scotland.

**Q36: Can organisations on the industry board be part of the bid?**

A: Yes, although they will need to declare their interest and wouldn't form part of the panel judging their own bid. Panel members who are part of a bid will be required to leave the room when their bid is being considered/evaluated.

**Q37: Is there a limitation on whether the fund can be spent at a student level? E.g., can the money be spent on individual students who are graduating at level 6?**

A: The IoC does not directly fund studentships.

**Q38: If the grant pays for the mechanism of an internship, would that be acceptable?**

A: Bidders would need to provide a business case, describing the way in which they will deliver such a mechanism. Bidders will also need to show how they would make such a mechanism sustainable beyond the current grant period. In principle, however, the setting up of a scheme that delivered future internships in an ongoing, sustainable, manner would be fundable.

**Q39: Can you advise on potential proposals?**

A: To ensure impartial assessment of bids we are not able to comment on individual bids before submission. We can answer general questions, such as the above, and, to ensure transparency, the question and answer will be added to these FAQs.

**Q40: Are teachers an acceptable audience for bid ideas?**

A: In principle, something aimed at teachers would be acceptable. Theme 5 already has a work stream on educating the educators. All proposals must meet levels 6 & 7.

**Q41. Should Full Economic Costings be used when preparing proposals?**

A: Yes, all bids should be submitted using full economic costings.



**Q42: Do you have a preference on whether the lead Higher Education Institution should be an existing member of the IoC or not?**

A: No. The IoC consortium is committed to expanding the number of partners in the consortium and individual bids can be led by either existing partners or new HEIs. Please note that the Office for Students has confirmed that the bid group must be led by an HEI.

**Q43: Can Higher Education Institutions support more than one bid?**

A: Yes. Higher Education Institutions can be involved in one or many bids.

**Q44: Can the proposals run past the end of the grant period, assuming all grant money is spent between January 2019 and January 2020?**

A: Yes. There will be no extensions to the deadline governing grant spending (Jan 2020) or the spending of match funding (Jan 2021) but long term sustainability is key. All bids should describe the ways in which their proposed activity will continue beyond the funding period.

**Q45: If you are looking for 2 or 3 larger bids and potentially a few smaller ones, is there a limit to the amount of funding we should ask for when submitting bids? E.g., two bids would receive over £1.1m each.**

A: Bidders are encouraged to submit bids on projects that they feel would be useful and deliver against the success criteria. You should explain the ways in which the grant funding sought through the bid would deliver your proposed activity. In judging the bids, the Industry Advisory Board will consider what you are trying to achieve first and cost second. If that means we end up with 2 or 3 bids that we'd like to award but together they exceed the fund available we will ask the groups submitting those bids to scale back activity to match the financial support that we are able to award.

**Q46: Can you be awarded a bid for less or more money than was initially proposed?**

A: Yes. As per Q45, if appropriate, the Board could propose a lower grant funding amount to one or more bidding groups.

**Q47: New curriculum development can be completed in the timescales of the funding, however, the results would not be demonstrable until after the life of the project. Is that acceptable?**

A: Any grant allocation must be spent by January 2020 but match funding can be spent until 31 January 2021. This gives a longer period in which to demonstrate results. You should provide milestones that give evidence of successful progress through 2019 and 2020. You should also describe important outcomes that will occur beyond that period e.g. improved employment rates that will occur as the result of courses that finish after the project period.

**Q48: Can all industry partners be SMEs?**

A: Yes.

**Q49: Is it acceptable for a private education provider to submit a bid as a lead partner?**

A: No. The OfS has confirmed that an HEI must lead the bid group so private education providers are encouraged to work with an HEI partner.