

# Skills & Opportunities Fund

Application Guidance  
2017

Help for what matters

 **Ulster Bank**

# General Hints

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- Complete the eligibility check as soon as you can. This not only saves time later but also ensures your intent to apply is logged by the system
- Access the application form early and upload your governing document, accounts and company logo as soon as you can. Document uploads are the most technical part of the application and so therefore the area that is most likely to cause a problem. You can upload your project budget once it is ready, prior to final submission of the application. We cannot accept applications submitted without all documentation
- The site saves your progress so feel free to dip in and out of your application but make sure that when you want to submit your application for the final time, you hit **submit** and not save
- If you are unsure of anything, contact the PNE Skills and Opportunities team before submitting. Once you have submitted your application it will either be marked as eligible or ineligible and that decision is final. We cannot go back and correct anything on your behalf.
- Remember, we have no prior knowledge of your activities or organisation. If you're unsure, contact a member of the team before submitting your application and we'll help you out
- Please be specific and explicit in your answers and ensure you give us all of the information we ask for. The more detailed your answers, the higher your score will be overall
- Please be warned that the closing deadline is strictly adhered to. Please refer to the [application page](#) for key dates. The application system automatically closes at the given deadline time and no further action or submissions will be possible. To protect the integrity of the application process, it is not possible for anyone, including staff, to make changes so to avoid disappointment make sure you submit your application as soon as you can!

## The Application Questions

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### 1. How much funding are you applying for?

This is where you enter the total amount of funding you are applying for and the amount requested from the bank must be clearly indicated within your project budget. The maximum amount you can apply for is £35,000. Please apply in Pounds Sterling and ensure the amount is less than 20% of your turnover. You will be required to enter the turnover shown in your most recent accounts and the system will calculate whether you are eligible to apply.

The maximum turnover for any organisation is £10million.

### 2. Please tell us about your organisation and its aims. (100 words)

Please explain what your organisation does, its purpose and aims, the services you deliver and who your beneficiaries are.

### 3. Explain clearly what you plan to do with the funding if successful. (300 words)

This is where you explain what you intend to do and with how many people. The most important single thing to include is the number of people who will benefit from the project, without a specific number we cannot accept your application.

In describing your project you must ensure that you make it clear how this project will help the beneficiaries e.g. will they receive training, achieve qualifications, improve their prospects of securing employment etc.

Remember to ensure your project meets the fund purpose and the key themes of Enterprise, and Financial Capability. It is vital you check [regional priorities](#) at the start of each round to ensure your project is relevant to your region.

You will be required to state the number of project beneficiaries and also enter details of your expected outputs in terms of number of businesses started\*, number of jobs created\*\*, number of qualifications achieved, number of people with increased enterprise skills and /or number of people with increased financial capability.

\*businesses started by beneficiaries

\*\*jobs created – from the new businesses started (including the business owner)

### 4. What difference will this funding make? (i.e. what will it enable you to do that you couldn't have done without the funding?) (100 words)

What specifically, does the funding allow you to do that you currently cannot? Is there any other added value your organisation can deliver through this project?

### 5. Please explain how the people this project will support are disadvantaged and tell us about the issues they face. (200 words)

We will only support projects that are delivered in or to a disadvantaged community. This could be a geographical area that faces a particular aspect of disadvantage or to a community of interest e.g. women, BAME, etc. You must explain how the people or the community are disadvantaged, what issues they face, how you know this and where you got your information from.

**6. What evidence do you have that what you are proposing is needed by the community? Please include details of any research you have carried out. (200 words)**

You need to be able to demonstrate that the project you are proposing is needed by the community. Using national information is useful but the more local the information that can be provided here the better.

Some questions to consider are: What is the situation in your area? How do you know? Who have you asked? Where have you got your information from? Do you keep records yourselves of particular kinds of requests that can be used to demonstrate need?

**7. Please tell us about your recent experience in delivering this activity to the target group, the results of your evaluation and any lessons learned (or if you haven't done this before, a similar activity). (200 words)**

What experience of delivering this type of activity do you have? Please give details of previous delivery, tell us about your achievements and your evaluation of this work and about any lessons learned. In this answer it is important we find out about changes you have made in response to these. If you have not delivered this activity to the target group previously what research have you carried out that suggests this approach might work? If your project is a pilot then what has inspired the pilot?

**8. Explain your project timeline. (200 words)**

For project timelines, the more detailed the better. We get lots of applications that provide high level time lines split up into vague project phases. We also get more detailed ones, providing specifics around project activities and events. It's the latter that score higher.

**9. Explain to us why your organisation is best placed to deliver this project (e.g track record, expertise, capacity etc). (100 words)**

For this question we are interested in your organisation's experience, both in this field and working with the target group. You must be able to demonstrate previous experience of providing similar activities and show that you have the necessary links to the target group to recruit the people you need to make the project a success. Do you have the staff in place to deliver the project, do they have the necessary expertise and skills? Organisations that are able to describe their previous impact will score highest here.

**10. Please tell us what the specific outcomes of your project will be and how you will monitor and measure its impact. (200 words)**

There are several important components to a good answer here. First you must state how you will monitor the expected outputs and outcomes (stated in Q3). A good answer will also explain how those outputs are recorded and how the outcomes are measured. An excellent application will include some provision for evaluation and impact assessment following the project. In answering this question you will explain how we will be able to externally verify your project outcomes. How will you report your successes to us? The aspect of sharing project lessons is often overlooked.

**11. How have you calculated your costs? (100 words)**

Explain how you have drafted your budget. Is it based on previous costs from a similar project? Have you based it on quotes from suppliers? If you have a high percentage (70%+) allocated for staff costs then you may want to provide assurances around the sustainability of the arrangement, its impact on your organisation and the project at the end of the funding. Applications that show sustainability will score higher.

**12. Please detail any in-kind or match funding included in this project. Please indicate whether the match funding is secured or when you expect it to be secured. (If using volunteers for project delivery, please indicate in-kind funding using an estimated daily rate for staff delivering activities). (200 words)**

This is where you list any providers of match funding. Tell us how much the match funding is, where it is coming from and whether this has been secured. If it is not secured yet, when will this happen? Applications are scored on levels of match funding. Additionally please detail where any in-kind funding is listed. Remember to use the correct daily rates and explain how this has been worked out. Has the in-kind funding been confirmed? Applications are scored on levels of in-kind funding.

**13. Will you be working in partnership with any other organisations to deliver your project? If so, please provide details of your partners and outline what they will bring to the project. You should include details of referral partners such as Jobcentre Plus, local college / school, or youth groups. (100 words)**

This is where you list any delivery partners and outline their involvement. We are keen to see applications with partnerships that add value to projects and provide a synthesis of complementary skill sets.

If you are unsure of anything please email our team at [sofapply@pne.org](mailto:sofapply@pne.org) or call the team on +44 191 438 7999. Phone lines are open 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday - Friday