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**Nottingham
City Council**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Nottingham
2025 - 2026 Open Call 1 (OC1)
Employment Support for Economically Inactive
Individuals**

Invitation to bid

December 2024

1. Introduction

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was introduced in 2022 as the successor programme to the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). It was originally funded until 31 March 2025. The current government has extended this for a further year to 31 March 2026. The original programme was funded directly to Local Authorities by the Government. In 2024 the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) was established covering Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The Government will issue 2025-26 UKSPF funds to EMCCA who will then allocate some of this funding to Local Authorities to allow them to continue to fund local provision.

Nottingham City Council set out their approach in an evidence led Investment Plan in 2022. This was approved by the Government. The plan for the programme for 2025-2026 will be to use the available funding to build upon on the successes and achievements to date, in advance of the Government's successor programme, anticipated to start in April 2026.

2. Background

The UKSPF was a central pillar of the previous UK Government's Economic Prosperity improvement agenda and provided £2.6 billion of funding from 2023 to 2025. It has improved pride in place and increased life chances across the UK through investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

The current government has decided to continue funding for UKSPF for a further year before it updates its support programmes from 2026 to 2029. Nationally, it is expected that there will be approximately 60% funding of the 2024-25 budget available in 2025-26.

The UKSPF supported the delivery of the previous Government's missions under three investment priorities: **Communities and Place; Supporting Local Business; and People and Skills.**

Government has published a refreshed prospectus for the UKSPF programme for the 2025-2026 year, which echoes much of the prospectus for the original programme. This [prospectus](#) and a related [Technical Note](#) can be found on the gov.uk website.

Nottingham City Council has taken a holistic approach to UKSPF, ensuring that planned investment is evidenced based and delivers on ambitions set out within our local strategic frameworks i.e. [the Strategic Council Plan](#) and [the Nottingham Economic Growth Plan](#) which include commitments to inclusion, carbon neutrality and being an internationally renowned city of culture, creativity and innovation.

Nottingham's Investment Plan focuses on narrowing regional inequalities across a broad range of indicators and critically, prioritises interventions that directly address those issues most impacting people, businesses, and communities. Therefore, our two key priority areas are:

1. Economy – Improving the economic prosperity of people and places by:
 - Addressing regional inequalities in employment, pay, skills, productivity and investment in R&D.
 - Creating a more sustainable and inclusive economy
2. Health & Wellbeing - Maximising opportunities to improve health outcomes (e.g. healthy life expectancy, anxiety, wellness) through:
 - The development of programmes that drive economic growth and prosperity, contributing towards increased life chances and improvements in healthy living.

This translates into the following funding priorities under UKSPF for 2025-26:

	UKSPF Investment Priorities	Nottingham UKSPF Funding Priorities
1.	Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals	Community Development
2.	Supporting Business Growth Supporting the Social Economy Supporting Business Start-Ups	Supporting Local Businesses

The themes of inclusion, productivity and carbon neutrality are interwoven throughout each Nottingham priority.

Open Call	Min grant for 2025-26	Max grant for 2025-26
OC1 - Employment support for economically inactive individuals* (particularly Nottingham City Council's priority groups)**	£75,000 revenue, £0 capital	£175,000 revenue £75,000 capital
OC2 - Supporting Local Businesses		
Lot 1: Supporting Business Growth	£75,000 revenue	£125,000 revenue
Lot 2: Supporting the Social Economy	£75,000 revenue	£100,000 revenue
Lot 3: Supporting Business Start-Ups / Entrepreneurs	£75,000 revenue	£125,000 revenue

*For UKSPF project purposes - Economically inactive individuals are those not in work and not actively seeking work (unlike unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work). Not all economically inactive individuals claim benefits. For those that do, this would include those claiming either "legacy" benefits or those within specific conditionality regimes in Universal Credit (UC). The former includes Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS). The latter includes claimants within the Preparation Requirement or Work Focused Interview Requirement conditionality regimes (or equivalent for all the above).

** Nottingham City Council's priority groups include:

- Female residents
- BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) communities
- Young adults (18-24 years old)
- Individuals aged 50 and over
- People with a health condition that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' impact on their ability to perform normal daily activities
 - 'Substantial' refers to effects that are more than minor or trivial, such as taking significantly longer than usual to complete daily tasks (e.g., getting dressed).
 - 'Long-term' refers to conditions lasting 12 months or more, such as a breathing condition that results from a lung infection.
- LGBTQIA+ community

The Government will allocate the 2025-26 UKSPF funding for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to EMCCA rather to the City and District councils as was the case with the 2022-2025 programme.

EMCCA proposes to allocate a portion of these funds to regional-level activities, while the remaining funds will be allocated to local authorities to support local projects and activities.

To avoid duplication, confirmation of activities funded at the regional level by EMCCA may influence the grants Nottingham City Council awards for local initiatives.

Applicants should note that no grants will be awarded through this Open Call process until Nottingham City Council's UKSPF allocation has been formally confirmed.

3. Grant Awards

The funding available for grants awarded through this Open Call will be from the **Employment support for economically inactive individuals** intervention in the People & Skills strand of Nottingham City Council's 2025-26 UKSPF allocation

Please note as this Open Call has been published in advance of the formal confirmation of EMCCA's plans for its UKSPF programme and the amount of UKSPF People & Skills funding that Nottingham City Council will be allocated:

- The funding available to an individual organisation is specified as both a minimum and a maximum grant amount.
- the number of grants issued through this Open Call will be dependent on the total available in the People and Skills budget
- in the event of Nottingham City Council not receiving sufficient funding, no grants will be awarded
- applicants should outline their projects, including the expected outputs and outcomes, for the period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. Should additional funding become available to extend this provision beyond the specified dates, Nottingham City Council reserves the right to offer further grant funding to successful applicants to support the continuation of their projects.

4. Aims of UKSPF Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals

Within this Open Call, we encourage applications from organisations, groups and bodies whose activities support the development of Nottingham communities and the people who live within them.

With the key metric of Improving Pride in Place by 2030, we would like to see applications that include:

- Offering engagement of Economically Inactive residents to support local regeneration and economic progression.
- Strengthening the social fabric of Nottingham.
- Promoting social inclusion.
- Reducing social deprivation, reducing the cost of living and encouraging social mobility
- Developing community and neighbourhood infrastructure.
- Delivering life, vocational, financial and personal development skills.
- Contributing to Nottingham becoming a carbon neutral city by 2028.

We aim to use UKSPF funding to lead to tangible improvements to our local communities where people live, study and work, so that Nottingham citizens feel more proud, more connected and more invested in and towards our historic city.

Local Priorities for Grants for Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals

Nottingham is a vibrant, dynamic and ethnically diverse city, with strong foundations built around community and creative spirit, but, as within most UK cities, we have pockets of long-standing inequalities in income, health and social mobility, with the worst impacts felt by our most deprived citizens.

Nottingham’s renewed [Strategic Council Plan](#) sets our vision and aspirations for the city, whilst keeping citizens at the heart of everything we do. Committed and routed in our values of equality, fairness and inclusivity, we see the UKSPF Grants for Employment Support for Economically Inactive individuals as an integral component in supporting the aspirations as set out in the Plan. We encourage and welcome applications that strive to address Nottingham’s inequalities and support the development of Nottingham as a place for people to live and thrive. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Young people not in education, employment or training.
- People struggling with long term health issues.
- Improvement in healthy life expectancy.
- People under-represented in the workplace.
- People affected by financial insecurities.
- Older citizens.
- Diverting young people away from knife crime and violence.
- Economically Inactive people who are socially excluded
- People suffering with financial insecurities.
- Improving citizens’ contribution to carbon neutrality.

Within the context of the UKSPF’s objectives, we intend to commission flexibly, securing value for money across a range of activities that represent the right solutions to support economically inactive residents’ progression towards employment.

5. UKSPF Outputs and Outcomes

The outputs and outcomes associated with the 2025-26 UKSPF interventions are detailed below. In the Indicative Deliverables document (found [here](#)) the definition of the outputs and outcomes can be found.

Table 2a: Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs

Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services
Number of economically inactive people supported to engage with the benefits system
Number of socially excluded people accessing support
Number of people supported to access basic skills courses
Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment
Number of people supported to engage in job-searching
Number of people receiving support to gain employment

Number of people receiving support to sustain employment
Number of effective engagements between keyworkers and additional services

Outcomes

Number of economically inactive individuals engaging with benefits system following support
Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support
Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF
Number of people in supported employment
Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services
Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services
Number of people engaged in job-searching following support
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support
Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months
Number of people with basic skills following support

Nottingham City Council aims to award grants through this Open Call to support projects that specifically help economically inactive individuals move into employment. The Council identifies the following steps as key to achieving this goal for the majority of individuals in this cohort: engaging with the benefits system, acquiring basic skills, participating in job-search activities, and receiving support to secure employment.

At the same time, applicants are encouraged to develop comprehensive projects that address a broad range of the outputs and outcomes listed in the tables above, to meet the diverse needs of the cohort you intend to engage.

6. What costs can be attributed to the grant?

Revenue funds can be used to contribute to the costs of ongoing operational expenses required in the running of the project, including:

- Staff salary costs (including Employer NI and Pension contributions).
- Overheads related to employing staff involved in delivering activities funded through the grant.
- Cost of business travel.
- Marketing and publicity costs
- Participant costs / hardship support.
- Small items of equipment (less than £5,000).

Capital funds can be used to acquire, build or upgrade physical assets, including:

- Building and construction costs.
- Professional fees associated with building and construction.
- Any large value item of equipment required to deliver activities funded through the grant.

7. Timescale and process

Nottingham City Council will run an open call for the 2025-2026 UKSPF programme.

- Technical Workshop – Thursday 19th December 2024

- Open Call documents published on [Nottingham City Council UKSPF webpage](#) – Friday 3rd January 2025
- Deadline for submission of Open Call applications – 23:59 on Sunday 2nd February 2025
- Grant Agreements issued to successful applicants by 28th February 2025

The anticipated timescales given above may be subject to change depending on:

- when the Nottingham City Council 2025-26 UKSPF funding allocation is confirmed by EMCCA
- the number of applications received
- the outputs and outcomes included in the 2025-26 programme (and their definitions)

8. How will applications be assessed?

Nottingham City Council will assess all grant applications submitted before the deadline of **23:59 on Sunday 2nd February 2025**.

Assessment will involve four stages; Gateway, Scoring, Moderation and Further Moderation (if required), including sign off of shortlisted applications. Questions that are to be scored have been weighted.

Further information regarding the assessment criteria can be found in Appendix A: UKSPF Nottingham Assessment Criteria.

Following assessment, Nottingham City Council will inform all applicants of their outcome.

Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with Nottingham City Council. A template grant agreement will be provided for reference as part of the bid documentation.

9. How to apply

To apply for grant funding, applicants must complete and submit the following documents to Nottingham City Council using this email address: UKSPF@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

- UKSPF Nottingham - OC1 – **Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals** Grant Application Form
- UKSPF Nottingham - OC1 – Appendix B – **Employment Support for Economically Inactive Individuals** – Budget & Performance Profile
- Evidence of Economic and Financial Standing (1.1 of the application form)

Applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted.

Complete applications must be submitted by: **23:59 on Sunday 2nd February 2025**.

10. Further information

For any technical queries please email: UKSPF@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

APPENDIX A: UKSPF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Stage 1. GATEWAY CRITERIA

Criteria	Pass	Fail	Partial
Criteria 1: Application signed, fully completed and returned on time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	-
Criteria 2: Economic and Financial Standing*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criteria 3: Economic and Financial Risk*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criteria 4: Financial clawback in past 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criteria 5: Policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criteria 6: Liability Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**These will also be assessed via due diligence checks on Equifax and Spotlight.*

Applications that fail any criterion cannot progress to Stage 2. Scoring.

For the questions which have been assessed as partial, progress to Stage 2. Scoring will be allowed with justification from the Assessor.

STAGE 2. SCORING

SCORING FOR QUESTIONS IN THE APPLICATION FORM (word document)

The maximum score for each question in the application form is 5, based on the scoring framework below, but some are weighted through the multiplication of the assigned score. For example, a score of 5 weighted by a factor of 4 will equal a total score of 20. The maximum score and multiplication weightings are shown on the application form in the dark grey box to the right of each question.

Score	Assessment	Description
0	Unacceptable	Response to the question is unacceptable or no response received. Does not give the Fund confidence in the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project.
1	Poor/Weak Response	Inadequate detail provided or some of the answer not directly relevant to the question. Is supported by none or a weak standard of evidence in several areas giving rise to concern about the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project.
2	Below Expectations	Limited information provided, and/or a response that is inadequate or only partially addresses the question giving rise to concern about the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project.
3	Satisfactory Response	Acceptable response in terms of the level of detail, accuracy and relevance. Is supported by a satisfactory standard of evidence in most areas but a few areas lacking detail/evidence giving rise to some concerns about the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project.
4	Good Response	Comprehensive response in terms of detail and relevance to the question and supported by good standard of evidence. Gives the Fund confidence in the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project. Meets the Fund's requirements.
5	Very Good Response	As Good, but to a better degree in terms of precision and relevance. Is comprehensive and supported by a high standard of evidence. Gives the Fund a high level of confidence in the ability of the bidder to deliver the proposed project. May exceed the Fund's requirements in some respects, for example, added value such as integration/synergy with other projects.

The weighted score for the application form will be out of 115

Scoring for Appendix B of the application (the excel document)

The financial details in Appendix B will be used to evaluate the value for money of the proposed project.

The number of economically inactive individuals engaged, along with the number achieving each output and outcome, will be used to assess the project's impact and effectiveness.

Higher scores will be awarded to projects that:

- Offer a comprehensive range of support
- Focus on key steps for facilitating the move into employment
- Demonstrate that the support provided will lead to individuals achieving programme outcomes

Weightings will be applied to certain criteria to reflect their relative importance in the proposal.

To prevent all applicants from submitting figures that would guarantee maximum scores in the appendix, the scoring framework and weightings will not be made available prior to the Open Call deadline

The weighted score for Appendix B of the application will be out of 82

The Total Score for the Application will be the combined score for Part 2 and Appendix B

STAGE 3. MODERATION

Grants will be awarded to the applicants with the highest score. The number of successful organisations will be dependent on the availability of funds.

Where applications tie on scores, further moderation criteria will be applied as detailed in Stage 4, or applicants may be invited to discuss/negotiate their total project values.

In selecting projects, caps will be applied in line with the maximum total funding available. This may result in applicants being invited to discuss/negotiate their total project values or the proportions of revenue and capital funding.

STAGE 4. FURTHER MODERATION (IF REQUIRED) AND SIGN OFF OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Based on the degree of moderation required to end up with a range of Grants which doesn't exceed the maximum funding available in each Investment Priority, Nottingham City Council, at its discretion, will agree an additional ranking or scoring framework (e.g. impact on local communities into consideration).

NOTIFICATION OF INVITATION TO BID OUTCOME

Once the outcome of the assessment process has been notified to all applicants, organisations can request feedback on their applications and scoring.