

Workforce Development Fund 2023 – 24



Partnership requirements

Last updated March 2023

These requirements set out criteria that Skills for Care expects grant holders and their respective partnerships to exercise when disbursing the Workforce Development Fund (WDF). Complying with these requirements is a condition of the grant funding.

Requirement 1: Partnership planning and grant management

Planning is required ahead of submitting the funding application and should consider any priorities the fund seeks to support. Funding requirements should be informed by a learning needs analysis or similar method of workforce planning. The grant holder should work with all members to understand their learning and development, and therefore funding requirements for the coming financial year. Plans to expand the membership and the number of claiming members within the partnership should also be considered, and evidence-based estimates of funds required for new members should be made and included in the funding application. Information provided by members at this stage will be critical to completing a realistic and deliverable bid, in line with advertised grant milestones which need to be met by successful applicants throughout the contractual period. Effective grant management will be required by all grant holders.

Requirement 2: Membership

Membership of a WDF partnership must be open to, and you must actively try to recruit, new members within the adult social care sector. Partnerships should take an inclusive approach to membership; however, it is acceptable for grant holders to set entry criteria if they are clear, transparent and fair.

Partnerships cannot charge members a joining or membership fee where their only purpose is to disburse the WDF or where an employer only wishes to access the funding and does not want to access any wider services the partnership may offer. If partnerships offer additional services to their partners and members, appropriate fees can be charged for those services only. (See also requirement 3 below.) Where members join partnerships to access any wider services on offer and pay a membership fee, it is not acceptable to prioritise their access to the WDF.

All employers must have equal access to the WDF.

A grant holder has not fully allocated their grant award until they have drawn down all funds within it from Skills for Care. Grant holders cannot refuse new or existing members access to the WDF while they have unclaimed funds available. It is not acceptable to hold funding allocations for some members and restrict access to the fund to others. If you cannot meet an employer's funding requirements, you must be upfront about this so they have the opportunity to join an alternative partnership.

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It may be necessary for partnerships to operate caps on the amount of funding that can be claimed by any employer to maximise the number of employers accessing the WDF as this funding is a resource to support the adult social care sector.

Grant holders must strive to attract new, and retain existing, members through the year, supporting them to gain access to this funding and striving to disburse the funds as broadly as possible throughout the sector. It is expected that partnerships will increase their membership during the period of agreement to increase engagement and access to the WDF and to maximise the number of their members who claim. Grant holders will be required to work with Skills for Care to ensure their membership is representative of the employer market in the geographical area or grouping.

Requirement 3: Administration and associated charges

WDF partnerships cannot levy any charges to their members for administering the disbursement of the fund. Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with Skills for Care to disburse the WDF and funding to support this role will be claimed directly from Skills for Care. On receipt of funds the advertised funding value available through the WDF must be paid in full directly to members.

Partnerships may levy charges for other services as described in requirement 2 above, provided all charges are transparent and information about them is made freely available to members and other stakeholders, including Skills for Care, at the point of tendering and before grant negotiations are completed.

No partnership may levy hidden charges.

Requirement 4: Governance, probity and transparency

Grant holders should conduct the affairs of their organisation or association in a manner consistent with good business practice, and with the generally accepted standards of probity and good governance.

In particular, they should ensure that potential or actual conflicts of interest on the part of partnership board members or officers (or any other individuals within the partnership who have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the partnership, or who have any authority or influence over the disbursement of funds) are clearly and transparently expressed.

Any board member or officer (or any other individual within the partnership who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the partnership, or who has any authority or influence over the disbursement of funds) must declare any relevant interests and may not influence the placing of contracts or the disbursement of funds to any organisation in

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which they have an interest of any kind.

WDF partnerships must ensure that adequate processes exist to identify and manage any conflicts of interests between the interests and activities of any board member or officer (or any other individual within the partnership who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the partnership, or who has any authority or influence over the disbursement of funds) and the interests that individual may have in the activities of any other organisations.

Requirement 5: Member responsiveness and orientation

The purpose of the WDF partnerships is to disburse funds and serve the needs of their respective members. Partnerships must ensure they discharge this responsibility fairly, equitably and without fear or favour.

Partnerships should actively seek to identify, and regularly review, the needs of their members, and actively seek to address those needs and requirements within reasonable constraints of cost and other available resources.

The grant holder will be the first point of contact for prospective and partnership member enquiries in relation to the fund. They will provide information, advice and guidance in relation to any aspect of the WDF, which includes compliance with all eligibility criteria, meeting the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set requirements, and submission of claims and evidence. Regular contact and clear communication with members is essential to manage member's expectations and effectively disburse the fund.

In addition, grant holders should provide information on all other elements of Skills for Care products and services and should provide impartial advice on selecting and commissioning learning and development. Grant holders who have a training arm to their business cannot make it a requirement for employers who are accessing their learning provision to join their WDF partnership or for members of their WDF partnership to use their learning provision. This represents a conflict of interests and is expressly forbidden.

Requirement 6: Efficiency and effectiveness

WDF partnerships should seek to undertake their activities as efficiently and effectively as possible. They should continuously seek to find new and improved ways of working, in order to provide the best possible service to their members at the lowest possible cost whilst meeting contractual requirements.

Partnerships should have an inherent drive to share innovation and good practice with

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Skills for Care and other partnerships where applicable.

Requirement 7: Economies of scale

Wherever possible, WDF partnerships should seek to work with other stakeholders to maximise economies of scale, for example, by sharing resources, costs or services to maximise efficiency in disbursing funds (as long as this does not conflict with contractual requirements or with any of the requirements within this document). Partnerships are actively encouraged to undertake a commissioning role and act as brokers to source learning and promote best value and quality outcomes for their members, whilst employer choice must be retained in relation to selecting the learning providers used.

Requirement 8: Promotion and networking

Grant holders should make an active effort to share information and good practice with their members and Skills for Care. It is expected that grant holders will participate in Skills for Care events and initiatives and encourage participation by their partnership members. It is also expected that grant holders should encourage their members to network with and learn from one another.

Grant holders are also required to widely promote the WDF through their networks and localities in a bid to extend their reach and enable as many adult social care employers as possible to benefit from the funding. Information presented on websites is expected to be easily accessible, current, clear and comprehensive. Skills for Care may identify priority groups to whom the funding must be promoted during the period of agreement, such as micro and small providers, Registered Managers and Service Managers. Where alternative disbursement approaches are introduced in support of funding priorities, partnerships are expected to participate in support of the approaches.

Grant holders are required to make all employers who receive the WDF aware that the funding is provided by Skills for Care by including a statement in all communications and using the 'funded by Skills for Care' logo where appropriate.

Good working relationships with learning providers are recommended to support effective disbursement of the fund, although communication has to be between the grant holder and the member, not via a third party.

Requirement 9: Relationship with Skills for Care

All grant holders will be expected to communicate effectively with Skills for Care in relation to their grant delivery and to work in partnership with us. This includes providing constructive feedback, raising issues with us before any others and working with us to

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identify solutions where relevant. Where held, grant holders will be expected to actively participate in grant holder meetings or teleconferences hosted by Skills for Care and to provide feedback as to how they have disbursed the funding along with any wider intelligence which could impact funding disbursement. Where meetings or events are held with partnership members, Skills for Care must be invited to participate to ensure that your members are fully aware of our projects, products and initiatives which may be of benefit to them. The relevant Skills for Care officer must be invited at the same time as your members to allow appropriate diary scheduling

It is central to the role of being a grant holder to promote the work of Skills for Care, and Skills for Care's role in disbursing the WDF must be communicated to members. As set out in requirement 8, the 'funded by Skills for Care' logo should be used on all partnership literature and website information relating to disbursement of the WDF.

Grant holders are expected to be champions for all of Skills for Care's activity and to work effectively with us.

Where a grant holder expands support to a wider area, it will be their responsibility to ensure that they are adequately resourced to operate effectively, liaise, communicate and network with employers across their chosen partnership area and not the responsibility of 'others' such as Skills for Care Officers.

Where the grant holder is holding meetings or events with their partnership members and is working across a wider geographical area, or across several local areas, the grant holder must make their network meetings or events open invitation to all of their current partnership members.