



Skills Fund

Supporting skills, talent and workforce capability
across Green Energy and Digital Technology.

OPEN CALL

Round 1 Key Dates

Expression of Interest: 18 September 2026

Full Application: 30 October 2026

NES

North East Scotland
Investment Zone



nesinvestmentzone.co.uk



What types of skills activity will be prioritised

Funding will support defined, time-bound projects aligned to the Investment Zone skills priorities. All projects must demonstrate alignment with Green Energy or Digital Technology as an initial gateway requirement.

Green Energy / Energy Transition

Reskilling and specialist capability for emerging green economy opportunities.

Digital Technology

Addressing technology skills shortages and digital talent vacancies.

STEM & talent pipeline

Increasing STEM education volumes and associated career pathways.

Employer-led skills

Activities responding to direct employer demand and identified skills gaps.

Entrepreneurial activity

Enabling entrepreneurs to progress with business development plans.

Projects must be evidence-based, additional and measurable.

What makes a strong Skills Fund project?

Before applying, check that the proposal is additional, skills-focused, evidence-led, deliverable and measurable.



Additional

Funding enables activity that would not otherwise happen, or allows it to happen sooner or at greater scale.



Skills-focused

The main purpose is skills, workforce capability or talent pipelines linked to priority sectors.



Evidence-led

The proposal responds to an identified skills challenge, employer demand or workforce need.



Deliverable

Costs, governance and delivery capacity are realistic and proportionate.



Measurable

Outputs and outcomes can be monitored and evidenced.



COLLABORATION CAN STRENGTHEN APPLICATIONS

Strong projects often bring together employers, training providers, educational institutions, community organisations and delivery partners to address shared skills challenges, maximise impact and avoid duplication.



Less likely to be supported

- Duplicates existing provision without clear justification
- Has no clear link to Green Energy or Digital Technology skills
- Cannot evidence need, demand or measurable outcomes

ADDITIONALITY TEST

Medium and large projects must demonstrate how they align with or are sufficiently different from provision funded through the main NESIZ programme. Contact the team for information on existing interventions and lead contacts.

Projects must also meet the applicant, location, activity and revenue-cost eligibility requirements set out in this guidance.

Eligible applicants and eligible area

Applicants must be UK-based and have a delivery footprint in Aberdeen and/or Aberdeenshire.

Eligible applicants include

- Educational institutions
- Community and not-for-profit groups
- Charities, CICs and social enterprises
- Co-operatives, trusts and trust ports
- SMEs, large enterprises and sole traders
- Public sector organisations

Where can your project take place?

To be eligible for the North East Scotland Investment Zone Skills Fund, your project must be delivered within **Aberdeen City** or **Aberdeenshire**.

Key

-  **Aberdeen City**
The Aberdeen City Council boundary
-  **Aberdeenshire**
The Aberdeenshire Council boundary



Eligibility reminder: Projects must be delivered within Aberdeen City or Aberdeenshire to be eligible for funding.



Key requirements all applicants must meet

Projects must comply with relevant legal and statutory requirements and provide evidence where requested.



Legal compliance

Employment legislation, National Living Wage, required licences and statutory obligations.



Tax & financial

Tax obligations, transparent project costs and appropriate financial records.



Subsidy control

Information needed to assess and evidence compliance with subsidy control legislation.



Fair Work & Net Zero

Fair Work First commitments and alignment with Net Zero principles.



Best Value

Quotes, procurement or tender evidence in line with published requirements.

Be ready to provide evidence at application stage and throughout project delivery.

What can be funded

The fund is for revenue activity that delivers eligible skills outputs and outcomes.

Removing barriers to participation

Eligible where directly linked to the funded skills activity.



Travel & transport

Access to training, placements or facilities



Childcare & caring support

Support needed to enable attendance



Accessible & flexible delivery

Practical adjustments that remove barriers

Eligible activities may include

- Delivering new skills and training provision
- Supporting employers to address skills gaps
- Creating higher-skilled and higher-value jobs
- Enabling entrepreneurs to progress business development plans

REVENUE FUNDING ONLY

Costs must be clearly linked to the activity, outputs and delivery plan.

ELIGIBILITY TEST

The cost must address a clearly evidenced barrier, be directly linked to eligible Skills Fund activity, and be explained and costed in the application.
General welfare support or costs unrelated to participation in the funded skills activity will not be eligible.

What every applicant must be able to evidence

Applicants should be ready to demonstrate compliance at application stage and throughout delivery.

Applicant responsibility

Projects must fully comply with legal and statutory obligations, programme conditions and any grant agreement requirements. Evidence may be requested before award and during monitoring.

1	Legal and employment	National Living Wage, employment legislation including IR35 where applicable, and required licences.
2	Financial and tax	Tax obligations, transparent cost breakdowns and evidence that costs are eligible revenue expenditure.
3	Subsidy control	Information required to assess and evidence compliance with subsidy control legislation.
4	Fair Work and Net Zero	Evidence of Fair Work First commitments and alignment with Net Zero principles.
5	Best Value	Quotes, procurement or tender evidence in line with published thresholds and Council requirements.



Revenue funding and cost breakdown

Project costs may only be revenue and must be clearly broken down in the grant application.

Revenue costs only

Typical Examples of Revenue Expenditure

- Staff salaries and associated employment costs.
- Training delivery costs.
- Course development and curriculum design.
- Professional fees and consultancy services.
- Venue hire.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Travel and subsistence.
- Consumables and materials used during delivery.
- Software subscriptions and licence fees.
- General project management and administration costs.

Cost schedule expectations

- Provide a breakdown of planned project costs
- Use a separate line for each planned purchase, contract or staff member
- Keep costs intended to form one contract as a single line
- Show enough detail to support eligibility and value-for-money checks

Revenue expenditure relates to the day-to-day costs of delivering a project or service.



Procurement, quotes and tender requirements

Public funding must be spent transparently, with evidence that project costs represent value for money.



UP TO £10,000

excluding VAT

1 written quote

Provide one written quote for the proposed purchase or service.



£10,000.01–£49,999.99

excluding VAT

Minimum 4 quotations

Provide four comparable quotations unless an exemption is agreed by the Council.



£50,000+

excluding VAT

Formal tender process

Undertake a formal tender unless an exemption is agreed by the Council.

Use the same specification for all quotes. Grant support will normally be limited to the lowest comparable quote.

What makes a quote acceptable

This slide keeps the public presentation concise while pointing applicants to detailed evidence requirements.

Quotes must

- Be in writing, for example letter, email or website screenshot
- Come from suppliers independent from the grant applicant
- Come from suppliers independent from other quote providers
- Be based on the same or equivalent specification

How quotes will be assessed

Specifications should meet the requirements of the project. When comparable quotes are provided, only price should be considered when comparing quotes.

Detailed procurement guidance should sit online and be linked from the application page.

A proportionate application route

The application process is designed to reflect the scale and complexity of the project.

Pilot projects

Up to £24,999

Simple application
Max 4 projects per round

Test, learn and refine.

Medium projects

Up to £249,999

Advanced application form

Scale, develop and deliver.

Large / strategic projects

£250,000 – £750,000

Full Business Case
Max £1m allocated per round

Transform, sustain and grow.

Round 1 closes October 2026 for projects from Jan 27 to June 29
Round 2 closes April 2029 for projects from Aug 29 to June 32
Round 3 closes April 2032 for projects from Aug 32 to Mar 35

What projects will be asked to measure

Applicants should select relevant outputs and provide realistic, evidenced targets.

People

- Learners engaged or supported
- Learners completing training
- Qualifications / certifications / accreditations achieved
- Individuals upskilled or reskilled into priority sectors
- Participants progressing into employment, further education, apprenticeships or priority sector opportunities

Skills provision

- New courses, modules or training programmes developed
- Existing courses enhanced or updated
- Training places created or funded
- Employer-led workshops, bootcamps or skills events delivered

Employers and businesses

- Employers engaged
- Businesses supported
- Employers participating in design, delivery or placements
- Work placements, internships or work-based learning opportunities created

Partnerships and ecosystem

- Delivery partners engaged
- Schools, colleges, universities or training providers engaged
- Employer-education partnership activities delivered



How applications will be assessed

Eligible applications will be scored against a consistent framework.

20%

Strategic Fit

Alignment with programme priorities and regional objectives.

20%

Need & Demand

Evidence that the project addresses unmet need or demand.

20%

Value for Money

Efficient use of funding and delivery of programme outcomes.

10%

Cross-Cutting Themes

Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty, sustainability and related themes.

10%

Legacy & Sustainability

Lasting benefit beyond the grant period.

20%

Capacity to Deliver

Financial and delivery capacity to complete the project.

Meeting eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding; applications will be assessed competitively.

What applicants should prepare

Strong applications will provide clear evidence, realistic targets and deliverable costs.

Clear project proposal

Who will deliver the project, who will benefit, what activity will be delivered and why the project is needed.

Financial package

Costs, grant request, match funding evidence where applicable and cashflow information.

Delivery plan

Milestones, risks, capacity to deliver, permissions and project management arrangements.

Evidence of need

Market evidence, employer demand, letters of support, strategies, research or survey findings.

Governance documents

Legal status, accounts, bank statements, policies, insurance and required organisational documents.

Outputs and monitoring

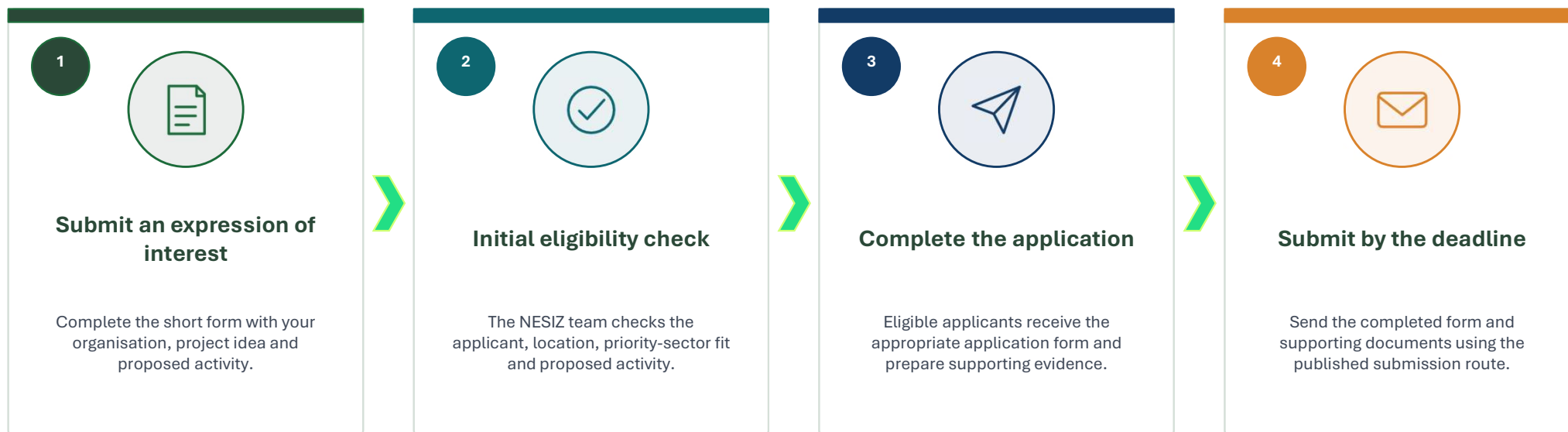
Relevant output targets and arrangements to evidence and report progress.





Expression of interest and application process

Start with a short expression of interest so the NESIZ team can complete an initial eligibility check before a full application is prepared.

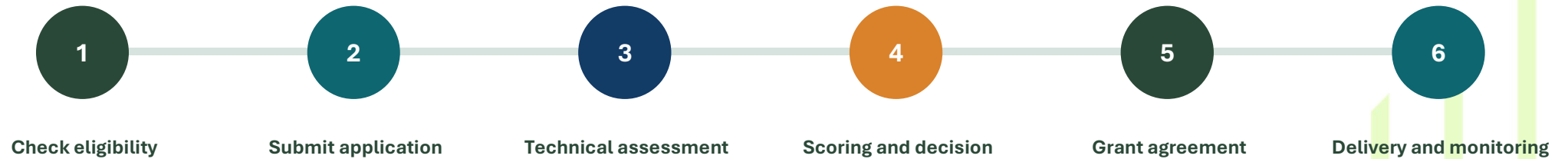


START HERE

Questions or submissions: nesiz@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

From application to delivery

The process is designed to be transparent, proportionate and evidence-led.



Applicants should build in enough time for evidence gathering, technical checks and grant agreement processes.



READY TO APPLY?

North East Scotland Skills Fund Application Guidance

Projects should support Green Energy and Digital Technology skills, demonstrate additionality, respond to employer demand and deliver measurable outputs.

Key next steps

- Review the prospectus and guidance pack
- Check eligibility and funding route
- Prepare evidence and output targets
- Submit by the published deadline

Round 1 EOI by 18th September 2026 and full application 30th October 2026 | Round 2 closes April 2029 | Round 3 closes April 2032

Email: nesiz@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

