



DATE:	26/01/24
SUBJECT:	Award of Round One UK Shared Prosperity People and Skills Funding - Steadfast Training Ltd - Connect2Grow (C2G)
PURPOSE:	To detail the decision to award UK Shared Prosperity Funding and Rural Prosperity Funding to Steadfast Training Ltd, in line with commitments made through South Hollands District Council's submitted Investment Plan for UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding.
KEY DECISION:	Yes
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Nick Worth (Leader of South Holland District Council)
REPORT OF:	Matthew Hogan -Assistant Director - Strategic Growth and Development
REPORT AUTHOR:	Lorna Hine – Project Officer – UK Shared Prosperity/Rural Prosperity Programme Saul Farrell – Senior Programme Manager - UK Shared Prosperity/Rural Prosperity Programme
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All
EXEMPT REPORT?	No

SUMMARY

This paper details the delegated decision taken to award funds of £140,569 to Steadfast Training Ltd- Conect2Grow under both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund Programmes. This award is to provide an integrated skills and employment service to residents across South Holland, targeted at supporting economically inactive and/or unemployed residents. The 13-week Programme will include intensive support focussed on individual barriers to skills training and support. The service will identify local job vacancies and match participants' skills with relevant job opportunities. All training provided will improve job seekers' skills and meet the needs of local employers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To award funds of £140,569 to Steadfast Training Ltd under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund Programmes.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Considerations and conclusions for this investment are made within the text of this report, including the options appraisal below.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Option 1 - Proceed as per the recommendation of this Report.

Under this option, a grant of funding to Steadfast Training Ltd will be made. This will support the realisation of the benefits as set out within the report below and allow the council to effectively allocate a substantial proportion of its available Prosperity People and Skills Funding on an impactful, targeted local project.

Option 2 – Do nothing.

Under this option, the recommendations are not taken forward and grants are not made available, the benefits of local skills provision will not be realised. Consequently, the benefits set out within the report will not be obtained. This also increases the risk of not distributing adequate UKSPF funding to strong projects that meet our commitments to central government and consequently, the risk of a return of funding to government.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Launching at the end of January 2023, South Holland District Council has been awarded a significant allocation of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding (£2.69m, less administration). This allocation was based on an Investment Plan which was submitted in the preceding year to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which was itself based on an extensive consultation with local communities and elected Members.
- 1.2 In line with our approved Investment Plan and DLUHC guidance, funding has been split equally across three themes:
 - Communities and Place – Supporting pride in place, improving residents’ experiences of their communities.
 - Supporting Local Businesses – Supporting local businesses to grow and local productivity, supporting employment growth.

- People & Skills – Reducing economic activity, supporting employment growth, and improving the skills of adult learners (to be principally delivered in Financial Year 2023-4).

1.3 Rural Prosperity Funding (RPF) has been allocated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This funding focusses on supporting rural businesses and communities, who have been historically underrepresented in the allocation of regeneration funding across the United Kingdom. This fund is entirely capital. As there is no allowance for administration within RPF, the two Programmes are administered concurrently by the same Programme Team across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

1.4 The expectation, legally embodied within our contract (Memorandum of Understanding) for funding from DEFRA and DLUHC, is that investments made by Local Authorities directly address the contracted outcomes within the agreed Investment Plan. They must also generate additionality – new activity in the local area rather than the replication of pre-existing service provision. They also stipulate that all projects commissioned must be delivered by the end of March 2025.

1.5 The allocation of funding of both UKSPF and RPF received for South Holland District Council, less administration (currently at 7.1%, which is within DLUHC guidelines for administration), is as follows:

Category	Capital	Revenue
Communities and Place	£531,765	£802,659
Supporting Local Business	£531,765	£802,659
People & Skills	£54,003	£486,025

1.6. Since the launch of the Prospectus, the Council has recruited a Programme Team (March 2023), held Assessment Panels, and conducted two rounds of Theme and locality-based Partnership Groups (with the relevant Groups for this project taking place in June 2023). The membership of these groups involves subject-matter experts and community representatives respectively, drawn from organisations and communities in the district. This has resulted in a recommendation to fund Steadfast Training Ltd to a value of £140,569.

2. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

2.1. A key priority, expressed both by elected Members and by communities upon extensive consultation, is ensuring that UKSPF/RPF funding supports communities that have been historically under-represented in the provision of public investment. Investment in local skills provision has been highlighted as a particular priority within this.

2.2. Steadfast Training Ltd have submitted a detailed Expression of Interest and Full Application to invest in an integrated skills and employment service to residents across South Holland. The project aims to help individuals with health-related or other barriers to access skills training and employment. The 13-week programme consists of a 1-2-1 In-Depth Assessment (IDA) followed by personalised health and

wellbeing-focused coaching and mentoring delivered by a Personal Advisor or a Community Connector. The service will identify local job vacancies and match participants' skills with relevant job opportunities, culminating in a guaranteed job interview with a named local employer. All training provided will improve job seekers' skills and meet the needs of local employers.

2.3. The project will be directly delivered by Steadfast Training with the support of a delivery partner, Tonic Health. Steadfast Training, a small-medium-sized enterprise with its Head Office in Spalding, Lincolnshire, and is an established provider of employability and vocational skills training and have been operating in the East Midlands (EM) and East of England (EoE) for over 16 years. They are a prime contractor to the ESFA, DWP, Combined Authorities and Local Authorities (including Lincolnshire County Council) and part of the fabric of employability and skills provision across Lincolnshire based on our AEB, ESF and Multiply delivery since 2007. Since 2018, they have improved the skills of more than 6,500 individuals, supporting them to progress into and/or within employment. The delivery partner Tonic Health is a well-established local Health & Wellbeing charity providing community support to unemployed, under-employed and other disadvantaged residents of South Holland and Boston. This is largely delivered via peer-led groups and sector-specific activities for people with mental health and other additional needs.

2.4. This project directly and specifically addresses a full range of UKSPF/RPF outcomes. Specifically, this project will support 170 residents across Boston and South Holland (136 in South Holland) to gain accredited qualifications and a guaranteed interview with a named local employer.

CONCLUSION

3.1 Recommendation: To proceed upon the basis of awarding £140,569 to Steadfast Training Ltd for the delivery of Steadfast Training Ltd - Connect2Grow (C2G)

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

These recommendations will allow the Partnership to meet the commitments that it has given to DLUHC through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It will also meet the key political commitment of ensuring that funding is distributed equitably and widely across the Partnership area, with a particular focus in this on developing residents' skills and employability prospects, as well as reducing the overall level of economic inactivity in South Holland District.

IMPLICATIONS

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILSPARTNERSHIP

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

None

STAFFING

None

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This is a Delegated decision, made by the Assistant Director (Strategic Growth and Development) in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder. The funding for the scheme has already been

provided by Central Government and accepted by the Council, and forms part of the councils approved budget.

DATA PROTECTION

None

FINANCIAL

The combined allocation of £140,569 in revenue funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 'People and Skills' Theme.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management shall be undertaken within the context of the contract management process. The applicant produced a risk register through the application process, and this is being kept under review. The three key risks are as follows:

- The recruitment of candidates/learners onto the scheme, with customers referred to the programme (particularly those from JCP) facing a significant level of need and barriers to learning.
- The engagement of employers for the arrangement of guaranteed job interviews and volunteering opportunities.
- The restricted timeframe for project delivery.

- **STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES**

This project was assessed in January 2024 through the agreed UKSPF/RPF Assessment process. This has included the following:

- Processed at Expression of Interest and full application stage through the internal Assessment Panel of Officers.
- Assessment by the specialist People & Skills Grants Panel
- Consultation within the South Holland UKSPF/RPF Partnership Group
- Consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder
- Consultation with the Leader of the Council
- Consultation with Senior Leadership Team within the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

REPUTATION

No specific reputational risks arising in this case. However, there is a substantial reputational risk associated with not committing UKSPF/RPF funding in a timely manner and to high quality projects that meet the outcomes that the Local Authority has committed to within the UKSPF/RPF Investment Plan, such as this one. At a project level, under-delivery is likely to carry substantial reputational risk, and this will be managed closely through the contract management process.

CONTRACTS

The project will be managed through a UKSPF/RPF Grant Funding Agreement, which will be managed by a designated grant funding contract manager within the Local Authority, situated within the

UKSPF/RPF Programme Team. As with all UKSPF People and Skills projects, the grant will be managed on a payment by outcomes basis, with automatic retention of funds where a project is subject to under-performance.

CRIME AND DISORDER

None

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

The council has considered equalities, diversity, and inclusion in formulating this recommendation, including compliance with relevant legislation. This includes protected characteristics under the 2010 Equalities Act and subsequent amendments. It is the view of the author that there are no implications in this regard in respect of this report’s recommendations.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

None arising at the macro-level, though the benefits in terms of health and wellbeing for individuals supported into work are substantial.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

MISSIONS	
This paper contributes to the follow Missions outlined in the Government’s Levelling Up White paper.	
Skills	By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
Wellbeing	By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
Pride in Place	By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

ACRONYMS

DLHUC – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

APPENDICES	
None	
<i>APPENDIX A</i>	<i>(Title of document)</i>

APPENDIX B	(Title of document)
APPENDIX C	(Title of document)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

(If none then insert the working 'No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.' Also delete the below text/boxes.)

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
UKSPF Prospectus	https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/article/23065/UK-Shared-Prosperity-Fund

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

A report on this item has not been previously considered by the Council.

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Lorna Hine – Project Officer – UK Shared Prosperity/Rural Prosperity Programme Saul Farrell - Senior Programme Manager – UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Rural Prosperity Fund
Signed off by:	Assistant Director - Strategic Growth and Development
Approved for publication:	N/A

CHECKLIST - DELETE BEFORE SUBMISSION TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

S151 Officer consulted on financial implications:	Yes / No / NA
Monitoring Officer consulted on legal and constitutional implications:	Yes / No / NA
Portfolio Holder consulted:	Yes / No / NA
Ward Member consulted:	Yes / No / NA