

Adult Education Budget – You Said, We Listened

Strategic Priorities

You said:

- 'Making learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents and widen the pool of talent for business' is the most strongly agreed with priority with particular support for the first half.

We listened:

- We understand that there is a need for community focussed learning that provides opportunities for everyone regardless of their financial situation and therefore we have altered the third priority to 'Making learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents'.
- We have reordered the priorities within the strategy so that the impact of the strategy on learners and residents is given more focus than the economic benefits.

You said:

- Aspects of the funding regulations are difficult to interpret and are often misunderstood.
- More should be done to promote the AEB opportunities that already exist and any that arise in the future.

We listened:

- To distribute clear and concise guidance.
- The MCA will consider how we can best work in partnership with organisations and local councils across the region to use communication and local messaging as a method for improve the promotion, uptake and impact of the AEB.

Challenges in meeting needs

You said:

- The challenges facing adult education in West Yorkshire may change in the near future due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the demand for labour and skills.

We listened:

- Whilst ensuring that the AEB remains responsive to the changing economic circumstances we need to be careful not to over-stretch the limited funds in an attempt to answer all skills needs, particularly in light of the growing demands caused by the pandemic. We will ensure that we are as responsive as possible in the following ways:
 - Making sure the AEB strategy is clearly aligned with the ever-changing West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan
 - Requiring all Grant holders to outline how their delivery plan for 2021/22 will be responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Ensuring that COVID-19 responsiveness is clearly outlined within the procurement specifications and assessed within tender submissions
 - Requiring that a focus on socially disadvantaged areas is demonstrated in tender submissions and provider delivery plans
 - Retain the planned 'Responsiveness pot' and commission in August 2021, providing some flexibility to target changing needs.

You said:

- There is a need to support individuals who are socially disadvantaged by providing them with access to the key skills that they need to get them into work.

We listened:

- We will continue to challenge government to address their historic lack of investment in skills as outlined the Skills Commission. The Commission calls for more investment in the skills system and the capacity for us to make decisions at a local level therefore allowing us to better meet local needs. More information on the Skills Commission can be found at: <http://futurereadyskillscommission.com/key-documents/>

Principles for commissioning

You said:

- You strongly agreed with the principles for commissioning
- There is a need to have a transparent, fair, and simple approach to procurement.

We listened:

- The CA will ensure that the AEB team has the capacity and expertise to engage fully with providers and understand their offer/delivery.
- Procurement opportunities will follow clear and transparent CA processes. An event will be held before the new procurement process goes live to provide support to providers and allow them to offer feedback on the process. The intention is to simplify the process and ensure it is flexible by procuring through a Dynamic Purchasing System, with the aim that providers can enter the market at any point as an approved supplier and then compete for 'one stage' opportunities as and when they are released.
- We are currently developing a methodology to reallocate funding on a needs basis rather than using historical data as has previously been done. For the first year of the AEB strategy implementation, funds will be continue to be allocated based on data from 2018-19 (the most recent data that we currently have) with the intention that, subject to CA approval, the new methodology will be used in future years.

Expectation of provider values and behaviours

You said:

- You showed strong support for each of the expected provider values and behaviours.

We listened:

- These values will not be changed

Proposed approach

You said:

- You generally supported the proposed approach
- Basing grant allocations on 2017/18 values does not take into account the level of growth/scaling back that providers have undergone since then. This could result in a reduction in the opportunities provided for learners and/or likely redundancies within institutions which would cause considerable instability within the sector.
- A specific consultation response highlighted a potential reduction in Community Learning funding spent in the area due to a Specialist Designated Institution operating across the area which does not meet the proposed Route 1 or Route 2 provider definition.

We listened:

- The Strategy outlines how our approach should reduce subcontracting practice in West Yorkshire. We will continue to scrutinise and review subcontracting practice throughout delivery, noting The Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) recently published review and planned approach.
- Despite being unable to negotiate any increase/advance on allocation values at a West Yorkshire level, the MCA recognises the need to minimise

the impact on learning opportunities available at key educational and community focussed institutions, and to minimise instability in the sector. We will therefore use the most up to date data from ESFA to determine the proportion of their total AEB allocation providers used to support West Yorkshire residents (18/19 data) and apply this to their most recent allocation value from ESFA (20/21) to determine their West Yorkshire grant for 2021/22.

- We recognise respondents' clear support for Community Learning and maintain our position that this will be reviewed in the first years of the strategy being live. We propose that the grant contract for this Skills Development Inventory is renewed for 2 years, on the condition they develop their delivery plan in conjunction with the five Local Authorities. This would ensure the levels of Community Learning spent in West Yorkshire does not decrease while the review is conducted. The MCA is seeking legal advice regarding this proposal.

Outcome and impact measures

You said:

- You strongly supported the actions, outcomes and measures identified for each priority set out in the AEB Strategy.

We listened:

- The planned outcomes and impact measures will be retained for the four unchanged priorities.
- The actions, outcomes and measures will be adjusted for the amended priority ('Make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents') to ensure they are still appropriate.

You said:

- The provision of 'free' courses is key in making sure that people from socially disadvantaged groups could access learning opportunities that they would not normally be able to afford or justify.

We listened:

- The MCA will carefully consider access and inclusivity for socially disadvantaged groups, particularly how the planned 'test pilots' might address some of the barriers faced.
- The MCA will carefully consider appropriate learner fees and contributions (as part of the development of the WY Funding Rules).

Review and Evaluation

You said:

- You strongly support the process and timeline outlined for review and evaluation.
- External factors such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic might necessitate the need for earlier reviews.

We listened:

- The proposed timescale for review in Summer 2021, once the Mayor is appointed, provides an opportunity for the strategy to be reviewed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact.
- The strategy is designed to allow us to review and reshape funding usage throughout its lifespan.