

Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership

No One Left Behind Employability Grants Programme 2026-2027



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1 Introduction

The Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme is designed to assist unemployed and economically inactive individuals in progressing towards and securing employment. This initiative acknowledges that, in order to equip local residents with the skills and confidence sought by employers, collaborative efforts at a local level are essential to deliver high-quality services to those most in need.

This approach is guided by the Scottish Government's policy framework, *No One Left Behind* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-employability-strategic-plan-2024-2027/>, which sets the strategic direction for government-funded employability services.

For 2026/27, the Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme will support **two distinct funding streams**. The first programme targets **all unemployed and economically inactive individuals of all ages** who require assistance in overcoming barriers to entering the labour market. The second programme focuses on **parents who are unemployed or on low incomes** — locally referred to as Child Poverty — and aims to increase household income through employment as part of broader efforts to reduce child poverty.

2 Grant Outcomes and Principles

The Scottish Borders Employability Grant Programme is designed to achieve the following key outcomes:

- **Reduction of child poverty** by supporting parents – particularly those within priority family groups – to increase household income through employment.
- **Support for unemployed individuals of all ages** to overcome barriers to entering the labour market.
- **Improved health and wellbeing** for individuals with long-term health conditions, mental health challenges, or disabilities, enabling progression towards employment.
- **Delivery of sector specific training** to prepare individuals for roles in industries with high demand for skilled workers.

The delivery of all provision supported through the Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme will be underpinned by the *No One Left Behind* principles:

- Dignity, respect, fairness, equality, and continuous improvement.
- Provision of flexible, person-centred support.
- Services that are straightforward and easy to navigate.
- Integration and alignment with other relevant services.
- Clear pathways into sustainable and fair employment.
- Evidence-driven approaches informed by data and lived experience.
- Support enabling individuals to secure the right job at the right time.

In addition, all funded provision must adhere to the following requirements to ensure effective support and sustainable outcomes:

- Services must be configured around participant needs rather than provider structures
- Consideration of “travel to work” options to address physical and perceived barriers, facilitating access to opportunities beyond local areas.
- Incorporation of lived experience into service design and delivery, in line with the Scottish approach to service design.
- Full consideration of the needs of individuals with protected characteristics.
- Provision should offer additionality to existing services where permissible, and create progression routes into Further/Higher Education, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships, and other relevant opportunities, alongside access to employment.
- Participation must not jeopardise benefit eligibility or result in a reduction of overall household income.

3 Type of Provision We Are Looking For

Focus Areas

Applicants should ensure their proposals address the **priority groups** identified by the Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership (LEP), while also considering the needs of local employers. Proposals should demonstrate how they will contribute to closing gaps in current service provision and respond to identified local challenges.

Expectations

The LEP encourages applicants to:

- Utilise their **expertise, local knowledge, and partnership networks** to design creative and innovative solutions.
- Submit proposals that are **evidence-based**, reflecting clear demand and alignment with local priorities.
- Develop services that complement existing provision and add measurable value to the employability landscape.

Flexibility and Innovation

The grant programme is designed to allow providers to bring forward their own ideas and approaches. Applicants are invited to propose **new services and interventions** that:

- Address barriers to employment for priority groups.
- Respond to employer needs and labour market demand.
- Demonstrate sustainability and potential for long-term impact.

Priority Groups for All Age provision

Applications are welcomed for all eligible groups in the Scottish Borders: Please find below a guide to eligibility.

People from school leaving age up to 67 years (Pensionable age) who are experiencing barriers to employment (must be experiencing at least one barrier)

- Disabled people, including those experiencing mental health issues and those who have an impairment or long-term health condition
- Primary Carer
- Person with a conviction (including CPO's)
- Person aged over 50 years
- People from Ethnic Minority backgrounds and minority racial groups
- Gypsy/travelling community
- Person requiring support with language, literacy, or numeracy, including those for whom English is an additional language
- Lone parent
- Low skilled
- Refugee or other granted leave to remain in the UK
- Homeless person (including temporary or unstable accommodation)
- Person affected by substance misuse
- Living in a household with children in poverty
- Person living in the 15% most employment deprived SIMD geographies (see ESF Scottish Local Authority Employment Deprived Area Postcodes list)
- Person living in an area defined as a “rural area**” or “very remote rural***”
- Person living in a jobless household
- Long-term unemployed

Parents on a low-income whilst in-work. Although there is a specific focus on the six priority family groups (see below), our service eligibility also recognises different family structures.

- Lone parent families
- Families with a young mother (aged under 25 years)
- Minority ethnic families
- Larger families (3 or more children)
- Families where the youngest child is under 1 year
- Families with a disabled child or adult

Your project should fit within the 5-stage employability pipeline illustrated below –

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Engagement, Referral and Assessment	Needs Assessment and Barrier Removal	Vocational Activity	Employer Engagement and Job Matching	In Work Support and Aftercare
This stage is about reaching out and supporting people into regular activity, positive routines connecting them with others	Assessing needs of individuals and agreeing key activities to address any barriers to employment or training	Activities include delivering a range of accredited training, employability core skills, job search etc.	Activities such as work experience or volunteering placements with employers, assisting individuals to secure job vacancies.	Activities includes supporting individuals to maintain and progress within the workplace
End to End Continuous Case Management/Key Worker Support				

The employability services and provision should be:

- appropriate for the age and stage of the target participant group,
- proportionate to the numbers of unemployed,
- where possible/appropriate delivered locally in facilities that are accessible to all,
- needed locally and not duplicate existing provision,
- in line with current and future labour markets, skills requirements, and job vacancies.

4 Application Process and Decision Making

Delivery Timescales/Key Milestones

This round of the Scottish Borders Employability Grant Programme will provide funding for delivery of services **for financial year 2026 to 2027**.

Milestone	Date
Grant opens for applications	Monday 9th February
Application guidance webinars	Thursday 12th February 2026 at 3.30pm Friday 13th February 2026 at 10am
Application deadline	Friday 6th March 2026 at 5pm
Award letters issued	Friday 1st May 2026

Providers can offer services throughout this period or for certain periods only (according to anticipated demand). Providers can make multiple applications if they wish to provide more than one project.

This information document and the application form is available on request from LEP@scotborders.gov.uk

Who is Eligible to Apply?

Third, public, private and further/higher education sector organisations are all eligible to apply. If you are applying as a partnership, the lead partner should apply, and detail

partners involved. The lead partner would be responsible for the overall management and delivery of the project including budget management and monitoring and reporting requirements.

What Makes a Good Application?

- Observe the word limit for each question.
- Please write succinctly and in plain English. Use short sentences and avoid acronyms and jargon. There is no need to use formal or flowery language. What is key to a good application is being as specific as you can and assuming the reader knows nothing about your organisation, track record and project even if you have received local funding before doing similar.
- Ideally you will provide a clear picture for the reader of what you intend to deliver, how you will do this, and what difference it will make to participants
- As well as how it contributes to the grant programme strategic outcomes.
- Please consider the NOLB principles when designing your project and when describing/evidencing this in the application
- Please provide a strong rationale to show both the need for the services and that there will be a demand from local people to take part in the provision.

Identifying, recruiting, and sustaining engagement of the number of participants stated is the responsibility of the organisation receiving a grant.

Eligible Spend

Only direct delivery costs will be considered as eligible grant expenditure.

Decision Making

An Assessment Panel will manage the assessment and scoring procedures following the Council's grant processes. Membership of the Assessment Panel will be drawn from strategic partner organisations represented on the Scottish Borders LEP including:

- Scottish Borders Council
- Skills Development Scotland
- Department of Work and Pensions
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Scottish Borders Chamber of Commerce
- Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber
- Borders College
- Heriot Watt University
- NHS Borders
- Registered Social Landlords
- Developing the Young Workforce
- Borders Community Action
- Live Borders

Each application will be pre-screened by the council's employability team before being presented to the LEP members for scoring and moderation. Panel members will be required to declare any conflict of interest which will be registered, and appropriate action taken e.g. a panel member submitting a grant proposal will not be involved in the assessment of their proposal.

Notification of Successful Applications

Application outcomes including grant award letters will be issued from Friday 1st May 2026. Full details of the payment process and terms and conditions of the grant, including monitoring and reporting requirements, will be included.

Any changes to what was specified in the grant application will require approval.

Scoring

Section		Questions
1	Project rationale – evidence of need	2b, 2c
2	Project content and delivery	2a,
3	Knowledge, including local knowledge, expertise, previous experience, past performance	2b, 2c
4	Participant engagement, accessibility and inclusivity of provision	2e
5	Output and outcome target and fit with grant outcomes	2d
6	Cost and added value	3a

You will be scored on the following basis:

Unanswered	Absolutely no response provided, or submission was not relevant.	0
Unacceptable	Inadequate response with little or no understanding of requirements, limited or no detail, lacking supporting evidence and/or has substantial weaknesses.	2
Poor quality	Minimal or poor response providing little evidence and/or has substantial weaknesses.	4
Acceptable quality	Response is generally good but lacks sufficient detail in places, which highlights some weaknesses.	6
Good quality	Response meets requirements with good evidence throughout and few weaknesses.	8
Outstanding quality	Excellent response demonstrating a clear understanding and comprehensive ability to fulfil requirements, outlining added value, innovation, an excellent application detailing evidence with no weaknesses.	10

5 Grant Payment Process

Public Sector Funding dictates that grant payments are required to be accounted for in the financial year of delivery.

Applicants will be required to submit quarterly claims, or more frequently, as appropriate. All claims will be checked, and evidence will be requested as appropriate. Payments will be processed through Scottish Borders Council's normal accounting system and payment to applicants will be by BACS.

Prior to final claims being paid, a monitoring visit will be made to all projects. The final monitoring visit will be made by an Officer from Scottish Borders Council. This visit will check that the project has been implemented as described, that financial records

associated with the project are in order, and that publicity arrangements and equality and sustainability policies have been complied with.

Where the applicant is unable to demonstrate sufficient progress towards achieving agreed outputs and targets, future funding may be withheld or reduced. Further details will be outlined in terms and conditions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress in achieving the objectives of the grant scheme will be measured in line with the Shared Measurement Framework for Employability as follows:

- The number of individuals engaging in employability support and training, broken down into age groups, parental status, and protected characteristics.
- The progression of individuals towards education, training, or employment.
- The number of individuals taking part in employment opportunities supported by employability funding.
- The number of individuals achieving sustainable outcomes.
- The number of parents achieving in-work progression.

In the event that you are unable to move a participant into a positive outcome at the end of your project, you must endeavour to refer participants to other training / employability provision.

Shared Measurement Framework

Participants registration and progress will be collected on a quarterly basis using the Scottish Government's Shared Measurement Framework which collects a range of data and reflects the No One Left Behind strategy. This will involve the quarterly submission of detailed data to the grant provider along with financial claims. This information is collected in an excel format and information on the collection of this will be provided as part of the grant offer to successful applicants. In addition, a case study is requested each quarter.

6 Data Collection and Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will be expected to use Scottish Borders Council's management information system Helix to register clients and record all personal and service-related information for participants on the programme. Tracking must be recorded and reported for up to 12 months following the date of a participant leaving or completing the programme. More information on this will be made available to successful applicants, and training will be provided where required.

Programme activity and performance reports will be provided to Scottish Borders Council on a quarterly basis and progress against the performance profile will be reported to the Local Employability Partnership.

7 Key Information and Data Sources to Help Applicants

- **Unemployment and Claimant figures for the Scottish Borders**
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157430/report.aspx?town=Scottish%20Borders>
- **Priority Area data - SIMD**
<https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTFTT/10.564445096043901/-2.7240/55.5791/>
- **Scottish Borders Community Plan 2023 / 2033**
<https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/12623/scottish-borders-community-plan-2023-33>
- **South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy**
<https://www.southofscotlandrep.com/delivery-strategies/regional-economic-strategy>
- **Annual Participation Measure -**
<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation>
- **Regional Skills Assessments - [Regional Skills Assessments](#)**
- **Protected Characteristics - [Protected characteristics | Acas](#)**