

**Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership**

**No One Left Behind**

**Employability Grants Programmes**

**2025-2026**



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## Introduction

The Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme aims to support unemployed and economically inactive people to move towards and into work. It is an initiative which recognises that, to help local people to develop the skills and confidence employers are looking for, we all need to work together at a local level to provide the best possible services to those who need them most.

The national funding for employability has changed significantly from April 2022 with the Scottish Government choosing to distribute funding at a more local level and through the local employability partnership. The partnership agrees on the local priorities and areas for action but will also ensure that local employability providers continue to have the opportunity to access funding for services. The key Scottish Government policy framework for this approach is called **No One Left Behind** <https://www.gov.scot/publications/no-one-left-behind-employability-strategic-plan-2024-2027/> and this guides the direction and delivery of Scottish Government funded employability services.

In the Scottish Borders, the **Local Employability Partnership (LEP)** consists of partner agencies from the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership and employability providers. The LEP is chaired by Scottish Borders Council and has met, as an active partnership, for around 5 years. Its purpose is to support the implementation of local and national employability policy through collective leadership, joint planning and co-commissioning. In doing so the partnership, working closely with local delivery partners, will make the best use of resources available to deliver effective needs-led employability services that help Scottish Borders residents make a successful transition towards sustained and fair employment.

The Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme for 2025/26 will support **two grants programmes** which will build on the work of providers funded through previous NOLB funding in the Scottish Borders. One programme is aimed at **all unemployed and economically inactive residents of any age** who need support to overcome barriers to entering the labour market. The other programme is aimed at **parents who are unemployed or on low incomes** and is locally known as **Child Poverty** and is focused on increasing the income from employment for parents as part of our local efforts to tackle child poverty.

This document, and the associated grant application forms, outlines Scottish Borders Local Employability Partnership's (LEP) intentions, principles and priorities to be met through the new Scottish Borders Employability Grant Programme supporting employability and skills provision between 2025 and 2026.

The Local Employability Partnership has agreed that all projects seeking support should have a minimum funding request of £10,000.00.

## **Our Grant Outcomes and Principles**

The key outcomes that the Scottish Borders Employability Grant Programme will contribute to are:

- **Reducing levels of child poverty by supporting parents, particularly those from the priority family groups, to increase their income from employment**
- **Supporting unemployed people of all ages to overcome barriers to employment**
- **Supporting people with long term health conditions, mental health or disabilities to increase their health and wellbeing and progress towards employment**
- **Deliver sector-based training to prepare individuals for jobs in specific industries where there is strong demand for skilled workers.**

Please see below the No One Left Behind principles that will underpin the delivery expectations for all provision supported via the Scottish Borders Employability Grants Programme.

- **Dignity and respect, fairness and equality, and continuous improvement**
- **Provides flexible and person-centred support**
- **Is straightforward for people to navigate**
- **Integrated and aligned with other services**
- **Provides pathways into sustainable and fair work**
- **Driven by evidence including data and experience of others**
- **Support more people to move into the right job at the right time**

In addition, all provision supported through the grant scheme should also consider the following requirements to help provide the best support to people to enable progress towards sustainable outcomes:

- **Services should be configured around the needs of the participants rather than delivery partners.**
- **‘Travel to work’ should be considered with participants to help overcome barriers (both physical and perceived) and support access to opportunities out with their local area.**
- **Ensure lived experience shapes service design and delivery as outlined in the Scottish approach to service design.**
- **Ensure that the design of services has considered the needs of those with protected characteristics.**
- **Provide additionality to existing provision, where permissible, to established provision and building progression routes into Further/Higher Education, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships and other appropriate provision, as well as supporting access to employment.**
- **Provision must not put at risk participants’ current eligibility for benefits or lead to a reduction in overall income.**

## **Type of Provision are we Looking For**

Applicants should focus on the priority groups and priority areas highlighted below and the needs of employers. The Scottish Borders LEP is keen that potential grant applicant partners use their expertise, local knowledge and links with other partners to develop creative and innovative proposals that they have confidence there is demand for and that meet gaps in service delivery. The grant programme will allow providers to come forward with their own ideas and suggestions for new services and provisions based on evidence of need.

### **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<sup>\*\*\*</sup>” or “very remote rural<sup>\*\*\*</sup>”

- Person living in a jobless household
- Long-term unemployed
- Care experienced

**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

### **Addressing the Key Challenges**

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 include supporting individuals to maintain and progress within the workplace.

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.



## 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 the financial year 2025 to 2026**.

Milestone	Date
Grant opens for applications	Monday 28th April
Application deadline	Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> May
Award letter issued	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> June

Providers can propose 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](mailto: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 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025. Full details of the payment process and terms and conditions of 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

## **Grant Payment Process**

Public Sector Funding dictates that grant payments require 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 the 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 by 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 endeavor 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.

## **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.

## Key Information and Data Sources to Help Applicants

The remainder of this document provides links to a range of information and key data to support applicants in the preparation of their applications. The information relates to current employment stats and trends and key data which could provide supporting information regarding the need for certain provisions locally in the Scottish Borders.

- 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/BTTTTFTT/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 [Regional Economic Strategy | South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership](#)