

Asset Skills Enhancement Capability Fund (ASEC) *Prospectus and Application Guidance*

Overview

The aim of the Asset Skills Enhancement and Capability (ASEC) fund is to enhance the supply of skills related to both Sizewell C and regional needs and aspirations by expanding, enhancing and developing local skills provision (such as apprenticeships) within the region's existing education, further education, training provider and higher education sectors. The fund will support revenue projects, such as curriculum development and development and retention of specialist trainers, as well as working capital projects, such as equipment to deliver courses and re-fit for existing facilities as required to meet the needs of the workforce. The fund will support the development of the skills infrastructure needed to help the 'work ready' individuals, including those supported by the Sizewell C Employment Outreach fund, to become 'job ready'.

Lifetime amount of ASEC funding:

Funding is split according to the construction phase the project proposal relates to:

Construction phase	Total proportion of funding	Current agreed allocation	Funds
Phase 1 Site Operations/Support Services/Enabling Works*	15-20%	15%	£1.17m
Phase 2 Main Civils	35-45%	35%	£2.73m
Phase 3 Mechanical/Electrical/Heating and ventilation (MEH)	35-45%	35%	£2.73m
Phase 4 Commissioning and Pre-Operational Phase	Not less than 10%	TBC	TBC

*Table 1: Amount of funding available for each construction phase
a maximum of 5% to be spent on Enabling Works

Current amount of ASEC funding available:

£3.9 million (50%) of ASEC funding allocated to Phase 1 and 2 of the Sizewell Project is open for applications. This combined funding allocation is in recognition that applicants may wish to submit projects that can support the needs of Phase 1 and 2 collectively. Whilst funding for Phase 3 and 4 has not yet been made available, we welcome applications to begin early discussions with the Regional Skills Co-ordination Function. It is expected that this funding will be allocated over multiple years and not fully allocated during 2024-2025.

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Phase 1 Site Operations/Support Services/Enabling Works	15-20%	15%	£1.17m
Phase 2 Main Civils	35-45%	35%	£2.73m

What will ASEC fund?

The ASEC fund invites proposals that contribute to the enhancement and expansion of local skills provision. We are particularly interested in the following types of projects:

- **Curriculum development:** Initiatives focused on developing and updating educational programmes to align with the skill demands arising from the Sizewell C project and regional needs.
- **Retention of specialist trainers:** Projects aimed at retaining and nurturing specialised trainers to ensure the continuity and quality of skills development programmes.
- **Equipment to deliver courses:** Working capital projects that involve acquiring necessary equipment to effectively deliver skills development courses aligned with project requirements and regional need.
- **Re-fit of facilities:** Projects to refurbish or adapt facilities to meet the specific needs of the workforce, creating a conducive environment for skill enhancement.

Regional skills need

Using the regional skills need assessment applicants *must* ensure that the priorities for funding expenditure are aligned with needs wider than the project itself.

Regional skills needs can either relate to the need to:

- **widen current talent pools** in broad skillset areas to create a pipeline of skills that are either directly required themselves or provide the foundation skills to enable progression through to more specific requirements
- **directly equip the workforce with specific and specialised skills** needed in roles where there will be a significant regional uplift required across projects and across time

A regional skills need is a set of skills and competencies (and its associated qualifications and professional certification) that can be clearly evidenced. Evidence is also required to confirm alignment with the strategies and capabilities of education or training providers in the region and that ASEC investment is essential to delivery. How the skillset contributes to local economic and social priorities should also be identified and evidenced.

Your application must show a clear understanding and alignment with the Regional Skills Needs Assessment.

Eligibility for proposals

Eligible applicants include:

- educational institutions, including further education colleges and higher education providers
- UKRLP registered independent training providers

Proposals:

- Must demonstrate a clear connection to enhancing local skills infrastructure.
- Must address the needs of the SZC project **or** the needs of the region created or increased by Sizewell C (identified in the Annual Skills Implementation Plan).
- Must support a wider and ideally long-term regional skills needs, details of this are to be found within the regional skills need assessment).
- Can include either capital or revenue projects, or be a hybrid project with a combination of both capital and revenue elements within the same proposal.

Preference, where relevant, will be given to education and training providers located in Suffolk, in line with the principle of the fund to ensure that those most impacted by the development of Sizewell C, also receive higher levels of benefit.

Assessment criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on alignment with ASEC fund objectives and regional need.

- Proposals supported by additional external funding sources would be preferred.
- Collaborative proposals are welcomed, including demonstrating partnerships with local and regional businesses.

Project Timeframes

Project start and length

The ASEC Fund is open year-round with full applications approved quarterly by the Employment, Skills and Education Working Group. Unlike typical grant processes, ASEC will remain open for the lifetime of the Sizewell C project or until all funding is allocated. The amount of funding made available is to be utilised across the construction phases, and therefore is not expected to be solely allocated in 2024/2025. Applicants are expected to demonstrate a clear understanding of when they will need to spend the grant funding requested, aligning with the relevant construction phase of the project and skillsets needed.

Projects are not expected to take longer than 4 years to deliver, with the majority likely to be significantly shorter. This is because the investment will need to deliver the intended change necessary in time to then enable the provision of skills related to the appropriate construction phase. Projects must therefore be completed in advance of the skills being required in the relevant construction phase to allow for training to be undertaken and skills to be supplied.

Examples

- You are applying for re-fit of facilities to address skills gaps in the MEH phase. Your re-fit project must be completed by the beginning of this construction phase. Students will then utilise the facilities throughout the construction phase.
- You are applying to train specialist trainers for the main civils phase. The training programme must be in place to allow for trainers to be job ready by the start of the construction phase. The trainers will work with students throughout the construction phase.

For more information, please refer to the ASEC project examples.

Grant amounts

The maximum grant amount is the amount of fund allocated to the construction phase as shown in [Table 1](#). For example, if your project is to address skill gaps for the main civils phase, the maximum amount available for your project would be £2.73m. However, for such large grants, we would be expecting this to be significantly collaborative in nature.

We would not expect to receive applications for funding of less than £50,000 due to the necessary scale of projects to be supported by this scheme. If you have a proposal which falls under this threshold, please contact us to discuss before completing the application.

Match funding and in-kind support

All proposals should be supported by contributions from other external funding sources. Ideally, this would be 50% match funding. Please state the amount of additional funding you have secured to support your proposal and clearly demonstrate the percentage of funding being requested from this scheme and the reasons why alternative sources of funding are not accessible. Match funding could be a method of integrating the Sizewell C supply chain into your project, for example through loan of equipment or providing specialist trainers as part of course delivery. It is at the discretion of ESEWG to make a collective determination of the validity of the match funding and in-kind contributions detailed within each application.

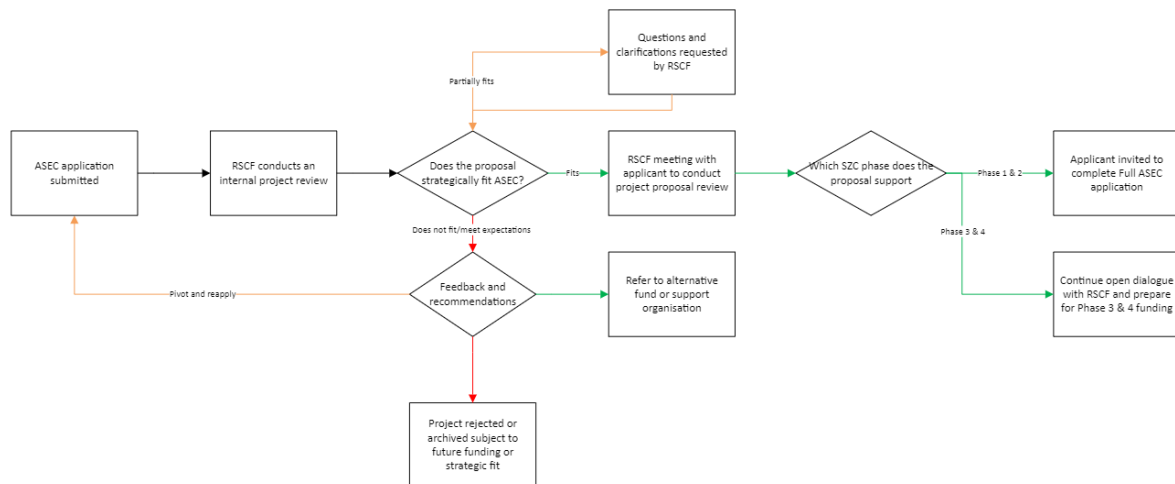
Payment terms

For most projects, funding will be allocated through an initial upfront payment, with subsequent payments profiled in alignment with achievement milestones specific to your project. This approach ensures funding is available to support project delivery at each critical stage. For smaller projects, payments will typically be made upon completion, subject to the submission of detailed invoices evidencing expenditure. If your project requires alternative payment terms, please contact us to discuss your specific needs.

Use of contractors

Where your project requires the use of contractors, you will need to comply with all applicable procurement laws, as well as Suffolk County Council procurement guidelines and processes. You will assume responsibility and liability for contractors.

Submitting a Project Proposal



1. The applicant produces and submits a 500 – 1000 word project proposal using the information and documentation provided - SZCskillsfunds@suffolk.gov.uk
2. The Regional Skills Coordination Function will review your application and subject to the strategic fit of your application the RSCF will do one of the following:
 - a. Strategically fits – arrange an applicant meeting to discuss the proposal
 - b. Partially fits - request clarifications and ask questions about the proposal
 - c. Does not strategically fit – provide feedback and recommendations
3. For applications that strategically fit ASEC and have met with the RSCF (subject to the phase(s) the application supports) applicants will be:

Phase 1 and 2 – invited to complete the full ASEC application process when it is launched.

Phase 3 and 4 – encouraged to keep an open dialogue with the RSCF and prepare for Phase 3 and 4 funding when it opens.
4. All full applications will be reviewed and approved as appropriate by the Employment, Skills and Education Working Group comprising of Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council.

How we will support you

The RSCF will work with you to develop your proposal, both at the project proposal stage, as well as to further develop your proposal if you are invited to submit a full application. The RSCF will also be able to support you to explore the possibility of supply chain-based contributions that may fit with your proposal.

Approval process

Full applications will be assessed on the quality, need, urgency, deliverability and strategic fit of their submission (more details of the full application process will be provided in Q1 2025). All full applications will be assessed by the Employment, Skills and Education Working Group (ESEWG), comprised of:

- East Suffolk Council
- Sizewell C
- Suffolk County Council

In reviewing full applications for funding and determining the allocation of such funding, the Regional Skills Co-ordination Function shall have regard to the following principles so that the allocation of funding is:

- fair, neutral, open, and equitable to those applying for funding
- focussed directly on maximising the number of home-based workers into identified legacy roles required by the project
- linked to wider regional legacy roles and industrial policy
- linked to the generation of match funding from wider industrial bodies including UK Government, and relevant industrial training bodies.

Timeline

Timing	Action
From December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASEC opens for project proposals • Regional Skills Coordination Function to work with applicants to further develop suitable proposals
From February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full ASEC application process opens • RSCF to continue supporting applicants to further enhance full applications.
From March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant documentation, including KPIs, to be finalised and agreed between beneficiary and funder. • Projects submitted to ESEWG for funding assessment at quarterly meetings (according to project timing and need, not first-come-first-serve)
April 2025 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earliest time that ASEC funded projects may begin delivering outcomes. Funds to be released to projects as per grant documentation. • Monitoring of KPIs to take place by the RSCF as per grant documentation

Monitoring delivery and evaluation

Once a project is approved, regular monitoring will be conducted to ensure adherence to the proposed timeline, budget, and objectives. Progress reports will be required at specified intervals to track the project's development.

Upon completion of the project, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted to assess the overall impact on local skills provision. The evaluation will consider the effectiveness, sustainability, as well as outputs and outcomes of the funded initiatives.

The ASEC fund presents a valuable opportunity for organisations to contribute to the long-term development of local skills infrastructure, aligning with the dynamic demands of the Sizewell C project and the broader regional context. We encourage all eligible applicants to submit innovative proposals that will make a lasting impact on the skills landscape of Suffolk.

Outputs

Below are examples of expected outputs from your project. However, it is not assumed or expected that a project will achieve *every* output. Within your application, please specify which of the below outputs your project will address, as well as any other outputs you would like to include. ASEC has been designed to enable applicants to demonstrate the detail and scale of need within their application.

Project Output Examples
Number of skills assessments carried out by training partners
Number of participants on construction access and pre-employment programmes, traineeships, work experience programmes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 14–16-year-olds ○ Participants from deprived areas ○ Hard-to-reach groups ○ Diverse groups
Number of people upskilled or retrained through Sizewell C training interventions delivered by education or training providers
Number of inspiration activities delivered
Number of course/programme/bursary applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deprived areas ○ Hard-to-reach groups ○ Diverse groups
Number of course/programme enrolments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deprived areas ○ Hard-to-reach groups ○ Diverse groups
Number of course/programme completions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deprived areas ○ Hard-to-reach groups ○ Diverse groups
Number of courses delivered within regional skills need
Number of apprenticeships completed
Number of instructors recruited/trained
Satisfaction level of participants
Number of participants progressing onto other training or education programmes
Employer engagement in curriculum/programme development
Employer engagement in course/programme delivery
Employer partnerships

Outcomes

Below are expected outcomes which we would expect your project outputs to contribute to over the longer term. Please indicate within your application which outcomes your project will contribute to.

Project Outcome Examples
Employer satisfaction with entry skill level of new employees/apprentices

Number of home-based workers, working at Sizewell C

- Deprived areas
- Hard-to-reach groups
- Diverse groups

Number of home-based workers completing apprenticeships

- Sizewell C
- Other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

Continuation of employment post-apprenticeship completion

Increased skill level (county average)

Increased wage level (county average)

Number progressing to positive destinations

- Training/education
- Sizewell C employment
- Other NSIP employment
- Other employment