



Flexible Workforce Development Fund for SMEs 2021-22

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) supports businesses in Scotland to up-skill and re-skill their employees to support inclusive economic growth in Scotland.

This fund is open to all SME employers in Scotland across the private, public and third sector. SMEs can access up to a maximum of £5,000 of training delivered by local colleges and the Open University in Scotland.

Employers can access training that will have a demonstrable impact on their productivity or meet a skills need that has occurred due to COVID-19.

The overarching objectives of the FWDF are productivity and economic growth. However, since the onset of the pandemic, the focus continues towards strengthening the employer/employee relationship, with a particular focus on upskilling the existing workforce to retain jobs and support employers as they pivot and adapt to a new and very different working environment as a result of COVID-19.

Employers are advised to make an application as soon as possible as access to the fund will be on a first come first served basis.





ELIGIBILITY

- The FWDF is available to all SME employers in Scotland across the private, public and third sector.
- For the purpose of the FWDF, an SME refers to any business with less than 250 employees.
- Employers must be based or operate within Scotland.
- Employers can access up to £5,000 of training delivered by colleges or the Open University in Scotland.
- The FWDF does not support provision of industry qualifications/training where there is a statutory obligation required by law, i.e. training legally required for businesses to operate. This remains the employer's responsibility and will not be provided through FWDF. However, where employers can evidence additional training needs over and above those usually provided to meet statutory requirements, potentially as a result of COVID-19 and as training is adjusted to meet (for example) physical distancing and hygiene guidance, this training will be eligible for funding.
- Mandatory training associated with specific job roles where employers are looking to provide additional training relating to skills outwith their employees' core role or relating to a new area of work, whilst also required by law, would be considered as upskilling/reskilling and therefore could be supported by FWDF.
- Employers operating on a Scotland-wide basis or across more than one college region may submit only one FWDF application, either to the college of their choice or the Open University in Scotland, and they are required to formally declare that their application is on behalf of the whole company and is their sole FWDF application.



TIMESCALES

The timeframe for the FWDF covers the academic year 2021-22, with the application window open from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022. The table below sets out the timeframe for academic year 2021-22 FWDF activity:

Training contractually agreed	Training commenced	Training delivered and completed
by 31 July 2022	by 31 August 2022	by 31 December 2022

APPLICATION PROCESS

Please contact Orkney College to discuss training available and your eligibility for funding through FWDF. Please note that a training needs analysis (see below) and further supporting information is required to support an application.

Training Needs Analysis – employers are required to identify the training they require will help make a demonstrable return on investment, therefore all applications must be supported by a relative training needs analysis (proportionate to the size of the business). Orkney College has partnered with Business Gateway Orkney, whose business advisers can support local employers with this.

Contact: business.gateway@orkney.gov.uk

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) can also provide a template for a business to use, or if a business has gone through SDS's Skills for Growth process, this could be used as part of a training needs analysis.

Contact: fwdf@sds.co.uk

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Who can access this fund FWDF?

SME's can access up to £5,000 of the FWDF fund through 1 route only – through local college provision or Open University in Scotland

Q2. What happens if the cost of an employer's training needs exceeds the capped amount for the FWDF?

FWDF can be used as part-payment towards training of a higher cost.

Q3. What type of training can be accessed by SMEs?

SMEs can access training that will have a demonstrable impact on their productivity or meet a skills need that has occurred due to COVID-19.

Q4. Is a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) required?

Yes, all applications must be supported by a relative training needs analysis, though this should be proportionate to the size of the business.

Q5. What evidence is required from SMEs to demonstrate eligibility?

SMEs are required to submit evidence of their status as a business with their FWDF application. This should normally take the form of a copy of one of the following:

- A business bank account.
- VAT registration.
- PAYE registration.
- Companies House info (latest accounts, etc.).
- Registration for self-assessment tax return (HMRC).

Q6. What training courses are NOT supported by the FWDF?

- Statutory training that organisations are required by law to provide, as part of running a service, or where a statutory body has instructed an organisation to provide certain training on the basis of specific legislation
- Lessons towards attaining a driving licence category A or B.
- Outward bound type courses; and leisure or sporting activities other than those that lead to a recognised coaching or teaching qualification.

Q7. What is the difference between statutory and mandatory training and when could FWDF be used towards this training?

FWDF does not support provision of training which is a statutory requirement for the individual's continuing employment, including any training which an employee is required by law to undertake in order to carry out the duties associated with his or her employment. In other words, it is training legally required for businesses to operate. This remains the employer's responsibility.

However, where employers can evidence that statutory requirements have been met and additional statutory training is required, over and above the minimum statutory requirements, this training can be supported by FWDF (e.g. certain health & safety training). Also where employers can evidence additional training needs over and above those usually provided to meet statutory requirements as a result of COVID-19, and as training is adjusted to meet (for example) physical distancing and hygiene guidance, this training can be provided.

In terms of mandatory training required by law and associated with specific job roles, where employers are looking to provide additional training relating to skills outwith their employees' core role or relating to a new area of work, then this would be considered as upskilling / reskilling and could be supported by FWDF. For example, if a plumber is being upskilled into the role of a heating engineer or if an employer is upskilling its workforce into a new area of work such as to address the transition to net zero.

For example: The 18th Edition wiring regulations for electricians is an industry requirement and as such is not a statutory requirement. Therefore companies if they meet the criteria could attract funding from the FWDF.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact our Business Engagement Manager to discuss your training requirements.

Email: Tina.Brown@uhi.ac.uk