

Strategic Outreach Match-Funding Proposal Guidance 2023-24

This guidance document will support you in your application for Aspire to HE Strategic Outreach funding, providing you with all the necessary information regarding how to make the most informed proposal, including a steer on our agreed priorities.

Strategic Outreach Guidance – Recommendations and FAQ's

- 1) What is Uni Connect/Aspire to HE/Strategic Outreach?
- 2) Areas of priority and outcomes
- 3) Recommendations when creating a bid
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- 5) Evaluation responsibility
- 6) Time frames and next steps

1) What is Uni Connect/Aspire to HE/Strategic Outreach?

Uni Connect brings together 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to deliver outreach programmes to young people aged 13 – 19 and support mature learners into higher education pathways.

Aspire to HE is a Uni Connect consortium based at The University of Wolverhampton, in partnership with six local Further Education Colleges across the Black Country and Telford & Wrekin.

Partnerships are focussed on improving the progression rates into Higher education for underrepresented groups.

What is 'Strategic Outreach' funding?

Aspire to HE works with local organisations to understand where there is a lack or oversupply of information, advice and guidance and outreach provision.

We then collaboratively agree where activity and funding for strategic outreach can have the most impact on underrepresented learners in the area, and fund new or existing collaborative initiatives, or act as a facilitator for new programmes.

Strategic Outreach is your opportunity to put together a project proposal for funds to help meet the needs of an underrepresented group (or groups) in your area of work.

2) Areas of Priority and Outcomes:

Areas of Priority

We particularly welcome proposal bids that will try to address at least one of the following priority areas:

- White working class boys
- Young people in school/FE transition phases
- Disabled learners
- Children of military families
- Care leavers or Looked After Children
- Those estranged from their families
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Areas of lower HE participation or lower socioeconomic status
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Mature learners
- Carers
- Refugees
- Raising attainment

Strategic Outreach Outcomes

The OfS outlined the following outcomes as part of the phase three work. We ask that when constructing your proposal for match funding that you consider how you will deliver local information, advice and guidance or outreach to underrepresented groups or 'cold spots', and contribute to at least one of the following outcome(s):

- Reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups.
- Support young people and adults to make well-informed decisions about their future education.
- Support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners including charities.
- Contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

3) Recommendations when writing your project proposal:

- **Schedule time to speak with Aspire to HE team:** Although not compulsory, we recommend that you arrange to speak with a member of the Aspire to HE team before you submit your application, so that we are able to support you in submitting the most effective application and answer any questions you might have.

- **Who is the target audience?** Using the areas of priority to guide you, think carefully about who you aim to reach through your project, how many people you aim to reach and how you will reach them. Do contact us if you are unsure on this and need some further guidance.
- **When would the activity/project happen?**
 - Delivery covered by the Strategic Outreach match funding should occur **before 31st July 2024**. However, if your proposal is a transition-related project across two academic years, please state the expected end date if it falls beyond 31st July. This will allow us to have further discussions with OfS about the timeframe for your project.
 - Your project may have already started so you need to show how the funding will add value to your existing project during this period. You must also include the source of your existing funding.
- **Objectives/Content of project to consider:**

The purpose of all Aspire to HE programmes is to help young people and communities make ambitious decisions about their futures. As such, as mentioned above in the 'outcomes' section, all proposals should be focused on how to address them, which means a focus on shifting their aspirations for the future and their attitude towards HE.
- **Be realistic:**

Give careful consideration as to whether you have capacity to run the activity.
- **Multiple project ideas/bids:** You are welcome to submit multiple bids, but please only include one proposal per form. If you are planning a big project, please bear in mind that we will only be funding up to £12,000 per proposal.

4) Funding FAQ

Match Funding

The project proposal must show how you will match the funding you are asking for from Aspire to HE. The project must be 100% matched but this doesn't have to be a cash match and could be a combination of the following;

- Staff time (please include detail of how that staff time is allocated and proportion of salary)
- Resources and materials
- Venue hire costs
- Marketing and promotion
- Other partnership funding

If your project has already started, you must include the source of your existing funding to ensure there are no double funding implications.

How much funding can I bid for?

In order to attempt to support a wide-range of projects, and due to limited funding, we are asking for match-funded projects bids not to exceed £12,000 per proposal.

What can the funding be used for?

The funding can be used to cover all aspects for running new or adding value to existing activities/ interventions to support the priority areas. This includes:

- New or existing projects initiatives supporting HE progression and access
- Materials to support the running of the project or initiative
- Bringing in external organisations to run sessions as part of a wider programme
- Staff & personnel costs in the delivery and administration of an event

What can the funding not be used for?

- The fund isn't intended to support individual applications from those who are looking to support their own HE progression or progression into specified institutions. We are looking for applications from organisations or self-employed freelancers who are able to demonstrate multiple impact to a group or community of people focussed around the priority areas.
- The Uni Connect Guidance from the Office for Students is clear that funding **cannot** be used to purchase branded 'freebies' for students, or purchase unnecessary hardware/materials i.e. we cannot fund tech/laptops etc. for learners. If in doubt please contact amy.allen@wlv.ac.uk for more guidance.
- The funding is only eligible to fund activity in the Black Country and Telford and Wrekin area. However if your project also covers activity in a bordering Uni Connect area we can consider a joint initiative so please contact us for more guidance.
- International Travel.

5) Monitoring and Evaluation Responsibility

As part of our reporting to the OfS we will need to monitor the impact of the partnership funding and will work with you to ensure that all relevant data is captured and shared accordingly.

If your bid is successful we will ask you to keep accurate records of evidence of interventions made with young people or communities. This might include registers, evaluations and evidence of 1-1 interventions, which will then be recorded on our data tracking system HEAT. We will work with you to ensure that all data sharing follows appropriate GDPR protocols.

Aspire to HE has a robust evaluation framework, and looks to work with young people and adults to develop in 5 core areas – knowledge of HE, attitudes, aspiration, soft skills and attainment. Unless a partner has their own evidence based evaluations, we will look for any joint funded project to be mapped against at least one of these core areas.

When developing your application please consider ways in which you intend to record, monitor and evaluate your project. If you wish to know more about our evaluation and outcomes framework or require support with this then please discuss in your initial conversation with the Amy Allen amy.allen@wlv.ac.uk

6) Time frames & next steps

- **Ask any questions** you may have to Amy Allen, Strategic Outreach and Delivery, (amy.allen@wlv.ac.uk) in advance of submitting your application. This will enable you to submit the most effective application and provide further context and understanding to the Aspire to HE team on potential projects we could work together on.
- **Attend an optional drop-in session/workshop** to talk through your ideas with us. We will be holding virtual drop-ins via Teams on:
 - Wednesday 1st November between 1pm and 3pm
 - Monday 13th November between 10am and 12noon

Please request to be invited to the Teams drop-ins by emailing Amy.

- **Complete and submit a Proposal Form** as soon as possible via email to amy.allen@wlv.ac.uk. The bidding window will be open until **5pm on Monday 20th November 2023**.
- **Review of projects/bids:**
Made by the Aspire to HE Discretionary Funding Sub Group.
- **Outcome communicated:**
Feedback will be provided to all project leads with next steps – informing you if you have been allocated funding, how much and for what project(s) and subsequently you will be asked to sign an agreement which reflects this.
We anticipate that feedback will be communicated to all project leads by 5pm on Thursday 7th December to allow sufficient planning time for any projects wishing to launch in January 2024.
- If for any reason you are unable to meet the following deadlines but feel you have a strong proposal please contact us to discuss your individual requirements.