



Digital Skills

The success of the D2N2 Strategic Economic Plan 2019 -2030 will depend on the extent to which we are able to respond to the major technological and social trends that will drive future growth. Linked with the 'grand challenges' identified in the UK Industrial Strategy, a key driver of change is successfully responding to the impact of digital enabling technologies and the 'data revolution', not just on specific products, production processes and skills, but on whole business models: over time, businesses will become 'digital businesses', even if their origins or core products long pre-date digital technology.

Module 1 – Digital Skills for the Unemployed (£1,132,973)

Digital skills are becoming increasingly essential for being successful in the labour market.

Looking ahead to 2030, we can expect our working-age population to grow only very slightly - so there won't be a lot of new labour coming into the economy. We can also expect the jobs of tomorrow to look a lot different – as digitalisation and automation gather pace – requiring a different skills' set. If we're to become a more efficient and internationally-competitive economy and, at the same time maintain a high level of employment (and minimise unemployment), we need to find ways to produce much more output with the labour we have and ensure everyone can compete in a digital economy.

There is a recognition that young people entering the global market over the next 10 years are the first generation of 'digital natives' – people who have grown up with digital technology and are comfortable using it for all manner of everyday tasks; it will be the older workers who will need to adapt and re-skill to remain competitive in the labour market. This call will prioritise those who are currently unemployed and inactive in the labour market to gain vital ICT skills to become competitive in the labour market and contribute to a high growth economy

This call will address the current skills mismatch in D2N2 and plan for the skills required in the digital age and in a high-value economy. This call will develop a pipeline of trained people with the digital skills required for SME's in D2N2 to flourish in the new digital economy. Activities within this priority will ensure a joined-up approach to meet the needs of businesses and individuals in the following ways

- Innovative delivery of digital skills to unemployed and inactive individuals to enable them to engage with employment
- support for collaborative projects, placements, internships or other activities that will enable unemployed individuals to gain industry-relevant experience and skills. Including brokering opportunities to encourage and increase work experience, work placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, and graduate placements particularly through wider employer engagement and involving supply chains;
- promoting apprenticeships (in ICT related subjects) by providing relevant training provision to unemployed and inactive individuals to enable them to access apprenticeships, developing a supportive environment for individuals and include employer engagement;
- developing better links with business to equip unemployed and inactive individuals with the skills to start and grow a business to meet local business needs
- engagement of the most disadvantaged groups or those who face local disadvantages in utilising digital skills

Module 2 - Digital Skills for the Employed in D2N2 (£2,000,000)

The refreshed D2N2 Strategic Economic Plan (2019 -2030) include a focus on supporting and developing the digital economy in the following areas.

- Digital opportunities for all businesses
- Digital skills for all
- A focus on the Creative and Digital Sector
- World class infrastructure and connectivity

This call will support our businesses to access the skills they need for productivity growth by providing employees with the skills to adapt to the digitalisation of the workplace and better engage with the knowledge and assets in our higher and further educational institutions and increase the take up of apprenticeships, particularly at higher and graduate levels.

The digitalisation in our economy will make new demands of our workforce, therefore we will need to raise our skills levels to meet these challenges.

The Made Smarter review of industrial digitalisation highlights that the relatively slow rate of technology adoption within UK businesses is acting as a brake on productivity improvements. More businesses need to adopt and adapt to innovation or be overwhelmed by it. In D2N2 we lag behind the UK on some measures of innovation performance, particularly product innovation.

Enabling businesses to exploit the opportunities from digitalisation will be a key component, building on our successful Digital Business Growth programme.

The creative and digital industries is a fast-growing sector locally, nationally and internationally and is important to the growth and development of other sectors. It is crucial that supplying software services and digital technologies for automotive, life sciences, visitor economy, and construction sectors can encourage innovation and design quality. The use of big and open data to be able to map out trends and forecasts is vital to the development of the sector. Furthermore, the creative and digital industries are a way to enhance the D2N2 area by attracting more inward investment, driving socioeconomic change and creating a culture of innovation, enterprise and creativity.

This call will address the current skills mismatch in D2N2 and plan for the skills required in the digital age and in a high-value economy. This call will develop the digital skills required for SME's in D2N2 to flourish in the new digital economy.

Interventions:

Activities should address some or all of the following;

- Practical support through coaching, advice, consultancy and mentoring to individuals seeking to improve digital skills to support SMEs utilise digital technologies and improve their productivity and competitiveness
- Assessment of the current skills profile of employees with a bespoke training plan which relates to the sector in which they are employed, and the employer's ICT needs and develop the appropriate training option or provide access to it
- Drive up skills levels, focusing on the skills being sought by employers
- Deliver skills provision which offers both accredited and non-accredited skills training which is innovative, responsive to local skills needs. Provision will normally be accredited but where suitable accredited provision does not exist, bespoke packages may be delivered (applicants will need to evidence qualifications delivered are full or units of level 2 or 3, as identified on the learning aims hub, to meet required outputs)
- Encouraging more women to engage in Digital Skills and help address the gender employment and wage gap
- Close partnership working with established training providers, business support providers and networks particularly the D2N2 Growth Hub Service

Outcomes

Some of the outcomes expected will be:

- Broker opportunities with local SMES in targeted priority and growth sectors to support existing employees as well as new staff to access additional qualifications in digital skills.
- Accredited units of learning at Level 2 or 3 and above may be funded where these do not lead to a full qualification.

- Work related learning and experience, developed and delivered in partnership with employers
- Increase participation in traineeships and apprenticeships as well as opportunities to link learning to work experience. Exploring and secure progression opportunities
- Work with colleges and independent training providers to revise provision to meet the future needs of SMEs in the Digital Age
- Foster an aspirational, digital and enterprising culture in SMEs

Contracting and funding allocation

The programme will be procured through the ESF Managing Authority (DWP) open call process.

The ESF funding allocation to support digital skills is £3,132,973. Applicants will need to have eligible match funding at 50% which must be from a source other than the European Union.

To ensure synergy D2N2 would wish to work with potential applicants to award one contract for Module 1 and 2 to ensure that services are available to beneficiaries across the D2N2 area and to avoid duplication in delivery.

Proposals should: deliver activities eligible for ESF; cover the whole D2N2 area; and be in line with the D2N2 LEP Core Delivery Principles. The Managing Authority may award more than one contract should applications of sufficient quality and scale be received that in combination provide for LEP wide coverage without duplication of activities or geography. There is a requirement for all contracts to clearly evidence how they will interact with each other to ensure they complement existing and future planned provision.

This document provides the strategic intent for this programme. Full details of the bidding, contracting and confirmed criteria will be provided within the published specifications.

The below provides an indicative breakdown of the funding allocation and targets.

Investment Priority	1.1	2.1
Module	Digital Skills for the Unemployed	Digital Skills for the Employed in D2N2
ESF	£1,132,973	£2,000,000
Match Funding	£1,132,973	£2,000,000
Targets	Volumes TBC	Volumes TBC
	Participants	Participants
	50+	50+
	Ethnic Minorities	Ethnic Minorities
	Disabilities	Disabilities
	Single adult household with dependent children	Single adult household with dependent children
	Basic skills	Basic skills

	Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	N/A
	Inactive	N/A