

OFFICER DECISION RECORD

Decision Title: Digital Skills Investment Programme Full Business Case

Decision reference number: 03.03.21

Decision date: 19 March 2021

Background / reason for decision:

In approving the £9.4m Regional Recovery Fund on 9 October 2020, the WECA Committee agreed officer delegations to ensure that decisions on business cases / detailed specific proposals for the agreed schemes can be progressed at pace.

One of the proposals was the Digital Skills Investment Programme, a £2 million investment to design and commission a programme of digital skills support.

A full business case was subsequently produced by WECA officers confirming the £2m requirement from the Investment Fund which will be match funded by £400k of Adult Education Budget and £279k from training providers.

Digital skills are recognised as becoming ever more important in today's economy and are a near universal requirement for employment. At least 82% of jobs require digital skills with employers indicating that about one-third of vacancies they find difficult to fill are, to some degree, attributable to a lack of digital skills amongst applicants.

The impact of COVID-19 has placed even greater emphasis on digital skills requirements.

The Digital Skills Programme will seek to maximise the value of any national programmes, such as the Lifetime Skills Guarantee and the Department for Education's Bootcamps. It will also highlight links to other WECA programmes and funded provision, such as Workforce for the Future, thus encouraging a skills eco-system and referral pathways.

The Digital Skills Investment Programme will administer a portfolio of calls, aligned to the region's digital pathway, to address digital skills gaps at both the lower/baseline and medium to higher level. The programme will target priority groups including:

- young people.
- unemployed people.
- people who have lost employment / income / education due to COVID-19.
- groups underrepresented in digital roles e.g. women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, people with a health condition /disability.
- people aged over 50.
- people that need additional support to secure a digital role e.g. career changers, returners to work, returners to the tech industry, graduates under-utilising their skills, residents currently in lower paid and/or insecure work.

The responses to each call for applications will be formally assessed against pre-determined criteria, with funding recommendations presented to the WECA Chief Executive for delegated approval in consultation with the Chief Executives of the constituent councils.

The Chief Executives of the WECA constituent councils were consulted on this proposal and were in agreement with the decision.

Options considered:

Not applicable in relation to this specific decision, i.e. this was the option considered.

Decision:

Approval given to the Digital Skills Investment Programme full business case and an award of £2m, noting that specific grant giving will be authorised by the WECA Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Executives of the constituent councils.

Consultation:

The Chief Executives of the WECA constituent councils were consulted on this proposal.

Officer making decision: Patricia Greer

Position: Chief Executive

Report / appendices / background documents:

None