

**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED
AUTHORITY COMMITTEE**

DATE: 06/10/2023

**REPORT TITLE: ADULT EDUCATION, MULTIPLY AND SKILLS
BOOTCAMPS**

**DIRECTOR: STEPHEN BASHFORD (DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
AND SKILLS)**

**AUTHOR: MELANIE TROTTER (AEB TEAM MANAGER) AND
GRAHAM SMITH (PEOPLE AND SKILLS COMMISSIONING
MANAGER)**

Purpose of Report

1. To update the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) Committee on the Adult Education Budget (AEB), Adult Skills Fund (ASF), Multiply, and Skills Bootcamps initiatives. A variety of decisions must be made to effectively administer public funding. To ensure timeliness and transparency, we are requesting that decisions are delegated to Director level.
2. To request delegation of decision-making powers for all three funding streams to Director level remain in place for as long as the funds are administered by the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Recommendation

- **Recommendation 1:** Delegate authority to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Director of Business and Skills, in consultation with equivalent Directors from the Unitary Authorities, to administer funds and deliver initiatives under pursuant to the Adult Education Budget / Adult Skills Fund, Skills Bootcamps and Multiply as detailed in paragraphs 24 and 25. In the event of a consensus not being reached at Director level, decision making will be escalated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs.

Reasons for recommendation

3. To enable timely and responsive decision making to ensure these funding

streams best meet the priorities outlined by the Metro Mayor in our agreed overall regional strategies, plans and budgets.

Voting arrangements

4. In order to be carried, a decision on this matter requires a majority of the members present and voting, such majority is to include the Metro Mayor. Each member present may cast one vote. If a vote is tied the decision is not carried. There is no casting vote.

Issues for Consideration

Adult Education Budget (AEB) and the Adult Skills Fund (ASF):

5. In 2018 the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority formally agreed to the transfer of powers and funding from the Secretary of State for Education. These powers and funds relate to certain aspects of mainstream Adult Education. The current mechanism for utilising these powers is the Adult Education Budget (AEB).
6. Since taking on the devolved powers and funding the Mayoral Combined Authority has supported c. 25,900 residents to undertake c. 59,000 learning aims. Our data reveals that to date 65% of our learners have been female, 47% are from an ethnic minority, with 35% from an ethnic minority excluding white minorities, and 22% have Learning Difficulties or Disabilities. 33% of our learners have accessed provision at Level 2+ and 9% have been supported through our Low Wage entitlement (fully funded courses for those earning under the real living wage).
7. As described in the initial AEB Committee paper dated 14 June 2019, the Mayoral Combined Authority's aim is to orientate the local Adult Education system to be more responsive to the specific needs of the Mayoral Combined Authority's residents, communities, businesses and the local economy. In order to deliver on this aim, the Mayoral Combined Authority continues to establish a local system which has the following aspects:
 - Provision which enables delivery of the priorities set out by the Metro Mayor in our different regional strategies and plans including the Employment and Skills Plan (ESP).
 - Provision which is varied, high quality and accessible to our residents and employers in both urban and rural settings.
 - Provision that is flexible and responsive to the changing regional environment.
 - A provider base which has a strong track record of successfully supporting learners to achieve their aims, fulfil their potential and achieve positive progression.
 - A provider base that works and plans in collaboration with others to create options and pathways for learners whilst also reducing unnecessary duplication of provision.
 - A system which supports a movement to a Low Carbon economy and helps supply green skills into the region's workforce.

- A system that, at its core, champions social value.
8. The Mayoral Combined Authority is taking an incremental multi-year approach to the development of the local Adult Education system. A broad outline of these developments can be found in appendix 1 of this report.
 9. Underpinning the work in relation to each academic year the Mayoral Combined Authority has:
 - 9.1. Developed robust data systems and practices to collect and manage data enabling us to monitor and manage performance. These processes have begun permeating across all funded projects within the Mayoral Combined Authority's People and Skills service.
 - 9.2. Worked with a range of partners/stakeholders to develop and run the system including Unitary Authorities, Department for Education (DfE) Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), other Mayoral Combined Authorities/Greater London Authority providers and their representative bodies.
 - 9.3. Assembled an appropriately skilled and experienced team to manage and administer the system.
 10. From the 2024/25 academic year the Adult Education Budget will be replaced on a national level with the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). This will involve changes to certain aspects of the national approach to adult skills funding and will amalgamate the AEB with other funding streams such as Multiply. There is no indication that this will alter the powers the Mayoral Combined Authority already has but it will potentially affect how they are exercised. We are not yet able to give more detail on the ASF as DfE have not yet published any guidance – we are fully engaged in conversation with them, alongside other Combined Authorities and will be able to confirm further detail in due course. Once clear guidance and detail has been provided by DfE, the Mayoral Combined Authority will determine the extent to which the new national approach (including funding rules and performance management approaches) best meets our regional needs and where deviation (enabled through our devolved powers) would better suit the needs of our region.
 11. Overall, the Mayoral Combined Authority will use the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 academic years to consolidate and continue to build upon the system changes introduced in previous academic years. Greater simplification and more flexibility will be given to providers to spend their allocations this academic year in response to a rapidly changing skills landscape. The Mayoral Combined Authority will build upon the strategy and underlying evidence base established from previous academic years to ensure we are best meeting our regional needs and objectives.

The Multiply Programme

12. Multiply is a national programme aimed at raising the level of adult numeracy skills.
13. Since its inception Multiply has brought c.£3m additional funding to the region. This will increase to £4.5 million by the end of its third year in 24/25. To date Multiply has reached over 1,500 of the region's most vulnerable residents targeting those who do not already hold a level 2 (GCSE C or above) in maths.
14. Multiply provision offers direct progression into substantial AEB/ASF funded provision. Curriculum designs are assessed on their uniqueness in order not to duplicate existing provision, (in line with ESP objective 1, simplifying and strengthening the skills system).
15. The Mayoral Combined Authority currently administers and manages the Multiply funding for the North Somerset geography. This is under an agreed arrangement with North Somerset Council.
16. The DfE has positioned Multiply directly under AEB/ASF for 2024/2025. It is likely that the Mayoral Combined Authority will follow suit and amalgamate Multiply staffing resources into the AEB/ASF team.

Skills Bootcamp Wave 4 and Wave 5

17. Skills Bootcamps fund provision which addresses short-medium term skills shortages. They are employer focused and offer a different approach to other mainstream skills funding.
18. Skills Bootcamps offer pathway progressions from AEB/ASF to higher levels of learning. They can bridge gaps from level 2 learning to higher level learning in higher education and apprenticeships.
19. Since its inception the Skills Bootcamps programme has brought an additional £9m of skills funding to the region and has supported over 2,000 residents.
20. The Mayoral Combined Authority intends to build on current funding (known as Wave 3) through Wave 4 into Wave 5 initiatives.
21. Future funding waves will continue to support delivery of Mayoral priorities contained within our regional strategies and plans including the ESP. The adaptable nature of Skills Bootcamps means that it can respond flexibly to regional changes in skills demand and support responses to emerging skills issues (i.e., HGV drivers, Bus drivers, staffing within Health and Social care etc.). As a result, Skills Bootcamps are a welcome addition to the regional skills landscape.
22. The Mayoral Combined Authority manages and administers Skills Bootcamp funding in Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Delegated Authority:

23. In relation to all three funding streams listed above, it is requested that decision making powers are delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Director of Business and Skills, in consultation with equivalent Directors from the Unitary Authorities. Where Directors cannot reach agreement, the matter in question is to be referred to CEOs.

23.1. Skills Bootcamps – this funding is currently administered on the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership geography.

23.2. Multiply – under the agreed arrangement where the Mayoral Combined Authority manages and administers Multiply funding on behalf of North Somerset Council.

24. The decision-making powers being delegated relate to all aspects of how the three funding streams are managed and administered. This ensures timely decision making to ensure they best meet the priorities outlined in our agreed overall regional strategies and plans (critically including the Employment and Skills Plan). An illustrative list of decisions in respect of which the delegations is sought includes:-

- Decisions on Adult Education Budget / Adult Skills Fund Commissioning Plan, Multiply and Skills Bootcamp funding approach.
- Decisions on indicative and final provider allocations for Adult Education Budget / Adult Skills Fund, Multiply and Skills Bootcamps.
- Decisions on in-year reallocation for funding including growth, claw back, continuing learners, and rebasing for future allocations.
- Decisions on provider contract extensions determined by the Grant Offer Letter.
- Decisions on contract termination in-line with rules determined with the Grant Offer Letter.
- Decisions to reallocate funding where providers are underperforming as determined in the Grant Offer Letter.
- Making decisions on the purpose and allocation of funds not allocated through initial funding calls or Curriculum Delivery Plan allocations.
- Making decisions on recommended amendments to the devolved approach for Adult Education Budget/Adult Skills Fund in subsequent academic years.

25. This delegated authority to Director level will remain in place for as long as the funds are administered by the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Consultation

26. Unitary Authority members of the Skills Officer Group are regularly consulted on matters relating to all three of these funding streams.

Risk Management/Assessment

27. The recommendations above address the risk that decisions relating to the three funding streams mentioned are not taken in a timely and responsive manner.

Public Sector Equality Duties

28. There are no specific implications resulting from this report for our equality duties over and above those normally applied.

Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

29. Financial implications from each of the funding streams

	22/23	23/24	24/25
AEB/ASF	£16,593,584.00	£16,146,966.00	1.15% of total national allocation + NSF funding (yet to be determined for 24/25) Multiply £1,395,745.59
Multiply	£1,209,646.19	£1,395,745.59	
Skills Bootcamp	£3,330,000.00	£5,115,000.00	Proposal to be submitted by end of September 2023.

*We are unable to forecast our funding allocation for 24/25 under the new Adult Skills Fund as DfE have not yet confirmed regional allocations. We will update Committee once details are confirmed by DfE.

Report and advice reviewed and signed off by: Selonge Russell 24/08/23

Legal Implications:

30. The delegation sought is lawful and enables timely and compliant decision making avoiding the need to rely on urgency provisions. Individual decisions made pursuant to any delegation will have their own legal implications which will be identified and addressed on a case by case basis.

Report and advice reviewed and signed off by: Daniel Dickinson, Interim Monitoring Office.

Human Resources Implications:

31. There are no HR implications arising from this report.
Report and advice reviewed and signed off by: Alex Holly, Head of People and Assets.

Land/property Implications

32. There are no land/property implications arising as a result of this report.

Appendices:

List any appendices to the report:

Appendix 1 – Adult Education Budget Yearly Developments

West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Contact:

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Appendix 1 – Adult Education Budget Yearly Developments

The development approach for the devolved Adult Education Budget has included:

2019/2020 (academic year): Mayoral Combined Authority introduced no changes to the system (e.g., rules, current providers etc.) and focused on smoothly landing the management and administration of the devolved powers and funding. Allocation levels were based on the funding utilised during the 2017/18 academic year.

2020/2021 (academic year): **Mayoral** Combined Authority worked with the same provider base and the same allocation levels whilst introducing a number of measured system changes. Critically these included instigation of the Curriculum Delivery Plan process where Mayoral Combined Authority allocations and Grant Funding Agreements (GFA) were only confirmed (provider by provider) once a Curriculum Delivery Plan (CDP) was developed and agreed.

2021/2022 (academic year): Mayoral Combined Authority introduced a number of further measured changes. Critically these included:

- The introduction of a Minimum Contract Value (MCV) to consolidate the inherited provider base.
- The introduction of a Strategy and underlying evidence base to support providers to focus on priority sub-regional groups of residents/communities, employers/sectors and geographies within the Mayoral Combined Authority area.

2022/2023 (academic year): The changes introduced in previous year were continued and the AEB Strategy maintained with further alignment to Mayoral priorities including Green Skills. An Open Application process allowed for new and existing providers to target gaps in provision.

2023/2024 (academic year): The Mayoral Combined Authority has simplified the Curriculum and Delivery planning to focus on priority residents. There is an increased focus on outcomes of provision including; positive progression, progression into work, and progression within work. Funding rates have been uplifted to match the ESFA priority sector areas as well as regional priority sector areas.