



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

ESFA business plan for the 2018 to 2019 financial year

October 2018

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Foreword from our Chief Executive

I am delighted to introduce this business plan, which sets out our policy and delivery ambitions for the 2018 to 2019 financial year. This plan aims to show the strong link between the vision of the Department for Education (DfE) and that of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). ESFA has a pivotal role to play in enabling the Secretary of State's priorities to be achieved.



Our vision is to 'support, develop and fund world-class education and skills provision for everyone to reach their potential, regardless of background'.

Our mission is to 'improve education and skills through excellent policy design and operational delivery, expert funding and market oversight'.

We are an executive agency of the DfE and our portfolio includes developing and implementing four of the Secretary of State's priority programmes on technical education reform and apprenticeships, funding schools and the further education (FE) sector, supporting citizens, schools and businesses to make informed choices about apprenticeships, skills, learning, work and careers. If we can harness the power and capability of the sector, working with our partners, we can continue to make an impact on boosting economic growth while creating opportunities for social mobility.

We care deeply about how it feels to interact with us, and we will continuously look for ways to improve that experience.

ESFA is committed to its staff, which is why we also have a people plan. Our people can expect us to value them, challenge them and develop their skills. Our aim is that they are empowered, innovative and continually seek to provide a better service to the sector.

We will use this business plan to set out our priorities for the year ahead, and to monitor our progress towards achieving them on a regular basis.





Eileen Milner

Chief Executive, Education and Skills Funding Agency

Introduction to ESFA

ESFA is an executive agency of DfE. It has responsibility, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, to oversee and be accountable for the funding of all 3 to 16 education, as well as post-16 education and training for young people, apprenticeships and funding for adult education in England, excluding higher education. It is also responsible for policy development and implementation of the technical education reform programme.

Our responsibilities are as follows:

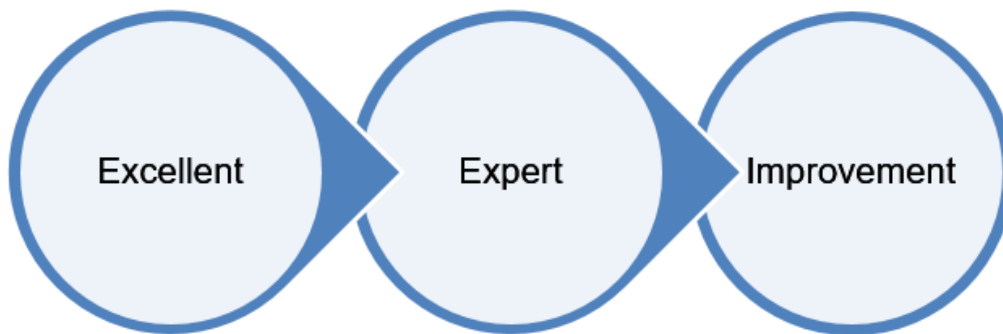
FUNDING	OVERSIGHT	DEVELOPING & DELIVERING HIGH PRIORITY POLICY PROGRAMMES & SERVICES	IMPROVEMENT
 <p>We are accountable for issuing £58bn of funding on time, every time.</p> <p>Funding distribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Authority Maintained Schools (pre-16) - £29.4bn• Academies - £18.2bn• 16 to 18 - £5.5bn• Apprenticeships - £2.3bn• Intervention, oversight & restructuring – £0.3bn• Adult Education – £1.6bn• European Social Fund – £0.2bn	 <p>We prevent and address risks to the sustainability and quality of education and skills provision, ensuring financial health of providers.</p>	 <p>We are delivering two of the governments highest priority Post 16 reform programmes. We also deliver high quality services on time and to budget that meet the needs of our users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical Education Reform• Apprenticeships• National Careers Service• WorldSkills UK	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market entry and exit• Restructuring• Re-brokerage

The Chief Executive of ESFA, as Accounting Officer, is responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which ESFA has charge; for ensuring propriety, regularity, value for money and feasibility in the handling of those public funds; and for the day-to-day operations and management of ESFA.

Our core principles

How we work and what we set out to achieve will be driven by our intent to deliver to the highest possible standards. This means that three core principles underpin our work:

1. Our ambition for all that we do must be that we aspire to be **excellent**, and that this commitment underscores the way in which we collaborate internally and how we are perceived and respected externally.
2. In order to be excellent, we must increasingly invest more in, and focus our efforts on, being **expert** and being recognised as such.
3. We must endeavour, through all that we do, to have a focus on how we serve to drive **improvement**. There is an ever-increasing need to anticipate and prevent failure, and it's a challenge to us, to where we sit, across all areas that we face, to visibly organise our work around this agenda.



Our ways of working

DfE has 4 transformation aims. As an executive agency of DfE, ESFA will support the achievement of these transformation aims, which are to:

1. **be user-centred:** we know who our users are and build our services around their needs
2. **deliver end-to-end:** we come together as one department to design and deliver
3. **empower ourselves and others:** we all feel we can innovate and take the initiative
4. **make evidence-based decisions:** we use our data to make effective decisions and improvements

Our priorities

Our priorities for the 2018 to 2019 financial year are set out in the sections below.



Empower our people

Develop and implement our people plan to ensure that we all have the skills, capabilities, support and confidence we need, to deliver our strategic priorities together.

To achieve this, we will:

- improve how we manage the performance of our people by working with our teams to identify where colleagues need help and offer active support
- recruit and train our existing people to be expert and provide excellent customer service and advice to Ministers
- ensure our people feel empowered and have the confidence to own their career development journey
- have a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, bullying and harassment

- tackle workplace anxiety and safeguard our people's wellbeing and mental health
- ensure sufficient coaches, mentors and buddies are available to support managers and staff
- increase our in-house specialist skill-set, and decrease our reliance on external suppliers for knowledge and skills

We will review progress against the following success measure:

- increasing the people survey engagement and learning and development scores across the agency to 75% with the ambition of becoming a high performing agency over the next 2 years

Deliver end-to-end

Policy development and delivery for apprenticeships and T Levels and provide insight on impact and outcomes.

To achieve this, we will:

- develop strong and productive relationships to combine both policy development and delivery within ESFA, ensuring all of our activity is designed, developed and implemented effectively
- turn policy aims into successful delivery for our customers by ensuring the 'voice of the customer' is at the heart of our work from policy through to delivery
- ensure policy development is supported by feedback from the sector and robust evidence
- always balance the needs of the customer with the best interests of the taxpayer in all development and delivery work.
- all products and services are developed and implemented using the highest standards of product development and delivery
- simplify accountability and roles of senior reporting officers (SROs) and programme directors
- create one apprenticeships group, linking up policy and delivery

We will review progress against the following success measure:

- ensuring we make life simple for our users so they have a straightforward end to end experience whilst linking into the departments transformation aims

Funding

Ensure all of our customers receive timely and accurate funding allocations and payments, and implement the schools national funding formula (NFF).

To achieve this, we will:

- deliver year 2 of the transition to a schools NFF
- build on our strong record of making accurate and timely allocations and payments to customers
- improve our systems and the experience of using them for our people and our customers
- align post 16 and adult education funding systems and capability
- agree a funding methodology for a second year of work placements in academic year 2019 to 2020 and first delivery of T levels in 2020 to 2021

We will review progress against the following success measure:

- accuracy and timeliness of all allocations and funding issued

Oversight and improvement

Prevent and address risks to the sustainability and quality of education and skills provision, with a focus on effective financial management and governance.

To achieve this, we will:

- work with providers to support good financial health, robust governance and better financial forecasting
- make the best use of our data to encourage better financial planning and forecasting
- shift the emphasis from intervening when problems have occurred, to preventing problems from occurring
- provide assurance that funding is used for its agreed purpose, and act swiftly and effectively in cases of suspected fraud and irregularity
- respond quickly to provider failure to ensure learner and employer interests are protected and new, high quality provision is identified
- align educational expertise with expert commercial skills to provide a rounded view of financial health and strategic solutions
- champion our customers and the tax payer to ensure best value for money across the sector
- improve the timeliness and completeness of data collected

We will review progress against the following success measure:

- effectiveness in predicting and managing providers in financial difficulty

Programmes and services

Design and adapt our services to reflect policy development to meet the growing demand from academies, providers, employers and citizens.

To achieve this, we will:

- accurately forecast the short and long-term future cost of our programmes
- deliver the final year of the current European Social Fund programme and put in place delivery arrangements for a successor programme from 2019 to 2020
- continue to manage the National Careers Service enabling citizens to access high-quality bespoke support to help them acquire the skills and training needed to progress in work and life
- support the devolution of the adult education budget and seek to protect the financial stability of institutions in the transition
- implement new contractual arrangements for delivery of the Student Bursary Support Service for disadvantaged 16- to 19-year-olds from 2019 to 2020
- take on responsibility for managing the grant arrangements for WorldSkills UK and assist with its programme of international and national skills competitions including its annual WorldSkills UK LIVE skills and careers events

We will review progress against the following success measure:

- all programmes delivered within agreed budget, timescale and outcome

Apprenticeships and technical education reform: develop and deliver the government's highest priority post 16 reform programmes.

To achieve this, we will:

- reform the qualifications market with new technical qualifications, known as T Levels, across fifteen routes in subjects including construction, creative and design, digital, engineering and manufacturing, and health and science
- develop the design principles for T Levels, establish a sustainable contract regime to procure and effectively manage the services of awarding organisations to develop T Level qualifications, and develop and coordinate the establishment of a robust assurance framework
- to develop and secure approval of high quality outline content to inform T Level qualifications
- test and establish the sustainable delivery of industry placements to act as a fundamental element of a successful T Level
- support the government's ambition of more high quality apprenticeships

We will review progress against the following success measures:

- introduction of high quality T Levels across 25 pathways, with the first 3 in teaching from September 2020
- number of apprenticeship starts

Be user-centred

Value and draw insight from our customers' experience, creating and continuously improving our programmes and services to meet their needs.

To achieve this, we will:

- publish an ESFA customer commitment, and ensure our service is easy for all to use and work with
- put customer experience at the heart of everything we do
- reward our people for effective customer experience initiatives
- provide an efficient customer enquiry service for providers, employers, learners and parents
- actively monitor user feedback and use it to continuously improve the services we provide
- monitor telephone and web-chat conversations to improve frontline services through the National Contact Centre
- transform the National Careers Service into a digital-first careers service through an engaging and inspiring website where all government careers material is available in one place

We will review progress against the following success measures:

- increased customer satisfaction in relation to the programmes and services we provide
- increased customer satisfaction in relation to the quality and timeliness of our responsiveness and resolution of enquiries

Be a data-led organisation

Drive value and innovation, deliver predictive data insight, to support ourselves and others to make evidence based decisions.

To achieve this, we will:

- upskill our people to make the best use of the data available to us
- challenge established norms and embrace the potential benefits of new methods of collecting and analysing data, such as machine learning

- move to a single data collections platform, allowing us to streamline data collection and improve the timeliness and quality of the data underpinning our products and analysis
- work more closely with data suppliers to make data collections as easy as possible whilst collecting only the data we need

We will review progress against the following success measures:

- increasing the number of automation and analysis tools we are developing in house
- increasing the usage of automation and analysis tools in house to enable effective decision making and influence policy design and outcomes



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