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Guidance

Apply to take part in the FE funding simplification pilot

How further education (FE) colleges can express an interest in a pilot to test simplifications to funding, audit and reporting.

From: [Department for Education](#)

Published 16 January 2024

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Applies to England

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We are launching a one-year pilot in the 2024 to 2025 academic year to support FE colleges by testing simplifications to funding, audit and reporting.

This pilot is part of a wider drive to simplify FE provision and increase productivity and follows on from the previous [funding and accountability reforms](#) which enable providers to:

- deliver high-value provision that meets both national and local economic needs
- support learners to progress into good, sustainable jobs

We are looking for a small number of FE colleges to take part in the pilot.

As part of the pilot, we will:

- give colleges more flexibility by removing several funding rules and some individual ringfences within Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

managed adult skills funding and 16 to 19 funding

- allow pilot colleges to deliver Skills Bootcamps without the need to bid for funding via procurement - colleges with an existing Skills Bootcamps contract may be able to access additional Skills Bootcamps funding
- improve how we deliver adult skills funding to improve predictability
- capitalise on the reduced funding rules and ringfences to simplify how we audit and assure FE funding as well as simplify back-end data processing
- develop options with a view to test several simplifications for apprenticeships, which could include simplifying onboarding, testing new funding approaches and streamlining end point assessment processes

This pilot is separate to the apprenticeship expert provider project, but learning will be shared where appropriate.

We will work with colleges selected for the pilot to finalise the proposals that we will test from August 2024.

Selection process and criteria

The pilot is only for general further education colleges that are part of the statutory FE sector. These colleges deliver the widest range of provision types and therefore are subjected to the most complexity.

If we get more colleges interested in participating than we have space for, we will select colleges based on:

- previous engagement with the department to develop and deliver the government's policies and priorities, such as apprenticeships and bootcamps
- what the college will aim to gain from participating in the pilot and what they can bring to the pilot

- colleges with a good financial health, with no significant concerns raised in any recent Department for Education or ESFA audits and no current, or recent investigations underway
- colleges that deliver a reasonable proportion of both apprenticeships and adult skills provision to sufficiently test the pilot changes
- their geographical location across England

In assessing applications for the pilot, we will focus on answers to the first 2 questions on prior engagement with the department and what the college will gain from, and bring to, the pilot.

We will work closely with colleges during the pilot to run and evaluate our proposals.

The proposals in the pilot will not impact funding that colleges receive from authorities with devolution deals for adult skills funding. Colleges in regions with devolved responsibilities for adult skills are still eligible to apply.

Ways of working for colleges selected for the pilot

Colleges selected for the pilot should be willing to:

- increase their delivery of government priority schemes, such as apprenticeships and bootcamps
- make a reasonable commitment to working with the department both before, during and after the pilot via regular workshops and meetings
- be willing to complete relevant evaluation processes and requirements for the pilot

Apply for the pilot

To apply for the pilot, please email us responses to the following statements:

- a short description of how you have previously worked with the department to deliver or develop the government's policies and priorities (maximum 500 words)
- outline how your organisation will use the flexibilities described in the advert above to increase the learner experience and outcomes, and what your organisation will bring to the pilot (maximum 500 words)

Send your application

to FEFunding.SIMPLIFICATIONPILOT@education.gov.uk by 11:59pm on Wednesday 31 January 2024.

Timetable

Wednesday 31 January 2024 11:59pm

Expression of interest (EOI) window closes.

February 2024

Colleges informed of the outcome of their EOI.

February 2024 to August 2024

We will work with colleges selected for the pilot to finalise changes.

August 2024 to August 2025

Pilot live, ongoing evaluation.

Further information

If you have any questions about the pilot please contact FEFunding.SIMPLIFICATIONPILOT@education.gov.uk.

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