

# **NATIONAL CONTRACTS SERVICE**

## **Employer Guide**

- 1 Introduction**
- 2 The National Contracts Service, its role and programmes that can be Funded**
- 3 Process for Contracting with the National Contracts Service**
- 4 Work Based Learning for Young People**
- 5 Work Based Learning for Adults**
- 6 Financial Assurance**
- 7 Health & Safety**
- 8 Data Processing**
- 9 Audit**
- 10 Help!**
- 11 Useful Contacts**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Contracts Service, part of the Learning and Skills Council, has the remit of engaging large, multi site employers in work based learning.

This employer guide has been designed to help new organisations that wish to contract with the National Contracts Service. Before you read through the guide, please complete the eligibility questionnaire to ensure that your company is eligible for funding through the NCS. [\[link to employer questionnaire\]](#) You can also register your interest through the questionnaire.

Once you have registered your interest with NCS you will be contacted by a senior member of staff who will visit you and allocate a Sector Account Manager to work with you. There is no need to complete any other documentation before the visit.

In each section of this guide there is a brief on its contents and how it can help you through the process.

## **2. The National Contracts Service**

*This section is provided for information only and outlines the role of the National Contracts Service within the Learning and Skills Council.*

*It explains the types of funding available through the Service and how it is using this funding as part of its role.*

### **THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CONTRACTS SERVICE**

#### **CUSTOMERS**

The Learning and Skills Council has established the National Contracts Service to provide a single point of contract for large - that is more than 1000 employees - multi-site employers who have sites in five or more Local Learning and Skills Council areas. Employers may contract directly or could authorise a training provider to contract on their behalf.

Whilst in exceptional cases large, multi site employers may want to contract with Local Learning and Skills Councils, most appreciate the benefits of a single contract through a single body.

In exceptional cases single, specialist sector training providers may be eligible to contract through the National Contracts Service.

To summarise, the National Contracts Service is available to the following types of organisation:

- a) employers with over 1000 employees, located in at least 5 local LSC areas who have a centralised personnel and payment system;
- b) training providers who are authorised to contract by large, multi site employers;
- c) in exceptional circumstances, training providers that provide a service to a specific specialist industry sector;

The NCS is not remitted to work with;

- National providers working on behalf of individuals or local SMEs;
- National voluntary organisations or charities training individuals who are not their employees;
- Any learning projects/contracts where the learners are not employed

If you are seeking funding for such programmes you should approach the local LSC nearest to your head office. [link to local LSCs]

## **FUNDED PROGRAMMES**

The National Contracts Service offers funding for the following programmes :

- Work Based Learning for young people
  - Modern Apprenticeships
  - National Vocational Qualifications (in exceptional circumstances)
- Work Based Learning for Adults
  - National Vocational Qualifications
  - Basic Skills
- UFI Directly funded Sector Based Hubs
- Provider Development Fund

## **WORK BASED LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Work Based Learning for Young People (WBLYP) is the generic title for the programmes the Learning and Skills Council will fund for young people between 16 and 24 years of age. The WBLYP route comprises of two streams that young people follow, Modern Apprenticeships and NVQ Training

### **Modern Apprenticeships**

This is the preferred vocational route the government wishes young people to follow. It is aimed at young people who are capable of achieving NVQ levels 2 and/or 3 and provides training in line with frameworks produced by Sector Skills Councils. [Link – Sector Skills Development Agency] Modern Apprentices are expected to be employed by the employer offering the training. There are two levels of Modern Apprenticeships these are:

- Foundation Modern Apprenticeships
- Advanced Modern Apprenticeships

A Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) is primarily for young people to gain an NVQ Level 2 with Key Skills and Technical Certificates.

Young people recruited to FMAs will typically have left school with D's or E's at GCSE.

An Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA) is similar to the above but aimed at NVQ Level 3 with Key Skills and Technical Certificates. You can find out more by visiting [real work real pay.com]

Young people recruited to AMAs will typically have left school with A's, B's or C's at GCSE.

### **NVQ Training**

This route is primarily aimed at young people who are either unable to complete an NVQ at level 2 or above, or where there is no approved framework from a Sector Skills Council. **It is only in exceptional cases that the National Contracts Service will fund NVQ training.**

Details of Funding rates for WBLYP for the current year are available at [funding rates WBLYP]

Further details on WBLYP can be found in Section 4.

### **WORK BASED LEARNING FOR ADULTS**

The National Contracts Service provides funds to employers to part finance the completion of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 or 3 by their employees

The training is funded either directly to employers (preferably) or via their chosen training provider(s). Funds are provided at the start of the programme and on successful completion.

Details of funding rates for the current year and full application details are available by clicking on the following link [funding rates over 24]

Further details on Work Based Learning for Adults can be found in section 5.

### **Ufi Directly Funded Sector Based Hubs**

The National Contracts Service funds a directly funded sector based hubs.

These are:

SEMTA	-	Engineering hub
Assa	-	Motor Vehicle Manufacturing hub
Careconnect	-	Health hub
Lantra	-	Land based industry hub
CITB	-	Construction hub
Road Haulage hub		
TUC hub		
Virgin Tracks hub	-	Rail hub
	-	Visual Communications hub

### **Provider Development Fund (PDF)**

The Service's Provider Development Fund is used to support quality improvement in Council-funded contractors and so to contribute to raising standards in post – 16 learning.

Contract holders are able to bid into the fund to finance improvements to the learning process as identified in their Development Plan. Sector Account Managers approve Development Plans and agree an allocation of the Provider Development Fund.

To be successful bids are also expected to contribute not only to quality improvement but also to addressing the LSC's national priorities, where appropriate.

For 2003/04 the national priorities are:

- self assessment and development planning, including 3 year development plans as outlined in "Success for All";
- Equality and diversity;
- Learner retention and achievement;
- Leadership and management;
- Support to employers and providers with potential to be "excellent";
- Development of qualified staff with a focus on key skills, assessment and verification, and basic skills assessment and support;

- The continued introduction and achievement of technical certificates.

The total development funds available to the National Contracts Service for its provision amount to £1million for the 2003-04 contract year.

The Service also uses these funds to organise events designed to address common areas for improvement. Details of these appear in the [NCS Bulletin – link].

It is expected that the PDF will become an annual funding stream, continually helping our contractors to improve their delivery and so provide the highest quality of learning to their employees.

### **3. Process for Contracting with the National Contracts Service**

*This section describes the stages from first contact to a contract with NCS. It is written as a flowchart with a tracking sheet to help you keep a record of your progress.*

It also lists the documents required to gain a contract and has links to digital pro formas for you to download.



# THE PATH TO FUNDING

**Documents**

**Date Completed**

**Stage One  
Pre-Application**

Initial Visit by Senior Sector Account Manager to confirm eligibility and discuss programme

NCS Marketing Pack (provided by SSAM)



**Stage Two  
Application**

Employer and Sector Account Manager work up application

- a) Employer sends company accounts to NCS
- b) Financial assurance visit to employer by PWC
- c) Health and safety assurance visit
- d) SAM outlines Quality Assurance requirements.

Initial Assessment of New Provider [Link]

company accounts

Financial Questionnaire [Link]  
H&S Checklist [Link]

None

Grey bars representing date completion fields for company accounts, Financial Questionnaire, H&S Checklist, and None.



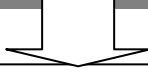
**Stage Three  
Approval**

SAM takes application to NCS Approval Panel.  
  
APPROVAL GIVEN

Panel Approval Form (SAM completes)  
Notification of Approval [Link]

Panel Date

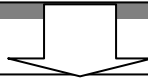
Grey bars representing date completion fields for Panel Date and Notification of Approval.



**Stage Four  
Preparation for Contract**

Employer or agents attends training on NCS data requirements with NCSL support services.

Grey bar representing date completion field for Stage Four.



**Stage Five  
Contract**

- a) SAM and employers agree learner numbers
- b) Contract issued by NCS
- c) Contract signed by employer
- d) Contract signed by NCS

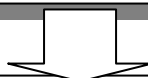
MA and Over24 profiles submitted

Contract

Contract

Contract

Grey bars representing date completion fields for MA and Over24 profiles submitted, Contract (three instances), and Contract.



**Stage Six  
Quality Assurance**

Within 6 months of signing contract Employer produces Self Assessment Report (SAR) and development action plan (DAP)

SAR  
DAP  
Ali Link

DAP Signed off

Grey bar representing date completion field for DAP Signed off.

## **4. Funding Rates for Worked Based Learning for Young People (WBLYP)**

*This section contains further detail on the funding rates payable for young people that are on WBLYP programmes and links to WBLYP documents.*

This route currently is split into 2 broad categories:

Modern Apprenticeships, both Foundation and Advanced and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Training.

### **Modern Apprenticeships**

The rates vary by occupational sector and are based on the typical length of time (in months) that a learner would receive funding.

An amount of money is also allocated for payment of the Technical Certificate, please consult your Sector Account Manager for further details.

The funding is paid in three ways:-

1. On Programme Payments; a payment for each month a learner is in learning.
2. On achievement; of an NVQ or complete framework.
3. For Technical Certificates; a payment each month for the technical certificate element of a Modern Apprenticeship

Your Sector Account Manager will explain the rates structure further and also advise on additional or other funding routes.

Current MA rates are shown at [[Link to WBLYP rates](#)]

## **5. Work Based Learning for Adults**

### **Over 24 Employee NVQ Programme**

The National Contracts Service funds employees of large, national companies to complete Basic Skills and National Vocational Qualifications at levels 2 or 3 and in some cases level 4

The initiative satisfies the aims of the Learning and Skills Council, by contributing to national training targets.

The training is funded either directly to employers, the preferred route, or via their chosen training providers.

In 2002/03 over 20,000 employees were funded via this scheme.

The funding is available to all NCS contractors.

Funding is paid in two parts.

1. On start, when an employee is enrolled onto a learning programme – to cover enrolment and registration costs.
2. On achievement of the NVQ – to cover training and assessment costs.

There are no on programme payments.

The rates vary with the occupational sector and the NVQ level.

Rates for the current year may be found at [over 24 rates].

An application form for the over 24 programme can be found at [over 24 application form].

### **Basic Skills**

Where employees recruited onto NVQs are found to be in need of basic skills training employers are encouraged to provide for their needs.

Although there are no published rates for basic skills your Sector Account Manager will advise on funding that can be agreed on an individual basis.

## 6. Financial Assurance

*This section outlines the way in which NCS assures the financial health of prospective contractors.*

The NCS needs to ensure that all who contract for the delivery of learning remain in healthy financial circumstances throughout the duration of the funded learning.

As part of the initial assessment of new contractors NCS has established a financial assurance process.

This involves:

- Completion of a questionnaire [link to financial questionnaire]
- Examination of the contractors' published accounts
- A visit to the contractors' financial nominee by the NCS accountants, PwC
- A report produced by PwC that goes to the NCS Panel

No contract can be issued before the financial report is received. This process will take a minimum of 5 weeks from receipt of the prospective contractors accounts.

**You can speed the process by ensuring that your financial nominee knows about the learning programme and the need to arrange a visit and arranges a meeting with our accountants promptly.**

## **7. Health and Safety**

*This section outlines the NCS approach to ensuring learners are safe throughout their learning.*

The health and safety of learners is a fundamental to the Learning and Skills Council. We believe that learners are entitled to learning that takes place in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

In addition, we consider that safe learning is essential to maximise learners' experience and achievement.

The NCS will endeavour to assure itself that all learners participating on government funded training schemes are undertaking their training in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

NCS cannot issue a contract unless we are content that learners' safety is assured. As part of this process the NCS requires completion of a Health & Safety questionnaire [[link to H&S questionnaire on LSC web site](#)] and a visit by our Health & Safety expert to review your arrangements for ensuring Health & Safety.

You can speed this process by ensuring that your Health & Safety nominee knows about the training programme proposed and arranges to meet our consultants promptly.

## 8. Data Processing

*This section outlines the data processing requirements of an NCS contractor and how you can get assistance to prepare for a contract.*

As NCS distributes government funds it has a responsibility to account for the funds distributed. In order to do this we must collect information on learners and their achievement. We also need information to be able to pay our contractors.

To collect this information we have constructed a large database that holds all LSC data. Each month contractors upload data to this database. LSC then process payments and produce summary data for its officers and sometimes ministers.

The timely return of data is therefore a condition of contracting with NCS.

To outline the data requirements of funding NCS has established NCS Support Services. This organisation

- provides training
- provides advice
- provides a help line \* number \* email\*
- produces a regular bulletin

on data requirements.

For more detail visit the following link [NCS Support Services]

## 9. Audit

*This section outlines the audit requirements of NCS contractors.*

Whenever public funds are distributed the distributing body has a responsibility to ensure that the funds are used for the purposes intended.

When NCS first contracts with an organisation we take steps to see that the contractor can account for the funds it receives. If you contract with NCS you can expect:

- 1 An initial visit to review your procedures.

This visit will provide you with advice and guidance to ensure that you can account for funds. A report will highlight any changes you need to make. It will also establish a rating for the effectiveness of your systems.

2. Regular Visits

These visits, which vary in frequency depending on the rating of the effectiveness of your systems, will result in a report and maybe in actions being identified.

If ever you have problems relating to audit, your account manager will be able to help.

## **10. Help!**

It can sometimes seem that there is so much to do to run an effective training programme. That is why we allocate Sector Account Managers (SAMs) to help you.

Your SAM will help you with your queries and can help you complete the documents necessary to contract.

The can also call in other experts in areas such as:

- Quality
- Health and Safety
- Audit
- Data Processing
- Qualifications and the Learning process

There are also networks of employers that come together to help one another.

NCS contracts with over 100 large, multi sited employers and can usually answer your questions – or find someone else who can.

If you have any concerns – contact your Sector Account Manager.



## 11. Useful Websites

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

**The Learning and Skills Council is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England.**

Our mission is to raise participation and attainment through high-quality education and training which puts learners first.

Our vision is that, by 2010, young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world.

With a budget of £7.3 billion the Council operates through 47 local offices and a national office in Coventry.

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

There is now a wide acceptance that to build an economy that will continue our success in the global market place we will need an even better educated and more highly skilled workforce. Equally importantly, to build a fair and inclusive society everyone must have the opportunity to realise their full potential. The work of the new **Department for Education and Skills** is central to achieving both of these aims.

[www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)

The Adult Learning Inspectorate reports, both to the Secretary of State for Education and the public, on the quality of education and training received by adult learners and young people in England.

**The ALI is responsible for inspecting all publicly funded work-based training for people over 16 and learning for post-19s.**

ALI inspectors are also responsible for inspecting learning in prisons, all adult and community education, area inspections of provision for 16-19 year olds in support of [OfSTED](#), and e-learning via [learnirect](#) provided on-line by the University for Industry. In addition, the ALI will inspect training offered and funded by employers at their invitation.

[www.lfw.org.uk](http://www.lfw.org.uk)

"**Learning for Work Limited** is a not for profit company limited by guarantee which has been set-up specifically to act as the Managing Agent for the Key Skills Support Programme in the work-based route. It brings together three organisations which have been very active in supporting and implementing key skills delivery in the workplace over a number of years".

[www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

**The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** is a guardian of standards in education and training. We work with others to maintain and develop the [school curriculum](#) and associated [assessments](#), and to [accredit](#) and [monitor](#) qualifications in schools, colleges and at work.

[www.ssdauk.co.uk](http://www.ssdauk.co.uk)

The Learning and Skills Development Agency is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. The Agency was previously known as the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA).

[www.lsda.org.uk](http://www.lsda.org.uk)

The Learning and Skills Development Agency is a strategic national resource for the development of policy and practice in post-16 education and training. The Agency was previously known as the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA).