

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Date: 10th February 2023

Subject: Skills Bootcamps: Priorities & Approach for 2023-25

Report of: Cllr Eamonn O'Brien; Portfolio Lead for Education, Skills, Work & Apprenticeships and Digital and Joanne Roney; Lead Chief Exec for Education, Skills, Work & Apprenticeships and Digital.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of the report is to provide members with:

- An update on Skills Bootcamps particularly the opportunities to access devolved funds to support retraining and upskilling until March 2025.
- Outline a delivery proposal for skills bootcamps including sector focus and set out the approach for working with stakeholders to commission provision.
- Key recommendations to ensure that this ambitious programme can be delivered on time, with full draw down of funding and maximum benefit for GM residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

GMCA is requested to:

1. Comment on the proposed approach to Skills Bootcamp delivery until March 2025.

BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

2. Delegate authority to the GMCA Treasurer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead for the Education, Skills, Work & Apprenticeships and Digital to agree the commissioning route and award of individual contracts including any subsequent contract extensions.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	The Skills Bootcamps Proposal supports those who are economically disadvantaged by ensuring they can access fully-funded skills provision with bespoke programmes for disadvantaged groups to support removal of barriers. This supports residents to progress in learning and to move towards / into productive and sustained employment. The Skills Bootcamps Proposal for 2023/24 set out what we plan to deliver to fill in-demand skills vacancies in the region with a focus on responding to the inequalities commission and targeting those groups facing most barriers to accessing employment.
Health	G	The opportunity to upskill and retrain into good quality well paid work will promote better physical and mental health for residents. Providers will need to show the wrap around support in place; for example, with childcare, resilience and mental health support.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	Upskilling residents and tackling skills gaps will support individuals, businesses and GM's labour market to become more adaptable and resilient, future proofing the economy. The specific focus on green skills will support GM's low carbon infrastructure.
Housing		
Economy	G	The Skills Bootcamps proposal will address key skills gaps identified in GM (especially those within priority sectors, such as Digital and Green) by employers and will provide local residents with opportunity to access fully funded training leading to improved employment. The proposal addresses the needs for upskilling and retraining to support career progression.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	The proposal outlines green skills as one of the key priority areas for upskilling residents in GM. In 2022/23 we have worked with providers who have delivered bootcamps in areas such as Low carbon, electric car installation, rail engineering and insulation which we will continue to run in 23/24. This will not only give residents the opportunity to upskill/retrain but will help reduce carbon emissions and achieve GM's Net Zero targets through filling these in demand "green economy" roles.
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		This proposal supports Greater Manchester to become carbon neutral by 2038 through the delivery of skills training relating to the green economy (such as retrofitting, and electric vehicle installation). The commissioning also goes beyond delivering skills programmes and includes working with sector business leaders and training providers to build systemic capacity to lead/respond to the low carbon agenda through employer led skills bootcamps.

Further Assessment(s): N/A

 Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	 Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	 Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	 Negative impacts overall.
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Risk Management:

A risk assessment has been developed for the programme identifying key risks and planned mitigations – strategic risks are highlighted under section five. GMCA's Education, Work & Skills Directorate will work with providers to ensure comprehensive processes are in place to identify and manage risk including managing the performance of delivery.

Legal Considerations:

Colleagues from legal have played a key role in the delivery of the various GM Skills Bootcamp pilots thus far.

The DfE will be making National Skills Fund (“**NSF**”) Grant available to the GMCA for the delivery of the GM Skills Bootcamps Programme during the 2023-24 Financial Year. It is expected that the DfE will require the GMCA to enter into a formal Memorandum of Understanding / Grant Offer Letter / Grant Funding Agreement (the “**DfE GFA**”), which will oblige the GMCA to comply with the DfE’s requirements in respect of the use of this NSF Grant. It is expected that the DfE GFA will include standard Government Grant “clawback” provisions which will apply in the event that the GMCA fails to comply with its obligations.

The GMCA will in turn procure a number of Providers who will enter into contracts with the GMCA for the delivery of individual GM Skills Bootcamps Projects across GM (the “**GMCA Contracts**”). The GMCA will ensure that its procurement of these Providers complies with all relevant requirements under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the GMCA’s own Financial Regulations, and all relevant requirements imposed under the DfE GFA. The GMCA will ensure that its GMCA Contracts “flow through” to Providers the obligation to comply with all relevant requirements of the DfE GFA (such as the requirement for Providers to supply the GMCA with any Monitoring Information which the GMCA is in turn required to supply to the DfE under the DfE GFA).

GMCA’s Education, Work & Skills Directorate will work with legal support to ensure the DfE GFA and the GMCA Contracts are in place within the timescales required.

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

This proposal provides an additional external funding stream of £7m to support retraining provision in GM in FY 23/24. To note – This is the same amount of funding we received in 22/23. DfE have approved in principle the full £7m for skills delivery, however they only have initial approval from HMT for 70% of this amount. DfE expects approval for the rest of the funding after business planning at the end of January/ early February. It is likely that we will

receive similar funds for 24/25 but this will be confirmed in late 2023. (We have pushed hard for a multi-year allocation to support strategic planning without success).

Financial Consequences – Capital:

Not applicable.

Number of attachments to the report: 0.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Engagement took place with the Economy, Business Growth & Skills Overview & Scrutiny committee prior to the proposal being submitted in early 2022 which this is an evolution of. There have also been further updates on all education, work and skills programmes. Individual contract awards have also been shared with scrutiny members providing the opportunity for questions before formal contract awards are made.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Skills Bootcamps Policy Spec Wave Four FY2023-24 Grants.docx](#)

TRACKING/PROCESS

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

Yes – impacts on all 10 LA Areas.

EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - GMCA EWS Update 14th Dec 2022

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Department for Education (DfE) are providing £2.5bn of funding (released on a year by year basis) running until 2024/2025 for the National Skills Fund (NSF) to help adults build skills for the economy of the future; complementing provision available through Adult Education Budget (AEB). NSF comprises of Skills Bootcamps and the Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs Offer. **Skills Bootcamps** offer free flexible courses of up to 16 weeks giving people the opportunity to build up sector specific skills and fast track to an interview with a local employer. The key objectives are to support adults to retrain/upskill into a better role and help employers to fill current skills shortage vacancies.

Skills Bootcamps are targeted at all adults aged 19+ who are in-work, self-employed, unemployed, returning to work after a career break and prisoners on temporary release or due to be released within six months.

GMCA initially worked with DCMS, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership & more recently DfE to test “digital skills bootcamps” through a multi-year £6m pilot starting in 2019. (Details on impact under section 2). In 22/23 we received £7m of funding for skills bootcamps delivery, splitting the funding across three key sectors; Digital & Tech, Construction & Green and Manufacturing (Details on impact under section 2). The success of which has led to further funding being secured for the Skills Bootcamps delivery in 23/24. It is important to note that whilst we have funding and locally commissioned projects, it is not fully devolved.

GM’s Labour Market is at a pivotal moment; skills and work activity has a critical role to play in supporting the recovery of growth and foundation sectors and tackling inequalities. GM is working with industry to shape our training offers, creating more routes into skilled employment. Skills Bootcamps are a unique industry led offering through co-design/delivery with employers. They represent an example of the flexible, non-qualification-based training that will play a vital role in responding to the Local Skills Improvement Plan currently being developed in GM led by the GM Chamber of Commerce. The GM LSIP will be published in late Spring, making recommendations around changes that are needed in the local skills offer in order to better align with the needs of our labour market.

Skills Bootcamps are one element of an integrated approach to skills dovetailing with:

- **Adult Education Budget** focuses on ensuring adults aged 19+ have the core skills that they need for work and fulfills several statutory entitlements relating to english, maths

and digital skills as well as first Level 2 and 3 qualifications and ESOL. AEB also delivers pre-employment training to support Sector Based Work Academies for jobseekers.

- **Skills for Growth** is a £42m three year ESF funded programme due to finish by the end of September 2023 which supports businesses to fill occupational skill gaps and upskilling for people in-work. At present it is supporting upskilling through flexible skills provision in the following key sectors; retrofit, construction, blue light services, health & social care, logistics, digital and manufacturing.
- Greater Manchester has ambitious plans to become the UK's leading technical education city region. This would build upon our thriving **Apprenticeships and Technical Education** landscape incorporating; GMACs, Traineeships, T-Levels, Apprenticeships, The GM Institute of Technology and Higher Technical Qualifications.

2. PROGRESS MADE TO DATE

Following an announcement in the October 2018 Budget GMCA worked with the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) to test “digital skills bootcamps”. The pilot funded twenty consortia of employers & providers to deliver innovative digital skills training with a wide range of employers engaged of all sizes and across all sectors. A wide range of underrepresented/disadvantaged groups were supported including unemployed young people, women returners, ethnic minorities and residents displaced by Covid-19. The success of the pilot led to an opportunity to work with DfE to further test the model and skills bootcamps are now being rolled out at scale nationally as part of National Skills Fund.

In 22/23 we have funded 14 providers across three priority sectors: Digital, Creative & Tech, Construction & Green and Manufacturing. There is a wide variety of skills bootcamps being delivered, covering skills gaps in areas such as: digital marketing, cyber security, cloud engineering, low carbon heating, installation of green technologies, rail engineering, advanced manufacturing and industrial textiles. The providers we have worked with in 22/23 include employers, independent training providers and FE Colleges.

Impact to Date: On the DfE funded skills bootcamps there have been 1259 participants completed so far. Key demographic data of participants:

- Gender: 58% Male: 39% Female (1% prefer not to say and 2% other)

- Ethnicity: 57% of participants were from ethnic minorities (this compares favorably to the demographic makeup of the sector with just 21% of employees from ethnic minorities). In GM we have specifically focused on tackling labour market inequalities for underrepresented groups and diversification of the workforce.
- Prior Employment Status: 50% unemployed, 37% in-work, 8% self-employed and 1% in-education, (2% unknown, 1% caring responsibilities).
- 72 % of those who completed in the pilot phases were offered a guaranteed interview with 54% moving into skilled employment. These outcomes are broadly similar to the national programme though it is important to note 86% of the GM outcomes relate to new jobs (as opposed to general upskilling) generating significant added value.
- Geography: The majority of participants came from Manchester (33%), Salford (14%) & Trafford (8%) due to the cluster of tech employers in these areas. Over the last year we have commissioned more place-based delivery and in developing the next phase GMCA have worked closely with localities to develop ways to connect a greater number of residents from all ten boroughs into these opportunities.

3. OVERVIEW OF 23/24 PROPOSAL: SKILLS BOOTCAMPS

By 1st December 2022, DfE required MCAs to submit a high-level proposal setting out what we plan to deliver in **23/24 only** (starting from April) to fill in-demand skills vacancies in the region. Including quantum of funding required, numbers to be trained and sector/occupational focus. The proposal has been developed based on Local Industrial Strategy priorities, vacancy data and consultation undertaken with employers, sector bodies, localities, and the GM Employment & Skills Advisory Board. At the end of Dec 22, DfE approved the 23/24 proposal in principle, agreeing to grant the full amount requested.

Our proposal is based on the following key principles:

- Responsive to employer need and an integral part of our response to the GM Local Skills Improvement plan in line with the policy intent set out in “Skills for Jobs”.
- Responsive to skills gaps and vacancies in frontier and high employment sectors.
- Building upon what has worked well in delivering job outcomes and career progressions to date; whilst commissioning new provision to address specific gaps.

- A greater focus on targeted approaches for underrepresented cohorts in response to local data and sustainment of job outcomes over the longer term.

Our key learnings from delivery during the pilot phase are:

- The wider economic & social context has presented significant challenges to delivery. Businesses operating under tight margins are reluctant to release staff for training whilst the cost of living crisis, ongoing impact of the pandemic and high number of job vacancies have impacted on the willingness of people to undertake an unpaid training programme.
- Adult learners come with a wide range of challenges as well as the need for technical skills such as; mental health issues, caring responsibilities, digital exclusion, poor physical health & low confidence. In order to complete courses and sustain job outcomes learners and employers are requiring far more wrap-around support than was envisaged. To deliver a more intensive type of provision will require greater investment per person.
- Lack of employer engagement in designing courses has been a key challenge – only the large employers will have the capacity to do this. In GM we were able to bring together UK Fashion & Textiles Industry with a local FE College to develop a programme but this needs to be baked into the bootcamps model on a much bigger scale.
- There is a real opportunity to join up the national procurement and MCA activity. This will become ever more important to ensure a coherent response to the GM LSIP.

If we had been given the opportunity to submit a three-year proposal in FY 21/22, we believe GM could have delivered an ambitious £25m+ programme supporting at least 10,000 people. But as we are still only able to submit a one-year proposal now there is a need to strike an appropriate balance between ambition and deliverability. We have been granted £7.5m (inc management fee) for 23/24, which will allow us to build upon year 1, maintaining quality whilst ensuring the demand is there from learners and employers. (We do not anticipate any issues with committing this level of funding in year two given many of the projects are already up and running and we are widening the sector focus).

For £7m GMCA will commission bootcamps across the range of LIS Priority Sectors including digital creative & technology, advanced manufacturing, green economy (including construction), and wider sectors such as health and social care, education and hospitality supporting 2100 people into real job vacancies in the region.

Building upon the recommendations of the inequalities commission we will target groups of residents underrepresented in key sectors and facing disadvantage in the labour market. Bespoke, targeted packages of support have proved highly successful thus far in helping for example - returners to work and black women - overcome the barriers they face.

The rationale for our proposed sector focus is set out below:

- Digital Creative & Technology will remain a focus for year two due to the significant demand for talent from a wide range of employers & large volume of skills shortage vacancies – over the last year 79,432 job vacancies have been advertised in Tech.
- GM will see several environmental initiatives roll out over the next few years supporting the journey to Net Zero by 2038. Ensuring the right skills support is critical – particularly in construction, net zero transport solutions, net zero buildings and de-carbonisation of existing sectors. As GM transitions to Net Zero all jobs will need to be “green jobs” so we will look to include core green skills such as carbon literacy across all the bootcamps.
- Other areas of technical skills such as advanced manufacturing and logistics are a key focus. Particularly given major strategic developments such as the Advanced Machinery & Productivity Institute in Rochdale and logistics hub around Airport City.
- Post-Covid wider sectors such as Health and Social Care and Education have significant vacancy pressures and skills gaps particularly in areas such as early years, adult social care and children’s services. The bootcamp model would support staff shortages in these sectors and attract new talent. We will take a test and learn approach to piloting the bootcamp model in these new sectors utilising the learning from other programmes.
- In addition to our priority sectors there are a number of cross cutting pilots we are looking to test. Including an intensive bootcamp model providing enhanced pre and post-programme support and a pathway to accelerated apprenticeship model.
- GM will also look to ensure to enhance and align other provision such as AEB, FCFJ, InnovationGM where appropriate.

3. ENGAGEMENT APPROACH & TIMELINE

In developing this proposal so far engagement has taken place with: key employers & sector bodies, localities, GM Employment & Skills Advisory Panel, and organisations engaged in the pilot phase. Overall feedback received was positive and in agreement with the approach.

Key comments included having flexibility to support a wider range of sectors in 23/24 as well as adding flex regarding unit cost to support learners who need extra support. The details of the commissioning approach are still being worked through, but it is likely to comprise sector specific lots and an innovation strand to allow for creative ideas.

The procurement timeline is as follows:

- Confirmation of GM funding allocation from DfE & terms of grant – **Jan 23**
- Sector/Stakeholder Engagement Events – **Feb 23**
- Procurement Activity for all providers (Launch, time to bid and evaluation) - **Feb–April 23**
- Mobilisation of providers – **April-May 23**
- Indicative start for providers delivery – **May 23**
- **All training delivery to be completed – End of March 24** (may be some flex around this and we would want the potential to extend beyond one year dependent on good performance).

During Jan and the beginning of Feb 2023, market engagement events for six different sectors will be taking place with employers and providers as well as further engagement with localities. Commission of provision will be launched in February to ensure enough time for mobilisation and to meet the timescales for delivery.