



Funding for Recruitment and Skills Training

A guide for Moray employers

October 2026



Funding is subject to availability, approval and the full scheme terms.

Contents

Four funding routes for Moray employers

Use this page to go directly to the fund that best matches your recruitment or skills need.

1

Moray Employer Recruitment Incentive (MERI) | Page 4

Best for: Create a new job for an eligible Moray Pathways client.

Funding: Up to £10,000 per post

2

Youth Jobs Grant | Page 5

Best for: Recruit an eligible young person aged 18 to 24.

Funding: £3,000 per eligible hire

3

UHI Offshore Wind Skills Hub Funding | Page 6

Best for: Recruit apprentices, train staff or remove learner barriers in priority occupations.

Funding: Up to £3,000 per apprentice, 50% of training costs or £1,500 bursary

4

Workforce North Co-Investment Fund | Page 7

Best for: Access support for training, apprentice recruitment, innovation or scaling proven workforce solutions.

Funding: Stream-dependent funding and caps

Each section explains what the fund supports, who can apply, the funding available, key conditions and how to apply.

Funding at a glance

Choose the fund that best matches what you want to do

If you want to...	Fund to explore	Maximum support
Create a new job for a Moray resident facing barriers to work	MERI	Up to £10,000 per post
Recruit an eligible 18 to 24-year-old	Youth Jobs Grant	£3,000 per eligible hire
Recruit an apprentice into a priority offshore wind or enabling occupation	UHI Apprentice Recruitment Incentive	£3,000 per eligible apprentice
Pay for short-duration training in a priority occupation	UHI Flexible Employer Fund	Up to 50% of eligible training costs
Remove a learner's financial barriers to training	UHI Learner Bursary Fund	Up to £1,500 per learner
Upskill staff or train someone for an identified vacancy	WFN Stream 1A	25% of eligible costs, subject to learner and employer caps; possible additional LA support
Recruit an eligible apprentice	WFN Stream 1B	£2,500 per apprentice; possible additional LA support
Test a new workforce solution	WFN Stream 2	25% of eligible costs, maximum £25,000; possible additional LA support
Scale a proven workforce solution	WFN Stream 3	25% of eligible costs, maximum £25,000; possible additional LA support

Important: Do not recruit, start training or commit expenditure until the relevant fund confirms approval where required.

1. Moray Employer Recruitment Incentive (MERI)

For employers creating a new post for an eligible Moray Pathways client

What does it support?

- A newly created paid position.
- Employment for a person who faces one of the barriers specified by the scheme.
- Eligible employment costs including wages, training, initial travel-to-work costs and supervisory costs.

How much funding is available?

Contracted hours at start	6-month award	12-month award
10–15 hours	£2,000	£4,000
16–20 hours	£3,000	£6,000
21–29 hours	£4,000	£8,000
30+ hours	£5,000	£10,000

Who can apply?

- Open to employers of all sizes across the private, public and third sectors.
- Employers that are not planning redundancies.
- Employers that are not receiving other public funding to create the same post.
- Employers with appropriate Employer's Liability insurance and Fair Work practices.

Who can be recruited?

- A client of the Moray Pathways partnership who lives in Moray.
- The person must be disabled or have a long-term health condition, or be at risk of long-term unemployment and receiving reserved benefits.

What must the job offer?

- At least 8 hours of employment per week.
- At least the Real Living Wage, stated in the guidance as £13.45.
- A genuine intention for the role to continue after the funded period.
- Flexibility to meet the employee's needs.
- Training and experience that develops skills.
- A new role that does not cover redundancy, sickness or maternity leave and has not been funded previously through MERI.

What are the limits?

- Maximum of two funded positions per organisation.
- A separate application is required for each position.
- For a 12-month grant, the post must commence before 1 October 2026.
- The employee must not start until approval is confirmed.
- The employee should start within 8 weeks of approval.

How is funding paid?

- Twelve-month awards are paid at 4, 13, 26, 39 and 52 weeks.
- Shorter awards are paid pro rata, with the schedule confirmed in the offer letter.
- Employers submit the invoice template and wage-slip evidence. Payment may take up to 30 days.

What support is provided?

- A Moray Pathways keyworker provides support and holds monthly review meetings with the employer and employee.

How do I apply or ask a question?

- Contact: kailie.walsh@moray.gov.uk
- [MERI employer information and application](#)

2. Youth Jobs Grant

For employers recruiting an eligible young person into a genuine paid job

What does it support?

- Recruitment of an eligible young person aged 18 to 24.
- Recruitment and training costs associated with the eligible hire.
- Job matching through Jobcentre Plus and local recruitment consultant teams.

How much funding is available?

Grant: £3,000 per eligible hire: £1,800 after 6 weeks and £1,200 after 18 weeks, once DWP verifies employment and earnings and all conditions are met.

Who can apply?

- Employers of any size, including sole traders.
- Employers operating in Great Britain that have traded for at least 6 months.
- Employers registered with HMRC, including UTR and PAYE.
- Local authorities and wider public-sector organisations are eligible, but central government bodies are not.

Who can be recruited?

- Aged 18 to 24.
- Claiming Universal Credit - unemployed for at least 6 months.
- Matched to the vacancy through Jobcentre Plus.

What must the job offer?

- At least 25 hours per week.
- Employment for at least 4 months.
- At least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage.
- A safe, lawful and genuine paid job comparable with other roles.
- The role must not replace existing staff or an existing role.

What does the employer need to do?

- Complete the online application and employer checks.
- Provide vacancy details for DWP suitability checks and matching.
- Use the employer's preferred recruitment process and make the final recruitment decision.
- Confirm the selected candidate and start date before employment begins.
- Provide a named contact and inform DWP of changes affecting the role or application.

Other points employers should know

- The grant amount remains £3,000 if the job offers more hours or higher pay.
- The grant can be combined with eligible apprenticeship funding, including employer hiring payments.
- DWP may limit the number of jobs registered in proportion to employer size.
- DWP can recover payments where the grant terms are breached.

How do I apply or ask a question?

- [Apply for the Youth Jobs Grant](#)
- [Read the Youth Jobs Grant guidance](#)
- [Request Jobcentre Plus recruitment support](#)
- Employer Services: 0800 169 0178

3. UHI Offshore Wind Skills Hub Funding

For priority offshore wind and adjacent enabling occupations

Who is the funding aimed at?

- Offshore wind employers and supply-chain businesses.
- Eligibility is based on the occupation being developed, not only the employer's sector.

Priority occupations include

- Installation and maintenance electricians.
- Wind turbine technicians.
- Engineering technicians and electrical engineers.
- Mechanical design engineers and metal-working fitters.
- Marine and waterways operatives.
- Civil engineering and specialist construction occupations.

A. Apprentice Recruitment Incentive

- £3,000 for an eligible net additional apprentice.
- For eligible Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship starts.
- Supports apprentices in priority offshore wind and adjacent enabling occupations.
- One award per apprentice.
- The programme information also identifies separate widening-participation awards of £2,000.

B. Flexible Employer Fund

- Up to 50% of eligible training costs.
- The employer pays the balance.
- Supports short-duration training, upskilling, reskilling and workforce-transition activity.
- Relevant skills include engineering, fabrication, welding, electrical, maritime and construction.
- Approval is required before training begins.

C. Learner Bursary Fund

- Up to £1,500 per learner.
- Can support travel, accommodation, equipment, care and certification costs.
- Designed to remove financial barriers to training and skills development.
- Priority groups include women entering technical occupations, rural and island learners, career changers, transition workers and people facing financial barriers.

What should an employer do first?

- Contact the Hub before recruiting, booking training or committing costs.
- Ask the Hub to confirm occupation eligibility, available funding, eligible costs and the correct application route.
- The Hub can help identify training, support workforce planning and assist with applications.

How do I ask a question?

- Contact: skillshub@uhi.ac.uk

4. Workforce North Co-Investment Fund

For immediate training and recruitment needs, new ideas and proven solutions

What applies across the fund?

- The employer or applicant must operate in the Workforce North area and the relevant local-authority area contributing to the activity.
- Priority areas include Net Zero, Construction and Built Environment, Digital and Data Skills, and STEM-related subjects.
- Workforce North generally contributes 25% of eligible costs. Stream 1B uses a flat-rate per apprentice payment of £2,500.
- The applicant must provide at least 50% of total costs from its own resources or other private-sector funding. In-kind contributions are not accepted.
- Moray Council may contribute towards up to 25% of the balance if funding is available.
- Funding is available until 2029 and all funded expenditure must be completed by 31 March 2029.

What will not normally be funded?

- Applicant staff costs, overheads or business-as-usual activity.
- Costs already covered by another funding source.
- Costs incurred before the funded activity begins.
- Reclaimable VAT or purchase and improvement of assets.
- Training delivered by the employer's own internal staff or training function.
- Existing SDS-funded Modern Apprenticeship provision through Stream 1.

Stream 1A: Training & Skills Fund

Who can access it?

- Micro, small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 250 FTE employees
- Employers of any size supporting unemployed people into work
- Supply-chain businesses with fewer than 250 employees linked to qualifying major projects
- ALEOs

What does it support?

- Accredited or industry-recognised non-statutory training.
- Short certified training linked to vacancies or employer needs.
- New trade or industry certification.
- Entry-to-work training for unemployed people or career changers.

How much can an employer access?

Employer type	Support per learner	Employer cap
Micro or SME under 250 FTE	25% of training costs; maximum £2,000, plus £500 for an unemployed learner	£20,000, or £25,000 when supporting unemployed people
Employer over 250 FTE	25% of training costs; maximum £2,500 per unemployed participant only	£40,000 for unemployed participants

Key eligibility conditions

- The training must develop new skills, not simply recertify existing skills.

- It must address a genuine employer need and improve access to work or upskilling/reskilling for jobs in the region.
- Where a participant is unemployed, the employer must have identified a job opportunity expected within 4 months of training completion.
- Training must be delivered in the UK by an eligible external UK provider that is separate from the employer.
- The learner must complete the full programme within 12 months of approval and by 31 March 2029.
- Funding is paid retrospectively and is not available for non-completion

Stream 1B: Employer Recruitment Incentive for New Apprentices

Who can access it?

- Micro business <10 FTE: support for the first apprentice.
- Business with <60 FTE: the business must already employ apprentices equal to at least 5% of its workforce; the fund supports additional apprentices, up to 10.
- Employer of any size: support may be available to employ an apprentice made redundant before completing the apprenticeship.

How much funding is available?

- £2,500 per eligible apprentice provided by the co-investment fund.
- Moray Council may provide up to an additional £2,500 if funding is available.

What conditions apply?

- For funding towards apprentice wages, employers must meet the mandatory Fair Work requirements stated in the guidance.
- These include paying the Real Living Wage, stated as £13.45, and providing effective worker voice.
- The guidance describes a limited route to request exemption from the Real Living Wage requirement where genuine affordability can be evidenced.

Stream 2: Workforce Innovation

- For testing a new workforce solution where barriers, uncertainty or an unproven approach exist.
- Examples include new apprenticeship pathways, employability pilots, technology-enabled training and coordinated attraction, assessment and training models.
- Funding is 25% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum Workforce North grant of £25,000.
- Applicants must engage Moray Council while developing the application.

Stream 3: Workforce Accelerator

- For scaling a workforce or training model that has already demonstrated success.
- Examples include sector academies, rapid programmes linked to employer-defined roles and regional rollout of successful pilots.
- Funding is 25% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum Workforce North grant of £25,000.
- Applicants must provide evidence that the model works and engage Moray Council while developing the application.

All Funding rounds stated in the guidance

Round	Application period
First round	1 September to 30 October 2026
Second round	30 November 2026 to 29 January 2027
Future rounds	To be confirmed

How does an employer apply?

- Read the general guidance and the guidance for the relevant stream.
- Check applicant, participant, activity, cost and match-funding eligibility.
- Engage Moray Council. This is encouraged for Stream 1 and mandatory for Streams 2 and 3.
- Complete the relevant application and provide the required evidence.
- Submit the application to WFN@highland.gov.uk.

What subsidy information is required?

- Awards are treated as Minimal Financial Assistance under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.
- An enterprise can receive up to £315,000 of MFA subsidy during the current fiscal year and the previous two fiscal years from all public bodies combined.
- The applicant must declare relevant subsidy received or awarded and retain the award records for at least 3 years.

Who can answer questions?

- Workforce North: WFN@highland.gov.uk
- Moray Council: moraywfn@moray.gov.uk
- [Workforce North funding information](#)