ECITB Regional Skills Hub Grant Programme

Guidance for submitting business cases

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1. Introduction

The ECITB Regional Skills Hubs (RSHs) Grant Programme has been established to support delivery of the **ECITB Strategy 2026-2030, Leading Industry Learning**, which will help attract, develop and qualify a diverse talent pool, upskill the current workforce, and develop the skills needed for the delivery of critical infrastructure projects, energy security and net zero ambitions.

The programme addresses critical engineering construction workforce challenges through targeted investment in skills infrastructure, workforce development and collaborative regional delivery models. It seeks to build a strategic skills ecosystem through a connected network of RSHs that increase workforce capacity, support industry growth, strengthen workforce mobility and contribute to the delivery of major infrastructure, industrial decarbonisation and energy transition projects across Great Britain.

This guidance sets out how to prepare and submit business cases for funding consideration by ECITB. It provides a consistent framework for organisations and partnerships seeking RSH funding and supports a transparent, evidence-based and proportionate approach to investment decisions, ensuring that funding is directed towards interventions that deliver measurable workforce and industry outcomes.

Applications should clearly demonstrate how proposed activity delivers against the **Deliver, Grow and Transform** pillars of the ECITB Strategy 2026-2030, addresses priority workforce challenges, and creates lasting value for employers, learners and the wider Engineering Construction Industry (ECI).

2. Who can submit a business case for consideration?

Applications may be submitted by organisations or consortia. The lead applicant must be an ECITB Approved Centre or Licensed Training Provider. If this is not the case, this stage must be completed prior to submitting a business case for review.

Applications must demonstrate collaboration between employers, training providers, and wider stakeholders. Proposals that do not evidence active partnership working will not be eligible for funding.

3. Drafting business cases & information required

Business cases must demonstrate how proposed activity will maximise workforce impact, deliver value for money, complement existing skills provision and contribute to a coordinated and demand-led skills ecosystem.

Business cases should clearly demonstrate alignment with ECITB workforce priorities, employer demand and identified regional skills shortages. Applications that duplicate existing provision, lack evidence of demand or fail to demonstrate meaningful employer engagement are unlikely to be supported.

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Business cases can support both capital and operational expenditure and must include:

- Description of proposed activities.
- Demonstration of how the proposal aligns to ECITB's strategy pillars of Deliver, Grow, Transform
- Evidence of workforce need and employer demand.
- Forecast outputs and workforce outcomes.
- Partnership and collaboration arrangements, including funding partners.
- Sustainability plan.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Risks and approach to mitigation
- Cross-sector relevance

Applications should demonstrate a clear connection between the proposed investment, the workforce challenge being addressed, the activities to be delivered and the workforce outcomes expected.

4. Regional Skills Hubs Programme objectives

- Address critical engineering construction skills shortages and workforce challenges.
- Increase the supply of skilled workers entering priority occupations.
- Expand training and assessment capability and capacity in areas of proven workforce demand.
- Support upskilling, reskilling and workforce mobility within and across sectors.
- Strengthen collaboration through the RSHs strategic network.
- Support productivity, major infrastructure delivery and the transition to net zero.
- Increase participation from underrepresented groups and broaden industry talent pools.
- Create sustainable regional capability and long-term workforce resilience.
- Leverage employer, partner and external funding to maximise industry impact.

5. Priority workforce areas

Business cases should demonstrate how they contribute to one or more of the following:

- Critical craft and wider technical occupations
- New entrant pathways
- Existing workforce upskilling and reskilling
- ECI sector-specific skills – water treatment, renewables, nuclear, food & drink, pharmaceuticals, oil & gas, power generation, chemicals
- Workforce mobility and competence assurance
- Future skills requirements identified through labour market intelligence.
- Returners to the labour market (through maternity, illness, etc)
- Recruitment and retention of trainers and instructors in the provider network.

Industry co-investment is a mandatory requirement of the programme. Applicants must demonstrate co-investment equivalent to a minimum of 50% of total eligible project costs.

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Co-investment may comprise cash contributions, facilities, equipment, staff time, mentoring, work placements, work experience opportunities, recruitment commitments or other approved in-kind support.

Applicants must clearly identify whether contributions are cash or in-kind and provide evidence to support the valuation of all in-kind contributions. ECITB reserves the right to verify the value of any cash or in-kind contribution before award or during project delivery.

Applications must provide clear evidence of employer demand and meaningful employer engagement and commitment.

6. Proportionality of business cases

The programme will apply the principle of proportionality. The level of information required should reflect the scale, value and complexity of the proposed investment. Business cases should be concise, evidence-based and focused on demonstrating strategic need, workforce impact, longevity of the intervention, and value for money.

All business cases must demonstrate:

- Strategic fit
- Deliverability
- Value for money
- Appropriate governance
- Long-term sustainability
- Workforce impact
- Effective collaboration

Every application must provide sufficient information to demonstrate that ECITB investment will be used effectively and that the proposed investment will lead to improved industry skills development.

7. Criteria, support, assessment and decision-making process

Business cases will be assessed through a structured process using the published funding criteria.

The assessment process will be as follows:

7a. Mandatory criteria eligibility assessment

Applicants must satisfy all of the following criteria:

- Funding requests must be between £250,000 - £1,000,000.
- Applications must feature a lead role for an ECITB Approved Centre or Licensed Training Provider
- The proposal must address a clearly identified ECI skills need, workforce challenge or capacity gap, supported by evidence. Proposals must demonstrate alignment with regional plans and the ECITB Leading Industry Learning Strategy 2026-2030.

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- The proposal must demonstrate a clear contribution to one or more of ECITB's Deliver, Grow and Transform strategic pillars.
- The proposal must demonstrate how delivery aligns with ECITB standards, qualifications, competence frameworks, new entrant programmes and workforce mobility objectives.
- Funding must support activities that increase training and/or assessment capability, workforce capacity.
- The proposal must demonstrate an increase in training, assessment and/or workforce development capacity when compared to the applicant's current level of relevant provision.
- Applicants must provide matched funding or demonstrate meaningful industry and other partners co-investment through financial contributions.
- Applicants must provide a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.
- Applicants must provide suggested milestones for funding payments, clearly identifying when and how funds will be utilised and how this will be evidenced with a supporting timeframe
- Applicants must demonstrate how project benefits will be sustained beyond the funding period
- Applicants must explain how they intend to increase participation from individuals from underrepresented groups.

Failure to satisfy any mandatory criteria may result in the application being rejected.

7b. Detailed assessment & scoring

Applications will be scored and assessed by the following criteria and weighting:

Score	Definition	Description
10	Excellent	The Provider has provided a response which **addresses all requirements of the question** and provides the ECITB with the **utmost level of confidence.**
7	Good	The Provider has provided a response which **addresses all requirements of the question** and provides the ECITB with a **good level of confidence.**
5	Moderate	The Provider has provided a response which **addresses all requirements of the question** and provides the ECITB with a **moderate level of confidence.**
3	Poor	The Provider's response **fails to address all requirements of the question** and/or the ECITB has **serious reservations.**
0	Unacceptable	Response **does not answer the question and/or is irrelevant and/or is otherwise unacceptable.**

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Assessment Area	Weighting	Application form evidence
Industry demand and workforce impact	35%	Case for change; existing arrangements; business needs; main benefits; forecast outputs and outcomes
Strategic alignment	20%	Context; alignment with ECITB Standards and workforce development frameworks
Collaboration and RSH network value	15%	Partnership members; context; critical success factors; delivery arrangements
Inclusion and workforce diversification	10%	Main benefits; forecast outputs and outcomes; delivery arrangements
Sustainability and impact	10%	Main benefits; affordability; revenue generation; balance sheet treatment; delivery, monitoring and evaluation
Deliverability and value for money	10%	Risks; proposed approach; value for money and strategic rationale; procurement; funding and affordability; milestones; delivery arrangements

Assessment scores will be converted into weighted scores using the above weighting framework. The weighted scores will be combined to produce an overall assessment score expressed as a percentage. This overall score will inform funding recommendations but will not override mandatory eligibility requirements or minimum category thresholds.

7c. Assessment thresholds and moderation

Applications must satisfy all mandatory eligibility criteria before progressing to detailed assessment. Applications will be independently assessed against the published weighted criteria. Assessment scores will be subject to moderation to ensure consistency, fairness and proportionality across all applications.

Moderation will consider scoring variances, supporting evidence and assessor rationale before final scores are agreed and recorded. Moderation outcomes will be documented and retained as part of the programme audit trail.

Assessors will provide written justification for all scores awarded and assessment records will be retained for audit and assurance purposes.

Requirement	Threshold
Mandatory eligibility criteria	All criteria must be met
Overall weighted assessment score	Minimum 60% of 100% available
Industry demand & workforce impact	Minimum score of 5 (Moderate confidence)
Strategic alignment	Minimum score of 5 (Moderate confidence)
Deliverability & value for money	Minimum score of 5 (Moderate confidence)

Applications that fail to meet any mandatory eligibility criteria or assessment threshold will not be recommended for funding.

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7d. Strategic review

Areas of particular importance to the ECITB when reviewing your application will include:

- Regional demand
- Priority occupations
- Existing RSH capacity
- Strategic importance
- Network-wide impacts
- Balance of investment across regions

During the strategic review, ECITB may also consider alignment with wider industry priorities, workforce forecasts, major infrastructure programmes, energy transition requirements, regional workforce strategies and wider public policy objectives.

7e. Conflict of interest

All individuals involved in the assessment, moderation and approval of applications must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Where a conflict of interest is identified, ECITB will exclude the individual from participating in the assessment, moderation or decision-making process relating to that application.

7f. Funding governance and approval framework

The RSH Grant Programme operates a structured governance framework to ensure that funding decisions are transparent, consistent and represent an effective use of ECITB levy funding.

ECITB Funding Requested	Approval Authority
£250,000 - £500,000	Operations & Grants Committee (OGC)
£500,001 - £1,000,000	ECITB Board following recommendation from OGC

Applications recommended for approval remain subject to the availability of programme budget and ECITB governance requirements.

7g. Funding decisions and feedback

Funding decisions will consider both the quality of individual business cases and their contribution to the wider RSH Programme. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate:

- strong alignment with the ECITB Strategy 2026-2030
- clear employer demand and workforce need
- measurable workforce outcomes

- collaborative delivery approaches
- long-term sustainability
- strategic benefit to the wider RSH network
- effective use of ECITB levy funding and partner co-investment
- a clear approach to improving workforce diversity.

ECITB may also consider overall programme balance, regional distribution of funding, sector representation and affordability when making final investment decisions.

Applications will be considered in accordance with the eligibility, assessment, moderation and governance arrangements described in this guidance.

Successful applicants will be notified in writing and funding agreements will define the approved scope, outputs, outcomes, milestones and reporting requirements.

Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback to support future applications. Feedback will not constitute a review or appeal of the funding decision.

Meeting the assessment threshold does not guarantee funding, as final decisions will also take account of available programme budget, portfolio balance and strategic priorities.

8. Assessment and approval governance process

Eligibility assessment

Applications will be assessed against the published mandatory eligibility criteria.

Detailed assessment and moderation

Eligible applications will be assessed and scored against the published funding criteria and weighting framework. Assessment scores will be subject to moderation to ensure consistency and fairness across applications.

RSH Working Group review

The RSH Working Group may review applications and provide advice, challenge, assurance and recommendations to support decision making. The Working Group does not have authority to approve or reject applications.

Operations and Grants Committee review

Applications will be presented to the Operations and Grants Committee (OGC) together with assessment findings, supporting evidence and recommendations.

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The OGC will review:

- strategic alignment
- workforce impact
- affordability and value for money
- risk and deliverability
- available programme budget
- wider regional and network considerations

The OGC may:

- approve applications requesting up to £500,000 of ECITB funding
- approve applications subject to conditions
- defer applications pending further information
- reject applications
- recommend applications exceeding £500,000 for Board consideration

Board approval

The ECITB Board retains final approval authority for all applications requesting more than £500,000 of ECITB funding.

The Board will consider the recommendation of the OGC together with the supporting assessment and business case documentation. The Board may:

- approve
- approve subject to conditions
- defer
- reject an application

The Board's decision shall be final and no appeals process shall apply.

ECITB reserves the right to seek clarification, additional evidence or further assurance at any stage of the assessment and approval process.

Decision notification and feedback

Applicants will be formally notified of the outcome in writing. Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback to support future applications.

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9. Monitoring and reporting

Successful applicants will be required to provide progress, performance and financial monitoring information throughout the funding period. Successful applicants may also be required to participate in evaluation activities and benefits realisation reviews undertaken by ECITB.

Monitoring and evaluation data will inform future investment decisions, programme improvements and reporting on the collective impact of the RSHs network.

10. Further information

Organisations seeking clarification before submitting a business case should contact the relevant Head of Region listed below.

- **Scotland,** James Hamilton - james.hamilton@ecitb.org.uk
- **North,** Alan Neale – alan.neale@ecitb.org.uk
- **South, Wales, Midlands and East of England,** Martyn Johnson – martyn.johnson@ecitb.org.uk