LEARNING WITHOUT WALLS

DELIVERY PLAN 2018/19
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Introduction to the delivery plan

This is our third delivery plan and it builds on the successful year we have had boosting the number of projects in our portfolio. We have made grant offers to over 70 projects and made the first 2 investments in our VocTech Amplify portfolio. We plan to engage with as wide an audience as we can and this year we connected with many more organisations and individuals through our programme of webinars and roadshows.

This year the plan continues with the same successful formula, offering three distinct grant and funding opportunities to meet the needs of project ideas at different stages of development. We have refined the focus of our funding to provide both targeted and open calls for proposals, based on feedback from our community of developers and educators and advice from employers.

Now that we have completed three full cycles of funding and as part of our commitment to be a learning organisation, we will in 2018 undertake an end-to-end review of our processes and implement any changes we identify as a result.

We will continue our conversations with the widest possible number of potential participants and projects to build on the main themes in our strategy and reach new communities of learners. We will also enhance our enrichment work with projects to ensure we get the best possible outcomes from our grants and investments.

Three distinct grant and investment opportunities

1. VocTech Seed Projects up to £50k
2. VocTech Impact Projects £150-300k
3. VocTech Amplify For ideas that are ready for market

“The work with Ufi has enabled us to put modern learning, for our workforce, partners and our service users, at the heart of a digital transformation programme.”

Relate
Overview of 2017/18

In a packed programme, we launched two funding rounds last year under VocTech Impact. VocTech Manufacturing projects under the Digital Learning for the Workplace strand funded 7 successful larger projects and an open call for Impact proposals will fund 7 additional larger projects across the UK. Our very popular VocTech Seed programme supported 15 projects under our Seeding the Market strand in 2017.

The November VocTech Showcase again celebrated the best of the ideas we have supported and gave an opportunity for our community to exchange ideas and experiences and support each other as they engage with learners to deliver at scale. It is important to us to ensure that our projects do not develop in isolation, but benefit from creating a market place that is increasingly visible to employers and learners.

We have started a significant piece of work on Apprenticeships in 2017, designed to allow us to support the best use of digital technologies to deliver apprenticeships. This is a potentially large area of opportunity for working with employers to embed digital learning in programmes from the outset.

We continue to focus on parts of the vocational learning market that suffer from underfunding and try to extend our reach into communities of learners that are not well served by the current system. It is increasingly clear from feedback we receive that Ufi has an important role to play as a catalyst to spotlight market opportunities and bring organisations together to meet the needs of the market.

“We wouldn’t have a project if it weren’t for Ufi funding. We started off with a sketch on a piece of paper and an idea that we felt pretty confident was relevant because we’ve got quite a lot of experience in the sector, but that was it.”

Cuppa
PROJECT:
Counselling Skills for Non-Counsellors, Relate

SUMMARY:
Relate are developing digital programmes to deliver basic counselling skills training to frontline staff across various sectors. They are now exploring many more ways to exploit the power of digital technology for training, including on-line delivery of workplace learning in text-based therapeutic skills.

Read more on the Ufi website
VocTech Seed provides grants of up to £50,000 for projects lasting up to 12 months. It supports ideas which are at a relatively early stage, with the aim of developing them to the point where they can demonstrate their viability and secure other funding. Like all Ufi funded projects, VocTech Seed projects must aim to demonstrate how novel uses of technology can transform access to vocational learning. This is our test bed where the first sparks of an idea can be scoped and tested in the supportive environment that Ufi funding can offer.

As in previous years, we are particularly looking for projects offering innovative ways of using technology to deliver to groups of learners that are more difficult to reach, geographically or socially; subject areas that can benefit from the use of technology or areas where digital technology has the potential to make a transformative difference. What our projects will all have in common is the potential to reach a wide audience of learners and be financially sustainable so the benefit to learners and employers is long-lasting.

In the 2017 funding round there was a real improvement in the quality of proposals coming forward for funding. We hope that the messages we have delivered through our programme of webinars and roadshows has helped potential applicants to understand better what we are looking to support. It is important to us that the potential audience for project ideas is big enough to be able to make a real impact and all ideas should be very clearly targeted at vocational learners.
1 VocTech Seed

In 2018/19 we will again give priority to projects that help us develop the main themes of our strategy, and applications should show how Ufi funding will help them to achieve their goals. There will be one call for proposals in 2018 and it is again a two stage call. Applicants who are successful in the first stage will be invited to submit a proposal for stage two.

Delivery Process

- 13 Feb – 14 March  Call open – Stage 1
- 13 Apr – 9 May  Call open – Stage 2
- 29 June  Successful projects notified
PROJECT:
Frailty Sim,
Fusion 48

SUMMARY:
An innovative, Virtual Reality based learning product designed to help staff working in social care services to increase their understanding of frailty, develop empathy, and sharpen their observational skills in a realistic environment. The learner-led, immersive VR experience promotes person-centred care and can be carried out at a time and pace to suit the learner’s needs.

Read more on the Ufi website ➤
VocTech Impact was launched last year to support direct impact projects that showcase a new way of working either working with a new sector, community, or technology to reach a high number of learners over a short timescale. The funding level and the timescale were carefully considered to encourage applicants able to deliver both impact and volume. The first round of collaborative projects were approved in June 2017 with seven projects now in delivery and starting to make a difference.

We are looking for projects to partner with us to demonstrate the ‘art of the possible’. The best projects we saw came from groups of organisations and individuals including employers, learning specialists and technology experts where the knowledge and connections they could bring to the project will accelerate entry into the market and engage learners very quickly. The ideas they brought to us had already been thought through and in some cases prototyped, so our funding was put to excellent use making sure the concept became reality.

Each project team we work with is allocated a Project Manager to provide additional support and help them to develop a strong project plan that also includes evaluation of the idea as it is implemented and clear plans for future sustainability.
VocTech Impact

This year’s call will welcome projects from all sectors, industries and technologies and will particularly encourage projects that show genuinely innovative approaches to digital solutions for vocational learning. Projects should consider how digital technology has the potential to work for learners who have disengaged with formal patterns of learning as well as opening up access for learners who have been unable to fit into the traditional classroom model. VocTech Impact also provides the opportunity to reach industries and communities that are geographically too spread out to create a sustainable market using traditional methods.

This is a two stage call. Applicants who are successful in the first stage will be invited to submit a proposal for stage 2.

Delivery Process

- **13 June – 11 Jul**: Call open – Stage 1
- **14 Aug – 7 Sept**: Call open – Stage 2
- **31 Oct**: Successful projects notified

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Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Decision
PROJECT:
Trax,
Digital Rail

SUMMARY:
Trax extends the ‘Techmix’ platform, allowing employers and educational institutions to publish courses and job opportunities. It offers high quality employer-led videos to Job Centres, enabling Work Coaches to better explore options with clients. Educational content can be sent directly to learners’ mobile devices. The project aims to guide people into employment in an industry they may not have considered and enables employers to select the very best talent.

Read more on the Ufi website ➤
2 VocTech Impact Specialist Call

In addition to the main VocTech Impact call in 2018 we will publish details of a specialist call aimed at a specific sector or technology. We will consult with our community and particularly with employers to agree a focus where we can achieve significant impact for learners in return for our funding.

The VocTech Manufacturing call in 2017 was the first of these specialist calls that we intend to support. With an overlying objective of providing learning ‘faster, better, cheaper’, we worked with businesses and learning providers to scope a funding opportunity that could engage learners at scale. Seven projects have been supported in a range of manufacturing industries and will run over the next 24 months.

The projects we hope to support under this specialist call will again be relatively close to market, with initial ideas and concepts tested and ready to scale up. Our project managers will work closely with project teams to provide additional support and focus and share the experience of other teams that are ahead of them in delivery.

“The partners appreciated having a funder that cared and was passionate about the project. The close and frequent contact from the Ufi project manager was beneficial to the project, as were the high expectations set for the project team.”

Blended Learning Essentials

Projects
£150-300k
PROJECT:
Flavours of Reality, Grimsby Institute

SUMMARY:
Grimsby Institute is piloting novel use of Microsoft HoloLens technology to create a ‘mixed reality’ environment for food safety training. Key to the project is collaboration with local industry partners involved in fish processing. By combining virtual/augmented reality with real production line experience, the workforce can safely ‘test and learn’ essential skills for food manufacturing.
2 VocTech Impact Specialist Call

As this call is still under development, the timeline published here is fixed, but the content of the call will be uploaded later to the Ufi website. Please check back for more detail, or contact us with ideas to help us shape the call.

Funding available will be between £150k and £300k. We will support ideas and projects that bring a new perspective on how to design, deliver or accredit learning that builds on the current market rather than competing with it.

Delivery Process

- 4 – 31 Oct  Call open – Stage 1
- 30 Nov – 10 Jan 2019  Call open – Stage 2
- 28 Feb 2019  Successful projects notified
VocTech Amplify is our social investment fund, helping early stage businesses to grow, whilst ensuring that their success benefits others and achieves a return to the core fund. During 2017 we completed our first two investments into VocTech Amplify projects.

In order to achieve long-term change, we know that there are a range of levers we need to pull. Some of these can be achieved through grant funding and some can be achieved via influence and partnership, but we also need in our portfolio a form of financial support that allows us to broaden the range of organisations we can work with and respond in the way that is most likely to provide long term sustainability.

When we consider what success looks like for us, one of the measures we have identified is transforming VocTech as a market sector – making investment in technology to deliver vocational skills a realistic investment proposition as well as an attractive and viable option for general investors. Seeing our projects and products succeed in the market is part of our goal to achieve that transformation.

Each funding package is tailored to meet the needs of the learning product and the organisation seeking investment. It is likely that most investments will have a small element of grant and enrichment funding to make sure the team can make best use of the financial boost.

VocTech Amplify is aimed at ideas that are not only on track to achieve impact at scale but also show strong potential for future impact, where social investment is more appropriate than pure grant funding. Further details on VocTech Amplify can be found on the website.
PROJECT:
The Priorities Project, Fluence.world

SUMMARY:
Fluence makes teaching resources more valuable and cost-effective, by exploiting powerful new language processing technology. Using a revolutionary combination of linguistic know-how, big-data and machine learning, the Fluence Language Doctor analyses the content students produce, and then prescribes academic support that students need. Fluence lets you: Upload content and detect academic gaps; Recommend tools, resources and support services; Channel resources to where they have the biggest impact; Diagnose without tests.

Read more on the Ufi website ➤
Project Enrichment

One of the distinctive features of Ufi funding is the enrichment that we offer to projects alongside their grant funding. This year, we are embarking on a process to see how we can improve what we do in this area. Although our projects already give us great feedback on what we do now, we think we can follow our own advice and try to do things better, faster and cheaper by using digital methods to support our project managers.

Our enrichment programme is a bespoke conversation between project manager and project team. What Ufi can add to the expertise brought by project teams is a wider view of the Ed Tech market and how to achieve long term sustainability for the technologies and learning products that we support. By identifying gaps in the experience of project teams, we can offer guidance and training that enables final results to be even better than everyone expected.

We are looking to provide concentrated time where developers can step away from their close focus on their project to see it in a wider context. In doing so, opportunities they may not have considered can often come to light and provide new and exciting routes to market. Tech-based companies can really benefit from exposure to new ideas from expert learning designers and vice versa. The needs and challenges of the vocational skills market is a common area in which we provide support. And all our projects can benefit from marketing and business support as they develop their ideas at scale.

Ufi is looking for long-term, sustainable change in this market, and we welcome any ideas that you would like to share on how we can help you to deliver this for your company or organisation.

“The great support from Ufi has given us the vision, skills and tools to rethink learning. Our Ufi project manager has empowered us to set ambitious goals for what we can achieve, and then deliver against them with effective coaching and focused feedback at every step of the development pathway.”

Relate