



PATHWAYS TRAINING FUND

Application Guidance 2023



February 2023



PATHWAYS TRAINING FUND

Improving the skills of your Workforce

Training your employees for the future

APPLICATION GUIDANCE for SMEs – 2023

The basics

- Up to 75% of your staff training will be covered – with a maximum grant of **£500 per employee** and £3,000 per employer, to be reimbursed once training is completed.
- Any changes to the funding allocations advertised here, such as additional funding or threshold allowances - will be published on the [Sparc website](#).
- Training can be both **accredited or non-accredited** from Level 1 to Level 7 and include whole qualifications, modules or units.
- PTF **cannot fund** any training that has already started or been paid for before your application has been approved.
- You should contact a training provider in our network (see Prospectus) to find out about a course and when it is running.
- Applicants must be **Suffolk or Norfolk-based SMEs or trading Social Enterprises** and should not be publicly-funded bodies such as local authorities or schools.
- This guidance takes you through the entire application process step-by-step.
- If you need any help at any point, please contact the Pathways Training Fund team (PTF team) at sparc@suffolk.gov.uk or one of the training provider partners below.

How to apply to the Pathways Training Fund

ELIGIBILITY

First, you will need to fill in the online SME eligibility form. The guidance for this is set out below. This form will automatically get sent to PTF team mailbox when you submit it (sparc@suffolk.gov.uk).

SME Eligibility Form – online link

1. Organisation Details Questions 1-14

Questions 1 – 14 ask you for basic contact details, location, business sector, Companies House registration (if applicable) and a website address.

2. Ownership Questions 1-15

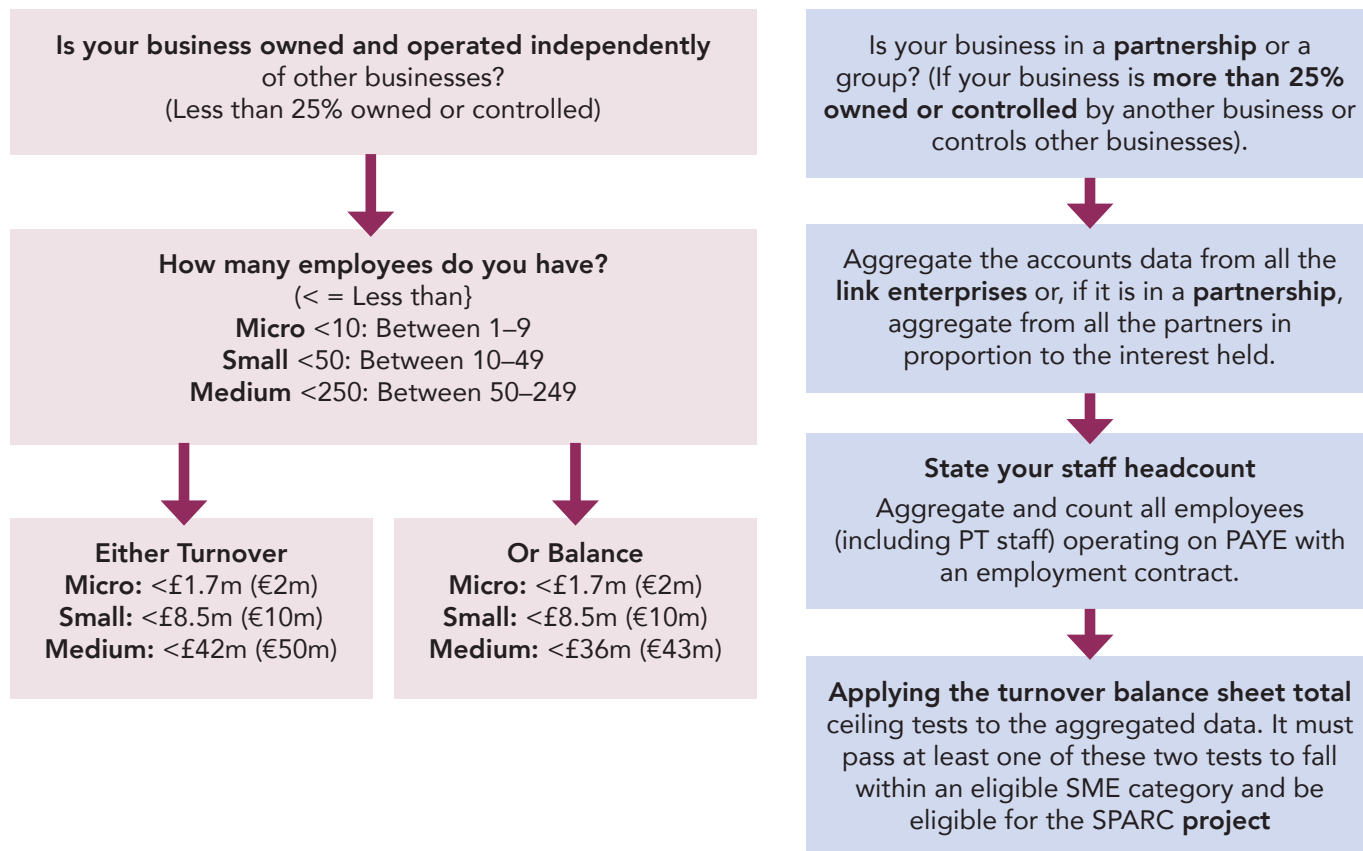
To be eligible as an SME you will either be an autonomous (independent) business

– less than 25% owned or controlled by another company – or you may have some form of linkage or connection in a **group** or **partnership**.

Question 15a asks if your business is autonomous or not. 15b and c deal with linkage and partnerships. The diagram below shows the difference (blue – autonomous, green – linked / connected / partnership). If your company has control of, or is under the control of, another company, or both companies are under the control of the same person or persons, for example, companies linked in a group -these companies are linked or connected.

Please note, the turnover and balance ceilings denoted in £s below are approximate and the EUR thresholds are binding.

Is your SME and eligible micro, small or medium-sized enterprise?



Questions 15A

Is your business less than 25% owned or controlled (capital, shares, voting rights) by another business or controls other businesses? Yes or No.

Answers:

15a. My business is autonomous / independent of other businesses.

15b. Another company has significant control of more than 25%.

15c. My company has significant control of another business of more than 25%.

Please note: we will make a check on Companies House to check ownership and control and ask for more information, where necessary, to verify eligibility.

If you answer Yes to 15b and/or 15c

If another company has significant control of more than 25% of your business or your company has significant control of another business, then the data from all companies needs to be aggregated (as above in green). This means adding together all the other businesses' headcounts and accounts, in proportion to the interest held.

We will contact you to ask for clarification and/or more information to confirm headcount and eligibility.

3. Staff Headcount

Questions 16

counting the full-time equivalent number of staff.

Your staff size (drop-down options) will determine whether you are a **micro**, **small** or **medium-sized** business in Norfolk or Suffolk.

Please include the full-time equivalent of all employees who are operating on PAYE and with an employment contract. The full-time equivalent number of staff is not always the total number of employees on the payroll because **part-time staff and those not working the full (reference) year** are treated as fractional values of a full-time employee (FTE):

e.g, 1 employee working 2 days a week = 0.4 FTE, another working 3 days a week = 0.6 FTE and together that totals 1 full-time employee.

If directors do not have an employment contract and get employment rights, but have their own different rights and responsibilities from employees, then they are not counted. If they receive a regular salary and do have the same employment contract and rights, they should be included in the employee headcount.

4. Definition of Enterprise

Staff headcount and financial ceilings determining enterprise categories ([Article 2 of the Annex of Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#)) are outlined below.

- a **micro enterprise** is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million;
- a **small enterprise** is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million.
- a **medium enterprise** is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 250 persons and whose annual turnover does not exceed EUR 50 million and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 43 million.

An entity must meet the full-time equivalent staff headcount threshold and at least 1 of the other conditions.

5. Turnover or Balance sheet

Questions 18

When you are clear which headcount group you fit into – micro, small or medium – then apply just one of the **turnover** or **balance** sheet thresholds to confirm your category. (Question 18).

Enterprise category	Headcount: Annual Work Unit (AWU)	Annual Turnover*	Annual Balance sheet total*
Medium-sized	50 -249	≤ € 50 m (£42 m)	≤ € 43 m (£36 m)
Small	10 -49	≤ € 10 m (£8.5 m)	≤ € 10 m (£8.5 m)
Micro	1 -9	≤ € 2 m (£1.7 m)	≤ € 2 m (£1.7 m)

*Approximate conversion rates are: €2m = £1.7m; €10m = £8.5m; €43m = £37m; €50m = £43m

Please note:

We will apply [the HMRC exchange rates for 2022: monthly -GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

The PTF team will confirm eligibility of staff headcount, turnover or balance from data available online on Companies House or from what you provide. We will contact you if more information is needed.

Self-employment

Eligibility evidence required for self-employed applicants can include:

- A submitted HMRC SA302 self-assessment tax declaration, with acknowledgement of receipt. SA302s can be requested from HMRC
- Where the first SA302 has not yet been submitted, other documentation to show that the trade/business activity is registered with HMRC for tax and national insurance purposes
- Records to show actual payment of Class 2 National Insurance Contributions
- Business records in the name of the business - evidence that a business has been established and is active / operating e.g. lease on premises; purchase / lease of equipment; publicity materials; business invoices; correspondence with Local Authority; legal correspondence

6. State Aid

De Minimis State Aid

Questions 25

State Aid is any advantage granted by public authorities through state resources on a selective basis that could potentially distort competition and trade in the European Union.

Any Pathways Training Fund grant you receive is considered to be *De minimis* State Aid. This means it will contribute to the total aid you are allowed to get in the relevant 3-year period, under EC Regulation 1407/2013 (De Minimis Aid Regulation). *De minimis* state aid calculations will start from the current tax year.

You'll need to look at other de minimis state aid you got in the **current claim year** and the previous 2 tax years. This is the relevant 3-year period.

You will need to make sure that you have space under your business sector **ceiling** (maximum amount you can receive) to get the full amount of grant funding available.

The ceilings below apply to the total amount of De minimis aid to a single recipient from all sources of De minimis aid.

Business sector	ceiling (€)
Primary production of agriculture products	€20,000
Fisheries and aquaculture sector	€30,000
Road freight transport sector	€100,000
Other, industrial (everyone else)	€200,000

How to work out de minimis state aid

**We will use the official Commission exchange rate applicable on the date the offer of de minimis funding is made (date of written offer). The rate is updated monthly and the European Commission offers a [rate calculator](#). [Exchange rate \(InforEuro\) | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)*

De minimis aid may include Employment Allowance (from 6 April 2020), and from March 2021, the full State Aid test should also be applied to these groups:

Fully Funded:

- All Apprenticeships (including Advanced) delivered to 16 to 18 year-olds;
- First Level 2;
- First full level 3 for 19-25-year-olds
- Literacy and numeracy at all levels;
- Level 3 'jumpers' (people who miss out level 2). Jointly-funded:

Jointly-Funded

- Apprenticeships
- First Advanced Apprenticeships. Shared investment – employer and public funding

Shared investment – employer and public funding

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at all levels.

You'll need to ask your training provider for any value that may apply. You should have been told in writing if other aid you have received was De minimis state aid. The letter should also tell you how much you got.

If companies are connected, you'll need to:

- add the totals for each of the companies together
- make sure that, together, they are not more than the relevant sector threshold.

We will email you within 8 working days to either confirm your SME eligibility and send you an application pack or ask you for additional information.

APPLICATION PACK

The application pack consists of the following forms. The PTF team and/or your training provider can help you to fill them in and find the best training for your staff.

Training Needs – online link

7. Training Needs form

This is an online form which we will receive as soon as you submit it. It has drop-down options to make it easier to fill in. It will provide us and your training provider with a snapshot of your business training needs and help you decide on the best training for your staff.

8. Training Table 1 or 2

If you are selecting training from our **network of training providers in Norfolk and Suffolk**, you will use Table 1 to list: the course(s), cost, training provider, location, main reason for selection, as well as the start and end dates of the training. Please do not name employees here, just put their initials for ID reference. Please add the training provider from the drop-down box.

The PTF team will add and use unique identification numbers for our reporting purposes.

Table 2: If you are buying training from outside our Norfolk and Suffolk training provider network, they will need to be registered on the UK Register of Learning Providers.

As a minimum standard, all training providers must be an active company, registered with Companies House and/or HMRC and must be on the UK Register of Learning Providers ([UK Register of Learning Providers \(ukrlp.co.uk\)](https://www.ukrlp.co.uk/)). This means they have been verified by an external source. See <https://www.ukrlp.co.uk/> for further information.

You will need to provide their legal trading name and 8-digit UKPRN number in Training Table 2.

Preference will be given to providers who offer qualifications recognised under the [Ofqual Regulated Qualification Framework](#) (RQF). Please always check the website for the latest updates, which could include changes, eg. to grant thresholds, approval times.

Employee Registration Form – online link

9. Employee Registration form

Each employee must have the right to reside and work in the UK for the period of this European Social Fund support. As an employer, you will need to verify that you have conducted the relevant, statutory Right to Work checks for each of the employees you propose for training.

The employee will be sent a response email. This will ask your employee to 'verify that you have completed the form by responding to this email and include your electronic signature, confirming the details in the form.'

The employee form will automatically come to the SPARC email box. The registration form asks for some personal data and it will be treated in line with UK GDPR and explained in our [privacy notice](#). All employee data will be anonymised so that the person is not identifiable for our reporting purposes.

NB Keeping documents: *Please note all supporting ESF documentation needs to be retained securely for up to 10 years after the grant is paid as it can be subject to audit or on-the-spot checks. This will include: application pack, proof of right to work, eligibility confirmation; certified copies of certification received for training; original invoice for training; De minimis State Aid confirmation value of the PTF grant. These need to be retained securely by you.*

APPROVAL OF TRAINING (SELECTION)

As soon as you have chosen your courses, fill in the training table (1 for courses in the prospectus, 2 for outside training) and add the training provider at the top. The PTF team will check the forms in the application pack and either approve the training or ask you for more information. The PTF team will check that the training provider is registered on the UK Register of Learning Providers, the course names, levels, dates and costs. All costs quoted must be net - without VAT.

If your training costs exceed £2,499, we will send you a form to ask you to provide three quotes of similar training available in the network or outside.

If training costs for similar/same courses appear considerably higher compared to courses provided in the network, we will make you aware. In some cases, we reserve the right to offer a grant lower than quoted, and less than 75% of the total. In these cases, we will calculate the mean average, based on your proposal and two additional similar/same courses.

If your proposal is not approved, we will offer you alternative solutions, including how to amend the proposal or redirect you to other funds. We will inform you when we have received all employee forms and then we will confirm by email within 5 working days to send you a Grant Offer.

10. Grant Offer

The grant offer includes: Grant Agreement, Acceptance Letter, Training Confirm table.

- Grant Agreement outlines the terms of the training grant.
- Acceptance letter needs to be signed by the 'Authorised person' in the business to say you agree with the offer terms. This includes acknowledging the provisional State Aid value of the grant offered.
- Training Confirmation table will be updated and you will need to confirm the conditions, the employees' names, add drop-down feedback and date and sign (printed name).

We will evaluate your proposal and send confirmation of approval by email within 5 working days, where possible.

11. Pathways Training Fund Network of Training Partners

The network of training providers listed below are all registered on the [UK Register of Learning Providers](#) and have dedicated staff to promote the fund and help you when you choose your courses.

Contact details for each training provider can be found on the back page.

The training partners are:



12. Types of Training

We will fund the 'must have' skills that employers need, in these five main areas:

- Digital Skills and Industry 4.0
- Leadership, Management, Project Management and Mentoring
- Customer Service and Client Relationship management
- Health, Well-being and Safety
- Innovation training for new ways of working, products, services & Net Zero

13. Digital Prospectus

All the courses that can be funded within the five areas above will be included in the digital prospectus. Each training provider will also have other courses which may be of interest. New courses will be added as they become available and can be found on the respective website.

BOOKING/PAYING FOR TRAINING

14. Booking / buying training courses

Once we confirm receipt of your Grant Acceptance letter, your training choices are approved and you can book and purchase your training. You can go directly to your approved training provider and book.

Please remember to make sure that the information on the Training (Confirmation) Table matches what you are buying. If, for any reason, you decide to change any of the details, such as employee names, course name/type, training start/end dates, you must contact the PTF team at sparc@suffolk.gov.uk and we will re-assess and let you know if approved, if necessary, before purchase is made. You must inform us before training has started in order for us to approve eligibility. You will need to **keep the original training invoice securely** as this will need to be sent or scanned and sent to the PTF team once training is completed. Please remember to certify the invoice as explained in Section 18. You can you can send this to sparc@suffolk.gov.uk as soon as you receive it.

TRAINING

15. Enrolling on training courses with the training provider

As soon as we have approved your training you should book directly. We can help with booking prospectus courses in the network. Quoted prices for courses with City College Norwich, Easton College, East Coast College, Suffolk New College, College of West Anglia, West Suffolk College, University of East Anglia and University of Suffolk are all exempt from VAT.

The training provider will undertake a separate enrolment for each employee and will deal with you and your employees directly.

The enrolment process will need to check that your employees are able to manage the content level of the course requirements as well as fit it in with their job and overall capacity to get the best outcomes and results.

If there are any significant changes in course dates the PTF team will need to be notified because we need to know when results will be achieved. We are available at all times to offer support and guidance, including during training.

GRANT PAYMENT – EVIDENCE NEEDED

16. Completion of training (results)

The PTF team will need evidence to support any results for participants. This should be received within 1 week of training completion.

A certified copy of the certificate, award notice or advice slip, etc. should be included in the grant claim. A qualification certificate issued and sent to the PTF team needs to be certified that it is a true copy of the original. If this is not possible or ready by the time you make the claim, E-mails can be used to notify the PTF team of the training results. This can be a letter or email confirmation from awarding body or training provider and must include the details of the training approved. The network Training Providers will send the employee names and results/course outcomes directly to the PTF team.

For providers outside the network, you will need to arrange for the training provider to email sparc@suffolk.gov.uk directly with the results of the training. We will confirm to you when we have received the email from the training organisation.

In either case, the e-mail address should include the name of the organisation in the email address string and the e-mail should also include the logo of the organisation. This result notification should give a description of what has been achieved as a result of the ESF support provided and match the training confirmation table's costs, course name, dates and delegates' names and numbers.

17. Training Outcome form

We will send you a blank outcome form after we have received your signed grant acceptance form.

You will need to complete this and submit it with the grant claim. Please complete the highlighted areas. The employee feedback will be used to inform and improve our processes. We will also use this as the basis for case studies and we will contact you separately for permission to reproduce anything you have told us. The form needs to be dated and signed by the authorised person.

18. Invoice – certified copy of the original

Your invoice must include:

- a unique identification number
- your company name, address and contact information
- the company name and address of the customer you're invoicing
- a clear description of what you're charging for
- the date the goods or service were provided (supply date)
- the date of the invoice
- the amount(s) being charged
- VAT amount if applicable
- the total amount owed

Sole trader invoices

If you're a sole trader, the invoice must also include:

- your name and any business name being used
- an address where any legal documents can be delivered to you if you are using a business name

Limited company invoices

If your company is a limited company, you must include the full company name as it appears on the certificate of incorporation.

If you decide to put names of your directors on your invoices, you must include the names of all directors.

VAT invoices

You must use VAT invoices if you and your customer are VAT registered.

Certification of Evidence

All evidence – invoices and copies of bank statements showing that invoices have been paid – must be certified as a true copy of originals or supported by a covering letter which confirms that all documents are true copies of originals.

This invoice copy (and bank statement copy – see 19 below) will need to be certified as a true copy by an authorised signatory in line with your scheme of delegation, as set out below:

Any certification must be confirmed by the project's Authorised Signatories in line with scheme of delegation, such as set out below.

I certify that this is a true copy of the original document.

Signed:

Date:

Position in SME:

Name of SME:

19. Bank statement copy

We will need to see a certified copy of the Bank Statement that shows the funds leaving your account and paying the training provider (see 18 above). This statement date should be after the invoice date. Please feel free to redact any other financial transactions on the bank statement that are not related to the invoice / training purchase, but retain the account name, number, sort code and address.

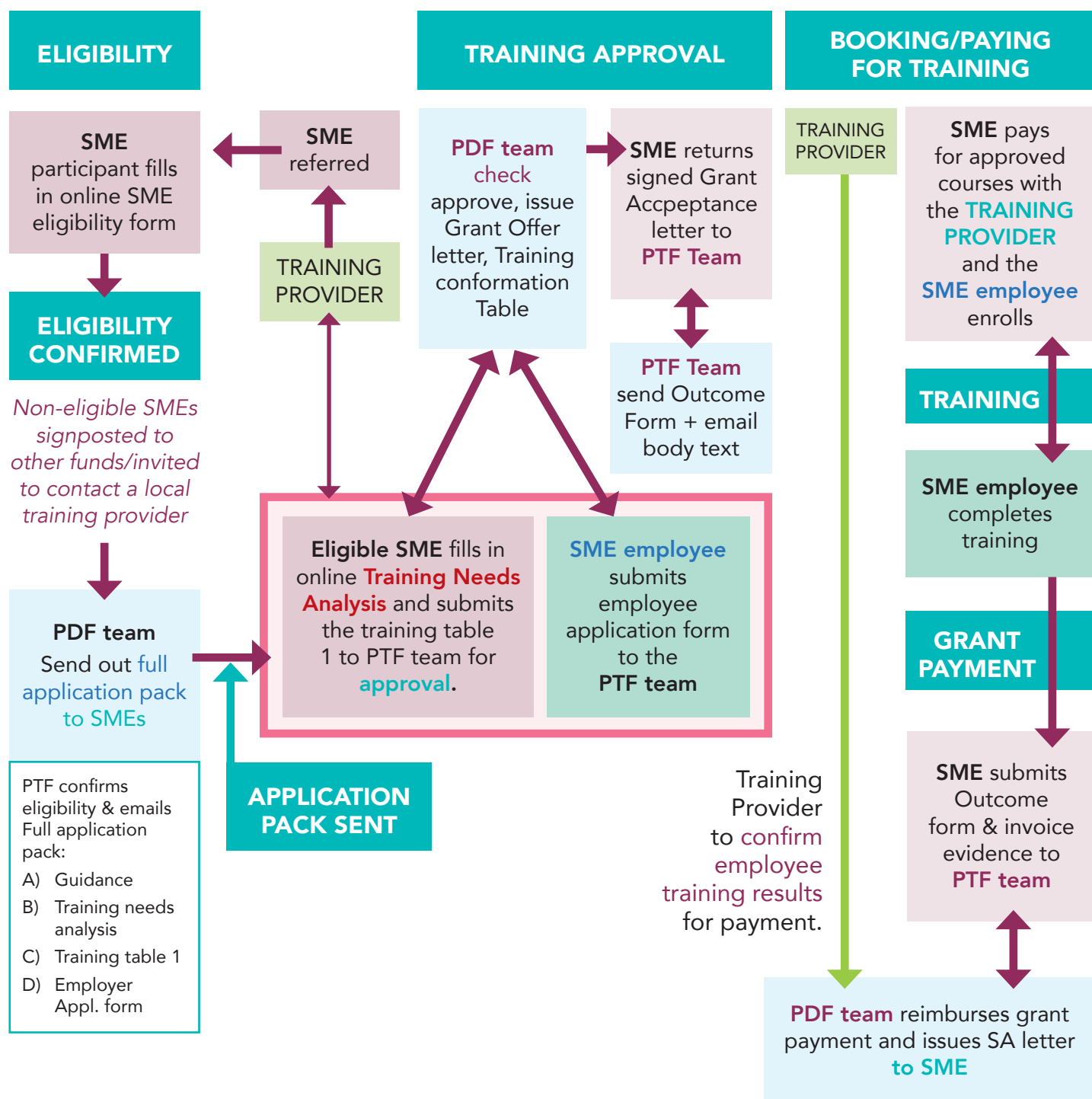
There should be a correlation between the expenditure amount and the associated defrayal evidence (e.g.: invoice number, value, payee name). If the expenditure amount is different to the amount shown in the defrayal documentation, we will be in touch to clarify before we authorise grant payment.

20. Payment of Grant

As soon as we have received your complete grant claim, we will verify and reimburse your grant payment within 14 working days. The payment reference will be the last digits of your continuous reference number that is on all correspondence.

21. De minimis State Aid notification

You will receive a letter from the Pathways Training Fund confirming the value of the De minimis State Aid in a separate letter days once the grant is reimbursed.



PTF team aim to produce a full application within 10-15 working days.

Partners



Lucy.Emms@ccn.ac.uk



cwatraining@cwa.ac.uk



r.bunn@eastcoast.ac.uk



business@suffolk.ac.uk



funding@turningfactor.com



productivity.east@uea.ac.uk



engage@uos.ac.uk



training@wsc.ac.uk

Grants

Grants will be paid to eligible SMEs to subsidise the costs of upskilling, training and retraining staff, sourced by our superb network of local training provider partners in Norfolk and Suffolk, or SMEs can procure further afield if they cannot meet your needs.

Business needs analysis

Training providers can provide a business needs analysis with each company to define current needs and look at bespoke training opportunities in line with the funding rules.

Funding flexible training

PTF will fund flexible training, from Level 1 to Level 7, which can be accredited or non-accredited.

It can be whole qualifications, modules or units and is intended to address those key skills that employers are lacking in these 'must have' areas:

- ✓ Digital Skills and Industry 4.0, Leadership
- ✓ Management, Project Management and Mentoring
- ✓ Customer Service and Client Relationship Management
- ✓ Health, Well-being and Safety
- ✓ Innovation training – for new ideas, ways of working, products or services, Net Zero preparations

All the courses listed in this prospectus are eligible for financing from the Pathways Training Fund.

Each Training Provider's full range can be found by clicking the link above.

All courses must be completed by September 2023.

Please click the link for more information and to download the Guidance and an Eligibility Form.

CLICK HERE

Please contact sparc@suffolk.gov.uk or one of the Training Providers for help and enquiries.