



Young People & Education Programme
Transitions from Secondary Education
Special Initiative

Request for proposals: Learning Partner for Phase 2 of the Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative

Requests for proposals (RFP) for appointment as the Learning Partner for the Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative are sought by the Mercers' Company.

Submissions should be sent to grants@mercers.co.uk by the deadline, 12.00pm (midday) on 6 August 2025. If you have any queries about the tender process, or if you would like to speak to us about the requirements, email grants@mercers.co.uk

Introduction

The Mercers' Company wishes to appoint a learning partner for the second phase of our Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative, funded by the Mercers' Charitable Foundation. The learning partner will work with us and two cohorts of grantees, with the aim of supporting the grantees to reflect on and develop their programmes throughout their funding term, and contribute to wider learning for the sector.

The learning partner's work will run from late 2025 until approximately March 2030. The main outputs are expected to be high quality reports, written for a wide range of stakeholders, which provide insight and contribute to best practice for supporting young people to make successful transitions from secondary education through various pathways.

Background

Making a successful transition into work, further or higher education, or training is critical to a young person's life chances and their social and emotional wellbeing. Young people who experience disadvantage often face additional barriers, making the pathways to education or employment opportunities even more difficult.

Transitions from Secondary Education supports organisations working with young people in London, who experience disadvantage, to progress successfully from secondary education, and to achieve the following outcomes for young people:

- Gain access to progression pathways, including further or higher education, apprenticeships, traineeships and other similar programmes.
- Build experience and knowledge of work, including career-specific work experience.
- Develop social and emotional capabilities including communication, leadership and resilience.

The initiative has been running since 2019, with 15 organisations funded in Phase 1, over three cohorts. In Phase 2, 4 organisations were awarded funding in March 2025. A second cohort (4–7 grantees) is expected to be funded from June 2026. Funding is awarded for a three-year period. See appendix 1 for details of grantees.

In Phase 1, we appointed an evaluation partner. The most recent evaluation report for Phase 1 can be found [here](#).

Brief

We wish to appoint a learning partner to work collaboratively with the Mercers' Company and grantees across the Phase 2 of the initiative. The role is to facilitate learning and improvement for the benefit of the grantees and their beneficiaries, and other stakeholders in the wider sector; and to provide an overview of the programme's effectiveness as a whole.

Aims of the learning partner work

- To support each funded organisation (grantee) and cohort in order to progress their own learning and develop programmes according to their own and beneficiaries' needs.
- To inform and improve practice through learning and insight.
- To determine effectiveness and draw out learning of the initiative as a whole.
- To share learning and insight with the Mercer's Company, funded organisations and wider stakeholders.

We are open to a range of approaches and wish to jointly agree the scope of the work and shape the project plan. Close liaison with the Mercers' Young People & Education team is expected throughout the project. Reports produced must be suitable for external publication. We want this work to be of benefit to the grantees, adding value to their work by supporting and informing practice. As such, we are seeking approaches that maximise data and insight grantees have, rather than duplicating or creating unnecessary burden.

Minimum requirements

1. Work collaboratively with the Mercers' Company and the grantees across the initiative, during their funding period.

2. Engage in initial work with Mercers' Young People & Education team to agree specifics of the approach and delivery.
3. Induct grantees into the learning partner approach and how they will work together.
4. Facilitate cohort peer learning sessions to enable grantees to learn from each other, bringing grantees together in cohorts and across cohorts for reflection and to share insights and learning, at least twice per year per cohort.
5. Draw out the knowledge, insights and common themes from the funded programmes, explore with relevant current evidence and research, and bring together for grantees, the Mercers' Company and other stakeholders to learn from.
6. Produce concise annual reports and a final report bringing together the key learnings from across all funded programmes, accessible to target audiences and suitable for sharing internally and publishing externally.
7. Deliver short presentations to the Mercers' Young People & Education Committee about the emerging findings and key learning/trends (once per year).
8. Plan, manage and run two symposium learning events for up to 100 people each, one at a mid-way point and one at the end, to disseminate the learnings and insights from the programme for internal and external stakeholders. The events will be held at the Mercers' Hall.
9. Devise a plan for how the learning reports will be disseminated, including any communication channels and networks, as well as findings from the learning events.

Across our philanthropy work, we reflect on the success of all our funding programmes using our own impact framework with three key impact indicators: improving people's lives; making organisations stronger; and contributing to wider societal change. It is expected that the learning partner's insight and findings will feed into this overarching framework and help us to track our progress against achieving these outcomes, utilising impact data gathered as part of grantees' annual monitoring reports.

Skills and experience required

1. Track record of learning partner work using relational and supportive methods, and influence within the sector and/or in relation to education, within London.
2. Knowledge of current national education, skills and employment policies and practices, and how they relate to work supporting young people to make transitions from secondary education.
3. Experience of relational stakeholder management, effective communication and engagement with individual grantees.
4. Experience of facilitating learning events and peer learning sessions to draw out learning and share insight.

5. Track record producing high quality, authoritative and accessible reports that share evidence and insight with a broad range of stakeholders.
6. Flexibility to work with a dynamic programme and diverse cohorts of grantees where aspects of delivery may change in response to ongoing learning.
7. Safeguarding policy and procedures which include enhanced DBS checks in place for all staff and associates who might have contact with children and young people.
8. Evidenced practice of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in delivery of work and an understanding of DEI practices in relevant sectors.

Submitting a proposal

To apply for this work, submit a short proposal of no more than 8 sides of A4 (readable font size of at least 11), and include the following information:

1. The name and contact details of the lead person submitting the proposal.
2. Your proposed approach and methodology for delivering the work, including:
 - how you will meet the minimum requirements set out above
 - how you plan to work with grantees and cohorts, including engagement and facilitation approaches
 - providing regular update reports on progress of the work and on the learning and insights from the grantees' work
 - how data will be collected across the funded work, utilising data and insight from grantees
 - drawing together insight and making recommendations that could inform funding and wider sector learning
3. A proposed timetable that includes key deliverables, progress updates and reporting.
4. A full budget, outlining fees, number of days provided with day rates, and associated costs such as travel.
5. An outline of your organisation's track record, expertise and suitability to undertake the work (including examples of previous work produced) with reference to the skills and experience outlined above.
6. Short biographies of key staff who would be involved in the work, including which elements they will be working on.

Timeline

Key actions	Dates
Proposal return deadline	12pm (midday) on 6 August 2025
Interviews with shortlisted providers	October 2025
Contract award	November/December 2025
Commencement of work	January 2026
Contract completion date	Provisionally by end of March 2030

Fee

The total budget for the work is £200,000 **inclusive** of VAT, if charged, and expenses.

The proposed budget does not need to cover the following costs which will be met by us:

- the design, production and printing of the final report
- venue and refreshments costs for peer learning sessions and wider learning events held at Mercers' Hall

Appendix 1: Grantees

The current grantees in cohort 1 are listed below. We anticipate funding between 4-7 further grantees in cohort 2, in June 2026.

Construction Youth Trust: Pathways to Professional Careers that supports young people aged 16-18 from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and groups underrepresented in construction to access careers in the sector.

Inspire: Launch Academy supports young people aged 14-16 identified as disadvantaged to raise aspirations, increasing employability, self-efficacy, personal development and wellbeing.

Making the Leap: Career Horizons, supporting young people aged 17-18 from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds to transition from secondary education into employment or apprenticeship pathways.

Noa Girls: Noa at Work supports vulnerable girls aged 14-24 with pathways into employment or enterprise and achieving employment and/or pursuing higher education that will enable them to progress in their chosen career pathways.