



Young People & Education Programme

Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative

Funding application guidelines 2025

Stage 1: Expression of interest (EOI)

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

The Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative, funded by the Mercers' Charitable Foundation, supports organisations working with young people in Greater London, who face disadvantages, to support them to progress from secondary education (including from school and alternative education settings). Transitions from Secondary Education is a current priority in our Young People and Education programme.

Aim and objectives

The overarching aim is to support young people to progress successfully from secondary education through a range of pathways that build on the skills, knowledge and key competencies valued by future employers. Organisations we fund must be able to demonstrate how their work helps young people to:

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

Eligibility

To make an application, organisations will need to meet **all** of the following eligibility.

Eligibility criteria	Not eligible
Constituted and not for profit organisation, charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), charitable company (limited by guarantee), community interest company (CIC) and/or social enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Applications from individuals✗ Applications from schools, colleges or universities✗ For-profit organisations✗ Organisations that currently hold a grant under any of our Young People and Education programmes that won't have ended before this grant is due to start
Work that supports young people of secondary school age, in Greater London, who experience disadvantage. This can be anywhere between ages 11-18. Support can continue for those over the age of 18 if relevant but work cannot solely support young people over the age of 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Work that takes place outside of Greater London✗ Beneficiaries who do not experience disadvantage✗ Beneficiaries are not of secondary school age✗ Projects that are only for those aged over 18 years old
Work that will commence between July 2026 and October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Financial support for costs that have already been incurred or work that has already taken place✗ Projects with a start date before July 2026 and after 1 October 2026
Work delivered over a three-year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Projects that are shorter than three years
Programmatic work that supports young people in secondary education to transition to further education, employment or training or other positive destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Capital projects (bricks and mortar)✗ Bursary or sponsorship support✗ Tutoring programmes✗ Applications for solely research or evaluation work✗ Work that is a statutory responsibility✗ General appeals for funding
Funding request between £120,000 and £300,000 over three years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Request for funding below £120,000 or over £300,000

What we are looking to support

We are looking to fund organisations to deliver programmes that support the transition from secondary school age to a positive destination. Proposed work needs to support young people to consider a broad range of pathways available to them, increase their aspirations and build their knowledge and experiences of these routes. A broad overview of what proposals will need to clearly demonstrate is set out below and the questions are listed in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

- **Programme:** A cohesive and sustained programme that meets all the aims and objectives of this fund and supports young people to choose, access and sustain pathways after secondary school through:
 - raising aspiration and exposure to a broad range of careers
 - building awareness of variety and suitability of pathway options
 - building skills and knowledge relevant to chosen pathways
 - supporting social and emotional capabilities to navigate transitions and pathways
- **Beneficiaries:** In depth understanding of the needs of beneficiaries, the specific disadvantages they face and how this leads to barriers to accessing pathways, and the ability to engage and work with young people
- **Track record:** Evidence of previous related work and of designing and delivering programmes that successfully meet intended outcomes and have positive impacts
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** Consideration of accessibility, inclusion, learning styles, and intersecting protected characteristics in the programme design and delivery; ability to support a range of needs and challenges; and plans to involve beneficiaries in the development of the work
- **Partnerships:** Strong and relevant partnerships with schools, colleges and employers, in the communities in which the proposed work will take place
- **Impact:** Clearly articulated outcomes and impacts specific to the proposed programme and beneficiaries. Broader alignment with our Philanthropy Framework, linking to at least one of our three impact indicators:
 - Improving people's lives
 - Strengthening organisations
 - Contributing to societal change
- **Evaluation and learning:** Plans for a robust and thorough evaluation, including how an evidence base can be developed and how the impact of the work can be effectively communicated to funders, policy makers and beneficiaries
- **Budget:** Appropriate budget in place. Plans for how the project will be sustained after the lifetime of the grant and any potential for longer term impact

Successful applicants must commit to participating in peer learning as part of the funding programme and to work with the learning partner appointed to support grantees to reflect and improve on their work during the funding term.

What we are offering

- A grant of between £120,000 and £300,000 per organisation paid across three years
- A learning/research partner with expertise in this area of work will be appointed and grantees will be required to work with them as part of a programme wide evaluation
- Access to organisational capacity building support through partner organisations
- A cohort approach creating opportunity for collaboration with organisations in the two cohorts funded between 2025 and 2029

Application process

The first stage is the submission of a stage 1 expression of interest application form, providing information about the organisation and the work funding is being requested for. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full stage 2 application.

Application timeline

Stage 1 application timeline	
Applications open	September 2025
Deadline for EOI submission	12pm (midday) on 30 October 2025
Indicative timeline for progression to Stage 2 to be confirmed	
Applicants contacted with the outcome of the EOI	December 2025
Stage 2 application window (if invited to apply)	December 2025 to February 2026
Assessment and due diligence	March to May 2026
Organisations informed of the outcome of application	June 2026
First payment of funding granted to successful organisations	June 2026

Note: timeline is indicative and may be adjusted in response to the volume of applications.

Visit our FAQs or contact grants@mercercs.co.uk with further questions.

Appendix 1 on the following pages lists the questions in the EOI application form to help you plan your application. Applications must be submitted via our [online platform](#).

Appendix 1: EOI application questions

Below are the questions in the EOI application form, with guidance on answering. If invited to stage 2, you will be asked to expand on the information provided in each section.

[Click here to access the online application form](#). You will either need to register for an account or log in if you have already registered.

Eligibility

You will need to meet all the eligibility requirements set out in the guidelines in order to proceed with an application. Applications that do not meet eligibility criteria will not be considered.

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
Organisation information				
1.1a- 1.1d	Name and contact details of your organisation	Free text	N/A	N/A
1.2a- 1.2b	Type of organisation	Dropdown selection	Select one of the options that best describes your organisation or, if 'Other', specify in the follow-up box in 1.2b. See the guidelines for which organisations eligible to apply in this funding round.	N/A
1.3a	Provide your charity number if applicable.	Number field	N/A	N/A
1.3b	Provide your company number if applicable.	Number field	N/A	N/A
1.4	What is your organisation's annual turnover?	Dropdown selection	Select one of the options in the list provided.	N/A

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
1.5	Is your organisation a Living Wage Employer?	Dropdown selection	Confirm if you are a Living Wage Employer by selecting YES or NO <i>We are committed to being a Living Wage Funder. If you are not currently a Living Wage Employer and your proposal is successful, we will discuss this with you.</i>	N/A
1.6	Contact details	Free text	Add the details of the person or persons in your organisation we can contact about your application. You will be asked to select who the primary person to contact is for the application.	N/A
Proposal information				
2.1	Proposal title	Free text		15 words max.
2.2	Provide an outline of the programme you are requesting funding for.	Free text	Outline the <i>Transitions from Secondary Education</i> programme you are planning to deliver. Include an overview of the activities that young people would participate in, and the support available to them, to ensure they are able to access and sustain pathways after secondary education.	400 words max.
2.3	At what stage of development of delivery is this work?	Free text	Summarise the stage of the proposed work i.e. completely new, extension of current activity, expansion or scaling of work.	50 words max.
2.4a/ 2.4b	Has your organisation previously been funded by us for a <i>Transitions</i>	Dropdown selection	Select Yes or No. If you aren't sure, a list is on our website .	150 words max.

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
	<i>from Secondary Education programme?</i>		If 'Yes', you will be asked to explain in 2.4b how this programme is different to and/or a development of your previously funded work.	
2.5a/ 2.5b	When will the work start and finish? Start Date End Date	Date field	Delivery must be across 3 years (36 months). There can be some small leeway. Funded work will need to commence between July 2026 and October 2026.	N/A
Beneficiaries				
3.1	Approximately how many young people do you expect will participate in the programme in total?	Number field	Provide the total unique number of young people who will participate over the three years.	N/A
3.2	Explain who your intended beneficiaries are - which young people you are aiming to work with and why.	Free text	Tell us about your understanding of your target beneficiaries and the disadvantage/s they experience. Explain the disadvantages and how you have come to understand these and the challenges they present. Give an indication of the numbers and ages within each beneficiary group you hope to impact over the duration of the work.	300 words max.
3.3	Where will the work take place?	Dropdown selection	We only fund work taking place in Greater London. Select up to five local authorities from the list provided.	N/A

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
3.4	Tell us more about the locations you are choosing to work in and why you have chosen to work with young people in these geographical areas.	Free text	Explain the reasons you are working in the local area, any existing relationships or connections and evidence of need.	250 words max.
3.5	How do you involve the voice of the people who will benefit from this work in its design and delivery?	Free text	Tell us how young people are involved in designing or delivering your work, to ensure continuous improvement and relevance to their needs and circumstances.	250 words max.
Expertise and partnerships				
4.1	Why is your organisation well placed to deliver this work? Tell us about your organisation, what its core mission is, the primary aims and objectives, how it works with young people, and previous experience of similar work.	Free text	Give an overview of your demonstrable track record in delivering similar work or other relevant experience.	300 words max.
4.2	What partnerships do you have, or intend to develop, to support the delivery of this programme?	Free text	Explain who each partner is and whether you have worked together previously. Give specific names of partners where known.	50 words max.
Impact and learning				
5.1	Describe the overall impact and outcomes for young people you anticipate as a result of this work.	Free text	Outcomes are the measurable short-term benefits of your work. Impact is the broader and more long-term effect.	150 words max.

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
5.2	How will you evaluate the programme?		Explain if you have an evaluation plan, what will the key indicators of success be and how you will know if you have achieved your outcomes and impacts.	150 words max.
Finances				
6.1	What is the total cost of your proposal?	Number field	Give the total amount the programme will cost over the three years, including the amount you are requesting from us.	N/A
6.2	How much are you requesting from us?	Number field	You can request between £120,000 and £300,000 over three years. Requests can be for the total cost of the programme. The amount requested per year cannot exceed 50% of the income of the charity. For example, a charity with an annual income of £80,000 would have an approximate income over the three-year period of £240,000 and therefore cannot apply for more than £120,000 in total over the three years.	N/A
6.3	Provide a brief description of how the grant will be spent.	Free text	<p>This is restricted funding to deliver a programme, but expenditure can include contributions to relevant overhead costs.</p> <p>Refer to the guidelines for what can't be funded. Link here</p>	80 words max.

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
6.4	If your programme requires funding from elsewhere, explain where this will come from and if it has been secured yet.	Free text	We will fund 100% of a project, provided it is not more than £300,000. If your project costs more than this, or will be funding through other income streams, tell us where this income will be from and how much has been secured.	50 words max.
Monitoring				
The information in this section is being asked to help inform our understanding of organisations who apply to us for funding. There is no judgment or preference for particular responses and will not be used as the basis of individual funding decisions.				
7.1a	How did you hear about Mercers' funding programmes?	Dropdown selection	Select one of the following options provided in the list. If you cannot find an appropriate selection, use the other box.	N/A
7.1b	Other	Free text	If you haven't selected an option above, use this box to briefly outline how you came to apply for this funding.	N/A
DEI Data Standard questions				
Your answers to these help us understand more about the organisations applying to us for funding and how they are led, using the categorisation set out in the DEI data standard for funders . Your responses to these questions are used for our own monitoring and information purposes and not for individual funding decisions.				
7.2	Is there a specific community that your organisation is dedicated to serving?	Dropdown selection	Select any that category from the list that you anticipate that the majority (75% or more) of people supported or benefiting will identify. Leave blank if this does not apply to your project or	N/A

No.	Question	Type	Guidance on answering questions	Word limit
			organisation. You may select from multiple categories to reflect the intentions of your project e.g. Black + Mental Health + Young People + Women and Girls.	
7.3	Does the leadership of your organisation identify in the areas you have selected above?	Dropdown selection	Select any category from the list that applies. By leadership of the organisation, we mean that the majority of the key decision-makers have a shared identity. As an indication, this might be 75% or more of the Board of Trustees/ Management Committee AND 50% or more of senior staff identify as from a community or characteristic.	N/A