



Young People & Education Programme

Transitions from Secondary Education

Special Initiative

Phase 2 2024 - 2028

Information and Guidelines

Background

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, will support organisations working with disadvantaged young people in London to support them to progress successfully from secondary education. We particularly want to fund work that supports young people considering alternative pathways that build on the skills, knowledge and key competencies valued by future employers, such as apprenticeships and other related programmes, by increasing their knowledge and experiences of these routes.

We have been funding organisations that support young people to transition from secondary education through this initiative since 2019. During Phase 1, 15 organisations were funded across three cohorts. A list of all 15 organisations is provided in appendix 1.

Due to the success of the initiative so far and the continuing high need in this area, we are pleased to announce that there will be a Phase 2 of the Special Initiative through which we plan to fund a further two cohorts of grantees over the four-year period from Autumn 2024.

Outcomes

Organisations we fund must be able to demonstrate how their work helps disadvantaged young people to:

- 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

What we will fund

- ✓ Constituted not for profit organisations, charitable incorporated organisations (CIO), charitable companies (limited by guarantee), community interest companies (CIC) and social enterprises and partnerships
- ✓ Work which supports young people in secondary education to transition to further education, employment or training or other positive destinations
- ✓ Work supporting young people in London including organisations that do, or could, have a national reach
- ✓ Project or core costs. We are happy to fund new or start-up organisations however the total funding requested should not be more than 50% of the organisation's total annual income at the time of application
- ✓ We are open minded about the form of financial support provided and are willing to consider social investment and repayable grants. Please contact us at grants@mercercs.co.uk for more information

We don't fund

- ✗ Applications from individuals
- ✗ Work outside of Greater London
- ✗ Capital Projects (bricks and mortar)
- ✗ General appeals or financial support for project costs that have already been incurred

What we are looking to support

In Phase 2 of the Transitions Special Initiative, we are looking to fund two cohorts, each of between 3 and 5 organisations. This funding round is for the first cohort of grantees.

We are looking for organisations running programmes that target the transition from secondary school age to a positive destination and with a strong history of delivering programmes that can clearly demonstrate:

- Evidence of previous related work and how this work will have a positive impact on the needs of the young people making successful transitions
- A deep understanding of, and strong partnerships with schools, colleges and employers, in the London communities in which the proposed work will take place
- A plan to involve beneficiaries and the community in the development of the work
- An understanding of the importance and impact of building trusted relationships with young people
- A project that considers accessibility, different learning styles, and intersecting protected characteristics in its design
- A commitment to robust and thorough evaluation of the proposed project, 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
- How the work might be scalable or replicable
- How the project will be sustained after the lifetime of the grant and any potential for longer term impact
- A clear link between outcomes and activities

Funded work will also align with the wider ethos of our Philanthropy Framework, which is to enable people to reach their potential and lead fulfilling lives. We consider three impact indicators relevant in measuring success over the grant period:

- Improving people's lives
- Strengthening organisations
- Contributing to societal change

Over the course of the Transitions Special Initiative, a number of common themes and challenges have been identified through the work of our grantees. We are particularly interested in applications that address any of the following:

- Support to help young people build resilience, especially those experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues, either directly through the programme or by signposting to relevant support
- Programmes that support young people facing additional barriers to successful transition such as care leavers, young carers, young people in alternative education institutes (i.e. pupil referral units (PRUs), secure estate)
- Raising awareness of and access to a wide range of career options for young people; especially in professions such as law, medicine, architecture, accountancy, and particularly for those from backgrounds who may not be widely represented in these sectors
- Programmes which offer soft skills support as well as educational/employment skills
- Programmes which utilise technology to support successful transitions such as virtual work experience, AI careers support

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 £350,000 per organisation paid across three years
- We anticipate making grants to between three and five organisations in 2024/25. Those organisations would form cohort 1. A further cohort will be recruited in 2025/26
- 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 optional organisational capacity building support through trusted partners
- A cohort approach creating opportunity for collaboration with organisations funded in both cohorts of Phase 2 of the Special Initiative

Application process

The first stage is the submission of an [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) for applicants to provide information about the work funding is being requested for. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full stage 2 application.

Application timeline

- 1) The programme launches on **Tuesday 16 July 2024** via a webinar, where prospective applicants can hear more about the programme and ask questions.
- 2) An **Expression of Interest (EOI)** will then be open for five weeks until **12pm (noon) on Tuesday 20 August 2024**. The EOI starts with two eligibility questions which will advise if the EOI can proceed
- 3) In September/October 2024, the EOIs will be shortlisted by a grant panel
- 4) By early November 2024 we will notify applicants of the outcome of the EOI and if they are invited to make a full application. We are not able to provide detailed feedback on EOIs

Grant application timeline	
Launch of the programme via webinar and access to EOI form	Tuesday 16 July 2024
Deadline for receipt of EOIs	12pm (noon) Tuesday 20 August 2024
Indicative timeline for progression to Stage 2 to be confirmed	
Decisions made and organisations contacted about outcome of the EOI	By early November 2024
Stage 2 application window (if invited to apply)	November – December 2024
Assessment and due diligence	December 2024 – January 2025
Organisations informed about outcome of application	Mid-March 2025
First payment of funding to be granted to successful organisations	1 April 2025 onwards

Contact grants@merciers.co.uk with any questions.

Appendix 1

Transitions from Secondary Education Special Initiative Phase 1 grantees 2019 – 2023

Cohort 1 2019/22

[Career Academies](#)

[Construction Youth Trust](#)

[Drive Forward Foundation](#)

[EY Foundation](#)

Cohort 2 2020/23

[Brentford FC Community Sports Trust](#)

[Dallaglio RugbyWorks](#)

[IntoUniversity](#)

[Young Westminster Foundation](#)

Cohort 3 2021/24

[Blueprint for all](#)

[Envision](#)

[In2scienceUK](#)

[Making the Leap](#)

[Power2](#)

[Street League](#)

[XLP](#)