**Q: Similar to geography what is the optimum or minimum number of providers expected in a FEA/geography?**

A: As we have not defined geographic areas, there is no optimum or minimum number of providers for each collaboration. We expect to see and would be encouraged by collaborations which include a range of eligible provider types as outlined in the prospectus. We see collaboration as key to driving the change set out in the White Paper. Lead applicants are required to consult with all institutions within the FE sector, which offer a broad range of technical provision and with more than 1,000 directly enrolled learners, located in the geographic area, and invite them to join the collaboration. Where an institution within the FE sector does not wish to engage, the lead applicant must confirm that the institution has been provided with an opportunity to join the collaboration and the rationale for them wishing to remain outside of it. The proposals must provide a clear justification for the collaboration membership and a high-level outline of the individual contribution of each member. Institutions in the FE sector are defined in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and include:

(a) institutions conducted by further education corporations,

(b) designated institutions Part I of this Act (defined in section 28(4)

(c) sixth form colleges.

**Q: These three questions refer to SDF Funding**

(1) Can the SDF revenue funding support Project Management costs for both SDF lead and/or partners for the period up to March 2022, should an existing post be seconded into this collaborative role. This might be a rate per day for X days a week?

(2) In terms of the development of new training/course modules which align to skills priorities and not funded through other DfE contracts, can SDF revenue funding be used to fund:

(a) The marketing of this new provision including existing staff time - e.g. development of social media, use of Facebook ads etc.

(b) To provide the courses either Free of Charge or at a highly discounted rate for businesses during the period up to March 2022?

(3) If the provision developed is tutor led but fully on-line, can more than one of the partners offer this during the pilot rather than perhaps just one partner at one location

A: Activities and items which are eligible and ineligible for funding are outlined in the prospectus. We will not enter into dialogue with applicants on their potential projects through Jaggaer. Selection to be a pilot area is not a commitment to fund any or all of the projects contained within an EOI. Collaborations selected as SDF pilots will be required to submit more detailed information on the specifications and costs of the projects contained in their EOI proposal at stage 2.

**Q: Some of Govt’s priority skills, i.e. retrofitting houses, will need training to be delivered by independent training providers & many of them will need capital funding to get ready for the scale of the challenge. While many MCAs are using local funding to gear up for these skills challenges; the exclusion of independent training providers here could cause problems nationally. Why can’t independent training providers have capital funding?**

A: ITPs are eligible to receive capital funding for equipment but are not eligible to receive capital funding for buildings and improvements to premises.

**Q: Why are Sixth Form Colleges not able to be lead applicants?**

A: Institutions are eligible to act as lead applicants because of their overall size and breadth of provision, and their focus on post-16 technical education and training. General FE colleges and other eligible lead institutions offer a range of technical and vocational provision at Levels 3-5 to both 16-19 aged learners and adults. Lead applicants must consult with all FE colleges, which includes sixth form colleges, offering a broad range of technical provision and with more than 1,000 directly enrolled learners, located in the geographic area, and invite them to join the collaboration.

**Q: Can a college under an ESFA Notice still be a lead applicant?**

A: Unless there are exceptional circumstances (defined as no other eligible lead applicant in the geographic area identified meets the quality bar) we would not expect the lead applicant to have a current Ofsted grade for overall effectiveness of less than Good, or a published Notice to Improve. Institutions that define, and fully justify a geographic area that is relevant to the local labour market and economy, but which has no institutions located within it that meet the criteria for lead applicant will have the opportunity to provide information on their circumstances in their application. This information will be considered in the assessment process. It could, for example, include information about the progress they are making in addressing the issues related to the Notice or Ofsted grade. We will draw on ESFA data and intelligence as part of our due diligence process to confirm eligibility and highlight any potential risks to project delivery. Where there are ungraded institutions due to recent mergers, we will accept the grades of former institutions. The Ofsted grade that determines eligibility is the one that a college has on the date of the EOI submission. Should this grade change before contract award we reserve the right to review the application in the light of this change. IoTs must have a current IoT licence. Institutions that are eligible to be part of the collaboration and receive funding through the Skills Accelerator are outlined in the prospectus, there is no requirement for these institutions to meet the threshold for lead applicant status.

**Q - Are applicants able to submit appendices to support the information in the application form such as pen portraits etc?**

A - We will only assess information provided on the SDF application form.

**Q - Can the authority please confirm whether a General Further Education College Group that has a overall Ofsted Grade 3 Requires Improvement but has a recent monitoring visit grade of 'Reasonable Progress' eligible to be the lead applicant?**

A - We have stated in the prospectus that lead applicant must not be under a published Notice to Improve or have an Ofsted Grade for overall effectiveness of less than good unless there are exceptional circumstances. However, we do not want areas of the country to miss out on the opportunity to become a pilot area and we are aware that there can be a delay between improvements being achieved and the formal lifting of the Notice or re-inspection. Where collaborations have identified a sensible geography which meets the criteria for a functional economic area and local labour market, we will consider the cases presented for the lead applicant to have an Ofsted grade of less than Good or with a published Notice to Improve. Space is provided on the application form to present the case. We will draw on ESFA data and intelligence to assure ourselves that undertaking the role of lead applicant would not distract the institution from addressing the issues which led to the Ofsted Grade or published Notice to Improve or present a reputational or delivery risk to the Skills Accelerator pilot.

**Q - Our geographical area covers urban, rural and coastal and note that the application form asks just to tick one box. Please can you define what predominantly refers to this in this case? Is it for example based on population, land area etc?**

A - It is for applicants to decide how they wish to be categorised. We have pointed applicants to Office for National Statistics data to help define their area as either rural, urban or coastal.

**Q - Are we required to invite HEIs in our geographical area to be part of our submission?**

A - Higher Education providers delivering Level 4 and 5 technical provision and higher-level apprenticeships are eligible to join provider collaborations where their provision is in line with the skills priorities identified and for the area they can provide added value. However, it is not a requirement for the lead applicant to invite HEIs to join the collaboration.