

Multi-million-pound fund to boost standards across the FE sector

A multi-million pound fund to help boost standards of further education across the country has been launched by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson today (Thursday 27th February).

Almost £14 million will be invested to help improve leadership and governance across the further education sector so more people receive the best education and training possible. This latest move forms part of the government's commitment to build the skilled workforce that businesses and the country needs to thrive by unlocking talent and levelling up skills and opportunities.

The investment announced today includes:

- A £9 million College Collaboration Fund to support colleges to work together to share their knowledge, expertise and best practice to boost the quality of education and training on offer. The fund builds on the successes of The Strategic College Improvement Fund which has already helped over 80 colleges [to improve the quality of teaching, strengthened their partnership working approaches and supported college-wide improvements in culture and leadership.](#)
- Up to £4.5 million will be invested in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes to support improved leadership and governance – developed by The Education and Training Foundation in partnership with the Oxford Said Business School, The Chartered Institute of Accountants in England and Wales and The Association of Colleges. The programmes will provide FE leaders and governors with tailored support in a range of areas including strategic planning, finance and working with employers to address local and national skills needs.
- £200,000 to support two Governance pilots that will test new and innovative approaches to boost the skills and improve the governance of college boards to make sure they achieve the best outcomes for students.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Good leadership and governance are vital if we want the further education sector to continue to thrive and grow.

The FE sector is already doing amazing work to unlock talent and opportunity up and down the country.

This multi-million pound investment will empower even more FE leaders and governors to drive up standards so more students receive the high quality education and training they deserve.

Richard Atkins, FE Commissioner said:

I welcome the launch of this support offer to the governors and leaders of our FE Colleges. In order to be successful, colleges require excellent governance and leadership provided by well trained and well supported Chairs, governors, Principals, Clerks and leaders, so that learners can benefit from enrolling at great colleges. I am delighted that this offer will enable governors and leaders at all levels to access and share high quality training, development and support.

The College Collaboration Fund will be key to helping colleges to work together to develop and improve further. This expanded development programme will build upon what we already know works well in the sector. The governance review and recruitment pilots will help college governing bodies to operate, challenge and support as effectively as possible. My team and I see examples of excellent practice during our visits across the country, but we also see examples of where support is needed if standards of governance and leadership are to improve. I am pleased that we will now have this expanded range of development opportunities to offer to colleges where we see this as necessary.

David Russell, Chief Executive of the Education and Training Foundation said:

Investing in the leadership of the Further Education and training sector is a vital aspect of the professional development support that helps it thrive. The announcement of these new programmes recognises that leadership comes from a number of places within institutions, from senior leaders to middle managers and from the governors to governance professionals. In doing so, it builds on the successful programmes already developed by the ETF with Department for Education funding in recent years, strengthening leadership capacity across the sector and, ultimately, delivering improved outcomes for learners.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of The Association of Colleges said:

This investment into the further education sector is welcome news and another good sign that DfE wants to invest in and back colleges. This package will help colleges help themselves and each other – proper peer to peer support, developing the skills and knowledge of leaders and governors across the country to strengthen the great education colleges already provide. Well-run and effective colleges rely on staff at all levels, which is why it is great to see targeted funds for continuous professional development opportunities as well. This is an important part of a wider systems reform programme which will see colleges thrive and college leaders

work to a bold and compelling vision for the future of FE.

Bill Watkin, Chief Executive of Sixth Form Colleges Association said:

The first two waves of the Strategic College Improvement initiative showed just how committed colleges are to helping other institutions – and how effective they are in doing so. The Sixth Form Colleges Association welcomes the announcement that there will be a second iteration of this government-funded programme which will see high-performing colleges continuing to share their strengths and strategies for success.

The [National Leaders of Further Education \(NLFEs\)](#) and [National Leaders of Governance \(NLGs\)](#) programmes will continue to provide peer-to-peer support to further education and sixth form colleges where governance and leadership can be improved.

This funding builds on the government's ongoing work to help colleges to be well-run and resilient, so they offer the best possible education and training.

The first round of the application window for The College Collaboration Fund is open from today until 8th April 2020

We expect to announce the successful colleges from May 2020. For more information on the application process, visit [here](#).

Further information about the governance pilots are available [here](#) and [here](#).