

[News story: ESFA calls on small and medium sized apprenticeship employers and supporting training providers to help develop the apprenticeship service](#)

The Education and Skills funding Agency (ESFA) has opened an Expressions of Interest (EOI) for small and medium sized employers and supporting training providers that currently have a non-levy contract to help the ESFA in its initial phase, to test the system functionality of the apprenticeship service for employers who do not pay the Levy.

Small and medium sized employers that do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy, as well as their supporting training providers, can now [express their interest](#) to help ESFA shape its services so it meets future needs for all employers. To apply to test the service:

- the employer must have an apprenticeship vacancy that will result in an apprentice starting in August, September or October 2019, for the application to be accepted
- as this is a test phase, the training provider should already have a contract with ESFA for supporting employers that do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy, and have money left in their non-levy funding allocation

This follows [news](#) that, in future, small and medium sized employers will be able to access the full benefits of the [apprenticeship service](#), even if they don't pay the Apprenticeship Levy.

The Apprenticeship Levy is paid by employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million and is used to help fund apprenticeships and skills development across the country.

From August, a small number of employers who do not pay the levy and their associated providers will be able to set up accounts on the apprenticeship service through our first test phase.

The test phase will take place between August and December 2019. The purpose of this test phase is to help make sure the service meets employer and provider needs, ahead of it being opened up to a wider audience.

Providers not involved in the initial test phase will not be disadvantaged when we further roll out the service and no new funding is available through

this functional test.

During this development phase, we will be working with employers and supporting providers to test a modest volume of apprenticeship starts.

Before employers and providers apply, they should consider:

- the training provider should already have a contract with ESFA and have money left in their allocation for non-levy funding
- the employer and provider must have an established relationship before submitting to the EOI process
- the employer must have an apprenticeship vacancy that will result in a start for the period between August and October 2019 for the application to be accepted
- the applicants who take part in the development will be allocated on a first come, first served basis; the ESFA will not be able to guarantee an apprenticeship start until the selection has been made and applicants have been notified

When applying, employers and providers must:

- submit a joint application and agree whether it will be the employer or the provider who will make the application – and have permission to do so on the other party's behalf
- ensure the provider referenced in the application is on the ESFA [Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers \(RoATP\)](#) at the point of submission
- ensure the employer referenced in the application submission has an annual pay bill of under £3 million per annum

The EOI will have two application windows. The first will open on 13 June 2019 and close 05 July 2019, after which the ESFA will select employers and supporting providers who have starts in August, September or October.

The second window to submit an EOI for ESFA to select employers and supporting providers, who have starts in November and December 2019, will open later in the summer.

We have [published](#) further information on GOV.UK.