

[News story: Final round of Strategic College Improvement Fund opens](#)

More colleges are set to benefit from bespoke support to help them boost the standard of further education on offer, as the [final round](#) of the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) launches today (8 February).

The [Strategic College Improvement Fund](#) was launched in June 2018, following an earlier pilot phase. In total, fifty colleges have been successful in securing funding to work with a high performing partner college to share their knowledge to help tackle common issues – such as raising the standard of teaching or boosting learner attendance and retention.

Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships, Anne Milton said:

I'm absolutely thrilled that the Strategic College Improvement Fund has already supported 50 colleges to improve so they can provide their students with the best possible education.

This is the last opportunity to secure funding from the SCIF, so I would urge eligible colleges to apply now.

The launch of the final application round comes as a [new report](#) highlights how the SCIF received overwhelming support from the colleges that took part in the pilot phase. Colleges reported a number of positive benefits including how the SCIF helped them boost the quality of teaching and learning, strengthened their collaborative working approaches, raised aspirations and supported college-wide improvements in culture and leadership.

Principal, pilot phase partner college, said:

We have learned things we didn't know about ourselves. It has been an opportunity for staff across college to take leadership on their bit of the project...it's shone a light on things we could improve on even if we didn't think it would.

Head of apprenticeships, pilot phase college said:

This has been a real success for us, we are now looking much more closely at individual learners and the quality of their assessments, feedback and progression.

Head of faculty, pilot phase college, said:

It was great to have the opportunity to discuss with colleagues in same climate, talking college to college. FE is tough and they understand the constraints, they have an understanding of where you start from, you don't have to spend lot time explaining reasons for things as they get it.

The Strategic College Improvement Fund was developed following calls from the further education sector for a peer-to-peer support programme. The SCIF plays an important role alongside the National Leaders of Further Education and National Leaders of Governance programmes, which draw on the expertise and experience of some of the best further education leaders, governors and clerks to help other colleges to improve.

Association of Colleges, Director of Policy, David Corke said:

The key purpose of this programme is to improve outcomes for colleges – and it has been great to hear so many college leaders say that the SCIF has accelerated improvements in quality, built sector capacity and helped share best practice.

We will continue to work with Government to ensure the highest standards are maintained in the sector through future peer improvement programmes and encourage all eligible institutions to apply for this third and final round of funding.

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

Sixth form colleges are increasingly working with each other and sharing expertise, resources and strategies to drive up standards across the sector. It is also encouraging to see colleges working with a variety of providers from other sectors, making the most of their system leadership strengths and capacity.

The Strategic College Improvement Fund offers a well-structured and well-funded framework to support that collaboration and support. All participating colleges stand to benefit, whether they are one of those that receive the grant or one of the Lead Partners, and I urge all colleges that are eligible, to engage in this opportunity by establishing a SCIF partnership and then submitting an application.

Deputy Further Education Commissioner, SCIF Lead, Teresa Kelly said:

The SCIF is one of the few opportunities for colleges to receive funding to support quality improvements and has been very well received by those colleges participating to date.

We very much hope that all remaining eligible colleges will make an application to the third and final round of the programme and take advantage of working with a college partner on practical and focused strategies to develop teaching, learning and assessment.

The application window for the third and final round of SCIF is open from today until Friday 8 March 2019.

We expect to announce the successful colleges from the second application round in March. For more information on the application process, visit [here](#).