

Press release: Colleges benefit from multi-million fund to drive up standards

A further 17 colleges been awarded funding totalling £2.5 million from the third and final round of the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF), Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton announced today (Thursday 6 June).

Colleges including Northampton College and Cheshire College South & West have been successful in their bid for funding from the final application round. They will now partner up with a high performing college to share their knowledge and expertise to help tackle issues – such as raising the standard of teaching or boosting learner attendance

The results of the final application round come as a [new report](#) is published today reveals that the SCIF has been widely welcomed by the sector. Colleges reported a number of positive benefits including how the programme has helped boost attendance rates, as well as the quality of teaching and learning and supported college-wide improvements in culture and leadership. The report also underlines the strong support for the collaborative working approaches, with many college partnerships pledging to continue this work even though the programme has come to an end.

Anne Milton, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister said:

I'm pleased to announce the colleges that have been successful in securing funding from the third and final round of the Strategic College Improvement Fund.

The fund will have supported 80 colleges in total to drive up standards and help to make sure all students get the best education and training possible.

We've seen some great success stories as a result of the programme. It's excellent news that colleges are making progress. Many colleges are intending to continue working together beyond the programme's end, which can only be for the good of students.

The SCIF was first launched in October 2017. In total 80 colleges across England have been successful in securing funding totalling £12.3 million. This includes Macclesfield College and Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College in London have been successful in securing funding from the fund.

Andrea Murphy, Vice Principal, Macclesfield College said:

We originally applied for the SCIF bid in November 2017 as although we had made significant progress in English and mathematics provision over a three year period, with the introduction of the new grading system we saw an opportunity to continue this trajectory by working with other providers to share and implement good practice from the sector.

Our first application was supported by a visit from the SCIF team who advised us as to how we could make improvements to the bid. Unfortunately, in that round we were unsuccessful. However we decided to apply again, as although by this time we had been through a successful Ofsted inspection, we felt that a resubmission could still support us. We reapplied in July 2018, again we were supported well by the SCIF team with the stage 2 application.

Our SCIF bid will focus on 'Raising the Bar through a Coaching and Growth Mindset – Engagement and Appropriate Intervention for English & Maths and Access to HE Learners'. We are now delighted to be embarking upon a journey towards becoming outstanding and feel that this bid will support us in this aim.''

David Vasse, Principal, Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College said:

Our application for Strategic College Improvement Funding has enabled us to construct a cohesive set of projects that will extend the scope of what we were already doing but also allow some new initiatives to take shape which we simply did not have the resources to start.

All of the projects will be delivered over a 10 month period but are designed to have a lasting impact on the social and academic norms of the college. From a student's perspective this will include significantly extended opening hours for study, an increase in academic mentoring, the opportunity to visit and network with students in outstanding settings else in the country and the chance to work towards status as a Monoux "leader of learning". From a staff perspective this will include the chance for us to access our Monoux Teacher training suite online, more expert-led training and increased opportunities for co-teaching.

Bill Watkin, Chief Executive, Sixth Form Colleges Association:

The SCIF has been a welcome and important opportunity for colleges to work together to raise standards in the sector. I am sure that many of the relationships established through SCIF activities will be sustained for years to come and students will benefit well beyond the end of this programme. We hope that the government will soon be launching SCIF 2!

Deputy Further Education Commissioner, SCIF Lead, Teresa Kelly:

The SCIF programme has been very well received by the sector and in particular colleges like that the focus of the programme is about improving quality with the support of another college

The SCIF has been the first of its kind across the sector with a real emphasis on quality improvement. Many colleges involved have reported that through the SCIF they have been able to tackle key issues such as improving attendance, improving their provision for apprenticeships or working on getting consistency in teaching standards across all curriculum areas. Having the resources available to drill down and concentrate on very practical issues has been of great value to teachers and curriculum managers.

SCIF programme funding has transformed the way that many colleges have delivered their CPD [continuous professional development] programmes. In particular there has been much direct link up with between teachers and colleges that they have identified as their improvement partner. Experiences of how others go about tackling practical teaching challenges have been identified as of the greatest value to those working with students in the classroom.

Almost three quarters of eligible colleges applied for the fund and 91% of applicants were successful in securing funding ranging from £60,000 to £500,000.

The fund has played an important role alongside the Government's National Leaders of Further Education (NLFEs) programme which also aims to share best practice and boost standards throughout the further education sector, giving more people the opportunity to access high quality education and training.

For more information on the SCIF, visit [here](#)