

**Office for
Students**



National Collaborative Outreach Programme

**Call for proposals to deliver phase two
of the programme in Leicestershire and
Northamptonshire**

Reference OfS 2019.01

Enquiries to ncop@officeforstudents.org.uk

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Introduction

1. The National Collaborative Outreach Programme¹ (NCOP) was established in January 2017 and contributes to the Office for Students' ambition to reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups². In doing this it supports our duty to promote equality of opportunity. The NCOP supports partnerships of universities, colleges, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, employers and others to deliver sustained and progressive programmes of higher education outreach targeting young people in Years 9 and above.
2. During phase one of the programme the NCOP partnerships focused their activities on the geographic areas in England where participation in higher education is low overall, and lower than expected given local GCSE results. These are the areas where evidence suggests there is the greatest potential for improved access to higher education during the coming years.
3. The Office for Students (OfS) has confirmed support in principle for phase two of the NCOP which will run from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2021. NCOP partnerships will continue to deliver targeted higher education outreach to young people in Year 9 upwards in the areas where they can have the greatest impact.
4. In an expanded remit the NCOP will support outreach hubs to provide open, transparent and impartial routes for secondary schools and colleges to access outreach from a range of higher education providers, avoiding duplication and eliminating gaps in outreach provision. The hubs will together cover the whole of England and will provide a platform to support wider local collaborative activity with local authorities, employers and local enterprise partnerships.
5. Phase two of the NCOP allows us to look afresh at the way the programme is delivered. We have decided to explore potential new partnership approaches to meet the programme's aims in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. The OfS board has allocated, in principle, funding of £1,495,219 per annum to support activity in the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire areas during the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21. This call seeks expressions of interest from eligible higher education providers to deliver phase two of the NCOP in these two counties³.
6. Bids for this competition from eligible providers should be submitted to ncop@officeforstudents.org.uk by **1700 on Monday 11 March 2019**.

¹ For more information on the NCOP see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-ncop/.

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-between-most-and-least-represented-groups/.

³ Higher education providers registered with the Office for Students in the approved (fee cap) category are eligible to bid for this call.

National Collaborative Outreach Programme phase two

7. The NCOP was established with the aim of rapidly boosting participation for those from underrepresented groups, with a focus on the geographic areas where this work can have the most impact. However in addition it has established a collaborative infrastructure for providers to work with each other and with schools and colleges, and thereby establish greater coherence and efficiency for higher education outreach.
8. Our plans for the second phase of the programme build on this potential by expanding our ambitions for the partnerships supported by the programme. By broadening their role, in addition to the delivery of focused work with the existing NCOP target groups, we aim to support ongoing, sustainable collaboration which reflects the imperatives in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, complements our reforms to access and participation plans, and responds to government guidance.
9. Our goals for the second phase of the NCOP are to:
 - reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups⁴
 - support young people to make well informed decisions about their future education
 - support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
 - contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.
10. The programme will achieve these goals through:
 - providing impartial, sustained and progressive higher education outreach from a range of providers tailored to the needs of young people in target areas
 - providing open, transparent and impartial routes for schools and colleges to access outreach activity from a range of higher education providers, avoiding duplication and eliminating gaps in outreach provision
 - supporting a local partnership infrastructure, now and in the future, which can act as a vehicle for activity on a range of agendas relating to access and participation, including activity set out in institutional access and participation plans
 - robust evaluation at both a local and national level, including capacity-building support.

⁴ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-between-most-and-least-represented-groups/.

Figure 1: Overview of NCOP approach



11. The success measures for the programme are focused on progression to any course of higher education, whatever the mode of study (HNC, HND, foundation degree, any degree). Partnerships are encouraged to consider their offer in terms of information about alternative routes into higher education, including higher and degree apprenticeships.
12. The NCOP provides a route through which schools and colleges can access impartial outreach, information, advice and guidance, without issues of competition acting as a barrier. During the last academic year NCOP partnerships worked with around 1,500 schools and colleges to deliver sustained and progressive programmes of targeted higher education outreach to 102,000 young people.
13. A strong and comprehensive plan to evaluate the first phase of the programme is in place, underpinned by a theory of change, a logic chain and an indicator bank. The overall aim of the national evaluation of NCOP is to assess how successfully the programme is meeting its objectives, by considering the developing wider context and the programme's alignment with, and impact on, the broader coverage of outreach activity and investment through access and participation plans. A 12-month report, covering the externally commissioned evaluations by CFE Research, was published in March 2018⁵.

Targeted outreach

14. The focus of phase one of the NCOP was the delivery of targeted outreach with young people in Years 9 to 13 who live in 997 wards in England where participation in higher education is low and lower than might be expected given local GCSE results⁶. These areas continue to be the

⁵ See

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180405115436/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2018/ncopyear1/>.

⁶ During the first phase the NCOP targeted wards (Office of National Statistics 2001 Census Area Statistics wards) that had low levels of young participation (Participation of Local Areas (POLAR3) quintile 1), and lower than expected levels of young participation, considering Key Stage 4 attainment and ethnicity (quintiles 1 and 2), or that had low levels of young participation (POLAR3 quintile 1) and lower than expected levels of young participation, considering Key Stage 4 attainment only (quintiles 1 and 2). For more information see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/.

focus of the targeted outreach during phase two. We have removed the upper age limit for engagement with the programme, but learners over 19 must be studying in further education to be eligible. NCOP partnerships are expected to engage at least 20 per cent of those in Years 9 to 13 in each of their allocated wards⁷. There is no minimum level of expected engagement with those over 19.

15. The activities and approaches delivered under the NCOP can be shaped to meet the needs of local areas and the young people who live there. However, we expect all NCOP outreach activities and programmes to:

- deliver activity that demonstrably improves equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access and then succeed in and progress from higher education
- be informed by evidence and focused on activity that has greatest impact on access and participation outcomes
- maximise opportunities to develop and deliver effective outreach collaboratively and in partnership with schools, colleges and others to create a shared vision and aims
- be transparent and accountable so that partners (including learners) and the wider community can understand the work taking place
- provide value for money
- be focused on continuous improvement, drawing on robust evidence of what works and in what context to address the challenges of improving access, success and progression.

Outreach hubs

16. Through phase two of the NCOP we will provide support for local collaborative outreach hubs operating across England. As well as delivering the targeted NCOP outreach we expect that outreach hubs will seek to:

- help teachers and advisors find out about the outreach activity available in an area by:
 - acting as a point of contact and information for all secondary schools and colleges in their geographic remit
 - hosting a website with details of the local outreach offer and signposting other information to support schools and colleges
- support schools and colleges in areas of low participation to access higher education outreach by:
 - engaging with these schools and colleges to understand their outreach needs

⁷ NCOP learner population estimates (updated September 2018) are available from www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-ncop/resources-for-partnerships/.

- facilitating access to existing outreach provision, either locally or nationally
- working collaboratively to help develop new or expanded outreach provision to meet this need, using the combined resources of the providers in the area and drawing on the investment set out in their access and participation plans
- provide a platform for other local collaborative activity by:
 - engaging strategically with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, employers and others to understand the landscape of educational disadvantage, high-level skills needs and joined up careers advice in the area
 - as far as possible developing innovative and locally tailored approaches to address the challenges identified through the above engagement, drawing in additional funding and support from available sources to support this.

17. Outreach hubs are intended to add value by providing relevant information in one easily accessible place for all secondary schools and colleges in an area. They are not intended to replace the many well established school-higher education links which already exist.

18. Table 1 gives an overview of the key elements of both targeted outreach and outreach hubs and the aims, activities, targeting and funding arrangements for each of these.

Table 1: Overview of key elements in the programme

	Aim	Coverage	Activities	Funding	Evaluation
Targeted outreach	Target learners supported to make well informed decisions about their future education.	Target learners who reside in Participation of Local Areas (POLAR3) quintile 1 and Gaps ⁸ quintile 1 and 2 areas.	Provision of programmes of higher education outreach.	OfS NCOP funding.	Monitoring, qualitative and impact evaluation locally and nationally, quantitative analysis, tracking.
Outreach hubs: Signposting	Enabling teachers and advisors to find out about local outreach activity.	All secondary schools and colleges in the outreach hub area.	Acting as a point of contact signposting existing outreach. Website providing information and signposting.	OfS NCOP funding.	Monitoring, qualitative and impact evaluation locally and nationally.
Outreach hubs: Support	Enabling the schools and colleges most likely to benefit to access the higher education outreach that they need.	Secondary schools and colleges serving pupils from POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 areas.	Engaging schools and colleges to understand their outreach needs. Facilitating access to existing outreach provision, either locally or nationally. Collaborative approaches to new provision where needed and where resources allow.	Drawing on both OfS NCOP funding and provider resources as set out in access and participation plans and other funding sources.	Monitoring, qualitative and impact evaluation locally and nationally, quantitative analysis, tracking.
Outreach hubs: Strategic engagement	Supporting effective and impactful collaboration between higher education providers and their local partners.	Geographic area covered by outreach hubs.	Understanding the local landscape of educational disadvantage, higher-level skills needs and joined-up careers advice. Developing innovative and locally tailored approaches to addressing the challenges identified.	Blend of OfS NCOP funding and other funding sources.	Monitoring, qualitative and impact evaluation locally and nationally.

⁸ See explanation on the archived Higher Education Funding Council for England website at <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180319115152/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/gaps/>.

Commissioning

19. We want to commission one or more partnerships of higher education providers, schools, colleges and other organisations to deliver phase two of the NCOP in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

20. The aspects of the programme available in this commission are:

- targeted outreach in one or more of the 26 target wards in the two counties
- one or more outreach hubs operating across the two counties.

Our preference is for bids which cover both the targeted outreach and outreach hubs in an area. However, we will consider bids which cover just one of these elements of the commission.

21. We expect, in principle, to allocate funding of £1,495,219 per annum to support activity in the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire areas during academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21. This is divided up as shown in Table 2. Full details of the funding to be allocated to the different elements of this call are given in Annex A.

Table 2: Allocation of funding

	Targeted outreach funding (£)	Outreach hub funding (£)	Total (£)
Leicestershire	565,840	165,794	731,634
Northamptonshire	622,743	140,842	763,585
Total	1,188,583	306,636	1,495,219

22. All funding is indicative, subject to the amount of overall funding provided by the Department for Education, confirmation of geographical coverage with each partnership, and a partnership operating plan approved by the OfS.

Priorities and criteria

23. Bids to deliver targeted outreach should set out how the partnership will address the goals of the programme through collaborative approaches to provide impartial, sustained and progressive higher education outreach by a range of providers, tailored to the needs of learners in Years 9 and above in target areas.

24. Bids to deliver outreach hubs should set out how the partnership will address the goals of the programme through:

- providing open, transparent and impartial routes for schools and colleges to access outreach activity from a range of higher education providers, avoiding duplication and eliminating gaps in outreach provision
- supporting a local partnership infrastructure which can act as a vehicle for activity on a range of agendas relating to access and participation, including activity set out in institutional access and participation plans.

25. In either case, bids should set out how the partnership will address the goals of the programme through robust evaluation at a local level and supporting the national programme evaluation.

26. Bids will require:

- ambitious plans to address the goals of the programme in the relevant areas, with credible proposals for how this will be achieved
- a strong understanding of local context
- evidence that the bidder can build a collaborative approach involving higher education providers, colleges, schools, employers and other relevant local agencies
- evidence that the lead provider has the capability and capacity to manage and oversee the delivery of the programme in the relevant areas.

27. Bids for this funding call will be assessed against the following criteria:

- a. The extent to which the proposed activities and approach of the partnership will address the goals of the programme. The ambition in the bid should be underpinned by appropriate risk management and mitigations, and should demonstrate clear additionality to any activities which are already planned or underway.
- b. The extent to which the partnership can demonstrate a strong understanding of the local context, including geographical or demographic challenges or unique characteristics, higher-level skills needs, educational disadvantage and careers education in the relevant areas.
- c. The extent to which the proposed activities and approach of the partnership will deliver activity that demonstrably improves equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access higher education.
- d. The extent to which the lead provider can build a collaborative approach involving higher education providers, colleges, schools, employers and other relevant local agencies to deliver its proposed approach.
- e. The extent to which the partnership can engage with schools, colleges and communities to meet the goals of the programme.
- f. The extent to which the proposals are informed by evidence and focused on activity that has greatest impact on access and participation outcomes.
- g. The extent to which the partnership can demonstrate the ability to put in place robust plans for local evaluation of its activities and approach.

- h. The extent to which the lead provider has the capability, credibility and capacity to put in place robust management and governance arrangements for the programme.
- i. Value for money for OfS investment.
- j. The extent to which the bid will form part of a balanced portfolio of NCOP activity in the wider region. We will seek as far as possible to fund partnerships which have sufficient size and scale to participate fully in the NCOP.

28. Funding will be awarded to the successful bidders on the following basis:

- a. This call is focused on the provision of targeted outreach and outreach hubs in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. We welcome bids from eligible providers to lead a partnership to deliver targeted outreach, outreach hubs or both, in all or some of these areas.
- b. For targeted outreach, there is an associated funding allocation for each of the individual wards in the two counties, which is available to support the delivery of targeted outreach to eligible learners living in these areas. Providers can bid to deliver targeted outreach activity in one or more of these wards. Full details of the funding allocated to the wards for targeted outreach are given in Annex A.
- c. For outreach hubs, there is an associated funding allocation for each of the local administrative units in the two counties which is available to support the delivery of outreach hubs in these areas. Providers can bid to deliver outreach hubs activity in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire or both areas. If covering both areas, this could be one combined outreach hub or two separate hubs managed by the partnership. Full details of the funding allocated to the two counties for outreach hubs are given in Annex A.
- d. Bids can be submitted by existing NCOP partnerships or by eligible providers looking to establish a new partnership. To ensure that all NCOP partnerships have a minimum level of resource available to meet the demands of the programme we would expect any new partnership to seek to cover, at a minimum, the outreach hub or all targeted outreach across at least one county area. We will look more favourably on proposals which seek to deliver both the outreach hub and the targeted outreach in the same area.
- e. The funding available is for revenue only and must not be used for capital expenditure.
- f. Funding is for phase two of the programme, covering the period from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2021. All funding is indicative, subject to the amount of overall funding provided by the Department for Education, confirmation of geographical coverage with each partnership, and a partnership operating plan approved by the OfS. We anticipate confirming funding in April 2019.
- g. We will accept no more than one individual bid per lead provider or NCOP partnership.
- h. This funding is intended to support new activity. We do not expect to fund activities which would take place irrespective of this competition. If proposals build on already planned activity, or overlap with existing activities, they should make clear how the requested funding will provide genuine additionality and avoid duplication.

- i. Successful bidders will be expected to consider what has already been delivered through phase one of the programme in these areas, particularly with respect to any sustained and progressive activity with learners. In as much as is possible they should seek to build upon the existing relationships with the schools and colleges in the targeted geographies and consider how learners already engaged with the programme might continue to benefit.

Bidding process and timescales

29. Eligible providers are invited to submit bids for funding using the template at Annex B⁹. Proposals must be emailed to ncop@officeforstudents.org.uk by **1700 on Monday 11 March 2019**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Bids not using the template, or altering it, will be deemed invalid and will not be assessed.
30. Where a new NCOP partnership is proposed we will require a signed letter of support from each member of the partnership. For existing NCOP partnerships we only require signed letters of support from new partners that are looking to join the partnership in connection with this bid. Letters of support should be submitted alongside the bidding template by the deadline.
31. Following submission, bids will be assessed by a panel comprising OfS officers and external representatives, which will make a recommendation to the Director of Fair Access and Participation.
32. The successful bidders will be required to submit an operating plan, alongside a progression framework (in the case of targeted outreach) and in due course a local evaluation plan. Further details of our requirements will be shared with the successful bidders in due course.
33. The timetable for this competition is set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Timetable

Date	Activity
1700 on Monday 11 March 2019	Deadline for bids
Tuesday 12 March to Friday 15 March 2019	Assessment process and decision making
Week of Monday 18 March 2019	Decisions communicated to bidders
May 2019	Successful bidders submit an operating plan, progression framework and project plan
June 2019	Operating plan assessment and approval
June 2019	Successful bidders submit a local evaluation plan
Thursday 1 August 2019	Funding commences

⁹ Higher education providers registered with the Office for Students in the approved (fee cap) category are eligible to bid for this call.

Responsibilities of the lead provider

34. Each NCOP partnership requires a lead provider which is responsible for maintaining close oversight of the funding allocated for its partnership, and its performance against its operating plan. This is the organisation with which the OfS has the primary relationship in terms of NCOP funding, including managing and auditing accounts, and day-to-day communication about all aspects of the programme. An award letter will be sent to the head of the accountable provider setting out its formal responsibilities before the start of phase two¹⁰. This must be formally agreed before grant payments will commence.
35. Funded partnerships are subject to the monitoring requirements of the programme. We will take a risk-based, proportionate approach to monitoring, to ensure value for money and the delivery of targets, objectives, outputs and outcomes. Programme guidance will be issued before the start of phase two setting out more details of our proposed approach to monitoring.

Next steps

36. Interested and eligible higher education providers are invited to complete the bid template at Annex B and email it to ncop@officeforstudents.org.uk by **1700 on Monday 11 March 2019**. The template is available to download alongside this publication at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-call-for-proposals-to-deliver-phase-two-of-the-programme-in-leicestershire-and-northamptonshire/.

¹⁰ Terms and conditions of funding for the NCOP phase one can be viewed in 'NCOP consortia guidance (updated October 2018)' at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-ncop/resources-for-partnerships/.

Annex A: Geographical coverage and funding allocations

The NCOP focuses on particular identified geographies, with funding allocated on the basis of weighted population data to each of these areas. Details of the geographies covered by this call and the associated funding are given below. All funding is indicative subject to the amount of overall funding provided by the Department for Education, confirmation of geographical coverage with each partnership, and the agreement of an approved partnership operating plan.

Table A1: Annual funding summary

	Targeted outreach funding (£)	Outreach hub funding (£)	Total (£)
Leicestershire	565,840	165,794	731,634
Northamptonshire	622,743	140,842	763,585
Total	1,188,583	306,636	1,495,219

Table A2: Targeted outreach

NCOP targeted outreach ward coverage	County	Annual funding allocation (2019-20 and 2020-21)
Abbey (00FNNF)	Leicestershire	£90,716
Eyres Monsell (00FNNQ)	Leicestershire	£84,428
Freemen (00FNNS)	Leicestershire	£69,995
Greenhill (31UHGH)	Leicestershire	£47,729
Hinckley Trinity (31UEGG)	Leicestershire	£45,152
Loughborough Ashby (31UCGN)	Leicestershire	£19,483
Melton Egerton (31UGGC)	Leicestershire	£23,504
New Parks (00FNNX)	Leicestershire	£126,280
Oakham North West (00FPND)	Leicestershire	£17,112
South Wigston (31UJFR)	Leicestershire	£41,441
Avondale (34UEGA)	Northamptonshire	£26,905
Central (34UBFN)	Northamptonshire	£35,565
Delapre (34UFGC)	Northamptonshire	£53,605
Drayton (34UCGQ)	Northamptonshire	£34,431
East (34UBFQ)	Northamptonshire	£17,834
Hazelwood (34UBFR)	Northamptonshire	£34,637
Hill (34UCGS)	Northamptonshire	£44,018
Kingswood (34UBFT)	Northamptonshire	£36,802
Queensway (34UHGB)	Northamptonshire	£40,204
Rushden West (34UDGP)	Northamptonshire	£43,399
Shire Lodge (34UBGA)	Northamptonshire	£24,225
Spencer (34UFGT)	Northamptonshire	£63,604

St Andrew's (34UEGL)	Northamptonshire	£30,101
St James (34UFGS)	Northamptonshire	£51,028
Thorplands (34UFGU)	Northamptonshire	£56,697
Warkton (34UEGW)	Northamptonshire	£29,689

Table A3: Outreach hubs

NCOP outreach hub area coverage	County	Annual funding allocation (2019-20 and 2020-21)
Blaby (E07000129)	Leicestershire	£14,428
Charnwood (E07000130)	Leicestershire	£19,583
Harborough (E07000131)	Leicestershire	£9,391
Hinckley and Bosworth (E07000132)	Leicestershire	£20,246
Leicester (E06000016)	Leicestershire	£59,079
Melton (E07000133)	Leicestershire	£8,803
North West Leicestershire (E07000134)	Leicestershire	£21,978
Oadby and Wigston (E07000135)	Leicestershire	£8,283
Rutland (E06000017)	Leicestershire	£4,005
Corby (E07000150)	Northamptonshire	£17,080
Daventry (E07000151)	Northamptonshire	£13,295
East Northamptonshire (E07000152)	Northamptonshire	£19,211
Kettering (E07000153)	Northamptonshire	£20,685
Northampton (E07000154)	Northamptonshire	£45,118
South Northamptonshire (E07000155)	Northamptonshire	£7,324
Wellingborough (E07000156)	Northamptonshire	£18,129



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