Institute of Coding competition: Invitation to submit applications for Future Projects funding to enhance higher-level digital skills provision and inclusivity

Dear Colleagues

1. This letter invites proposals for a total of £2.3 million in funding from the Institute of Coding Future Projects Fund to enhance the work of the Institute of Coding. The Institute of Coding has as its central mission the extension and improvement of digital skills education for all learners at undergraduate and postgraduate level (Levels 6 and 7), with a particular focus on those that are considered 'hard to reach'.

2. The Institute is funded by the Office for Students (OfS) which regulates English higher education providers and, therefore, the funding is only available for English HE provision[1]. Proposals must include matched funding.

3. We will allocate the £2.3 million of funding to up to a maximum of ten successful bidding groups with clear plans to improve access to digital skills education at Levels 6 and 7, enhance graduate employability and employment outcomes, and address identified skills needs (para 17(a) also refers).

4. The funding allocated must be spent between 31st January 2019 and 31st January 2020. No extension will be given to this end date.

5. This funding is available to groups which include at least one OfS-funded higher education institution (HEI) with existing course provision in computer science or information technology, and at least one industry partner. Bids may include multiple HEIs and multiple industry partners, other higher education providers of all kinds, other employers, outreach partners, professional bodies and/or other stakeholders[2]. The group does not have to include a current IoC partner. To incentivise inclusion and collaboration, 50% of the awards will go to projects that

---

[1] Other UK HEIs can be involved but must be self-funding.
[2] Industry partners include commercial companies of all sizes and types; Outreach partners include organisations dedicated to enabling and supporting 'hard to reach' groups (such as mature learners; the unemployed; learners with disabilities).

involve at least one new partner (i.e. that has not received funding in the initial IoC Consortium). New funded partners must be approved by the OfS and must join the IoC Consortium.

6. The deadline for proposals is **noon on Monday 26th November 2018**. We recognise that this deadline presents a challenging timescale for those submitting bids, and therefore encourage bidding organisations to contact colleagues within the IoC (ioc@bath.ac.uk) to discuss ideas ahead of submission.

7. Proposals should be submitted to the Institute Manager via ioc@bath.ac.uk using the templates Annex B and Annex C. (The templates will be made available to download from the IoC website). Proposals should include a risk register and letters confirming the effort and support to be given by each partner directly involved in the bid. Letters of support also to be included where other stakeholders are relevant to the aims and successful outcomes of the work proposed.

8. In conjunction with the CPHC[3] we will hold two open meetings to address queries from potential applicants – the first at UCL on 5th September 2018 and the second in Manchester in October 2018 [date/location to be confirmed]. If you wish to nominate an attendee for either/both of these meetings, please email. Maxine Leslie at cphc@bcs.uk

Context and Purpose of this funding

9. A range of recent reports, such as 'Digital skills for the UK economy', 'Forging futures: Building higher-level skills through university and employer collaboration' and the 'Shadbolt review of computer sciences degree accreditation and graduate employability', have highlighted a shortage of digital skills to meet the nation's needs, but also relatively high levels of unemployment for computer science graduates after graduation.

---

[3] Council for Professors and Heads of Computing (https://cphc.ac.uk/who-we-are/)

10. The HEFCE[4] (now the Office for Students) April 2017 invitation to submit proposals for the Institute of Coding (IoC)[5] noted that the key recommendations of the above reports focused on the need to:

   a. *Increase work experience opportunities so that graduates can learn to apply subject-specific skills to current industry challenges.*
   b. *Support the development of broader employability skills and transition into work.*
   c. *Secure better evidence and advice on immediate digital skills needs and conduct horizon-scanning for medium and longer-term needs.*
   d. *Engage employers actively in curriculum design to ensure its alignment with industry.*
   e. *Encourage more women into the digital sector and address the particular challenges experienced by students from ethnic minority groups and mature students.*
   f. *Prepare graduates for the particular characteristics of work in a fast-paced sector with high proportions of start-up companies and small and medium-sized enterprises.*

And stated three key objectives for the IoC:

   (i) *To increase the quality and support the growth of digital skills provision in England at Levels 6 and 7.*
   (ii) *To create and promote innovative learning and teaching models.*
   (iii) *To make a tangible, lasting and measurable impact on digital skills provision at national level.*

11. The IoC was announced by the Prime Minister in January 2018 in response to the above recommendations and the April 2017 invitation. The successful bid was a Consortium, led by the University of Bath, of 25 HEIs and 59 industry partners.

---

[4] Higher Education Funding Council for England, which was replaced on 1 April 2018 with the Office for Students – see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_Education_Funding_Council_for_England.
[5] The original IoC bid invitation is available here until Sept 2018:
(http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/Year/2017/CL,082017/)

12. The purpose of the IoC is to lead on creating and implementing solutions that provide access to, develop and grow digital skills to meet the current and future needs of industry. Collaboration between industry, academia and outreach partners is a fundamental tenet of the IoC.

13. Over £2 million of the £20 million IoC funding was set aside for the Future Projects Fund. This fund provides an opportunity to support additional work in pursuance of the IoC's objectives and innovative projects identified by both existing and new partners **after** the Institute's launch. This letter invites formal bids for that reserved funding. We intend to allocate the full £2.3 million reserved for this purpose and, therefore, there will be no further invitation to bid for these funds.

14. To receive this funding, applicants will need to state how they intend to

   - Satisfy one or more of the OfS's high-level objectives for the IoC. [Annex A, B1]
   - Contribute to the achievement of one or more of the IoC success criteria. [Annex A, B2]

15. Applicants should also consider
   - The priorities indicated by the IoC's Industry Advisory Board. [Annex A, B3]
   - The criteria the Industry Advisory Board will use to assess the viability of submitted proposals [Annex A, B4].

16. Applicants will need to provide a detailed description of the activities to be undertaken to satisfy the objectives and priorities referred to in points 14 and 15, above.

Funding and eligibility

17. Future Projects funding will be allocated to successful bidders on the following basis:

a. A total of £2.3 million in OfS funding is available from 31st January 2019 to 31st January 2020. We anticipate using that funding to support five substantial proposals, but may consider allocating more or less than one fifth of the £2.3 million to individual bidders (i.e. up to a maximum of 10 projects - para 3, above, also refers).

b. We recognise that this is a challenging timescale but will not be able to extend the end date for OfS expenditure (31st January 2020). However, matched funding could continue beyond this date, to 31st January 2021.

c. Funding will be allocated on the basis that bidders have secured matched funding from other sources. This means that for every £1 from the Institute of Coding funds, there should be a matched £1 invested. We will give priority to those applications that demonstrate this through cash investment. Loans from private sources and funding from other government sources will not qualify as co-investment.

d. Organisations **may** act as a lead on more than one bid.

e. We will not support activity that would take place irrespective of this call, and will seek evidence through the assessment process that the proposed activity is additional to that which would otherwise be undertaken.

f. We will not support activity that is already contracted to happen in the IoC or activity that is funded through other OfS programmes. (Please note that OfS monies cannot fund research.)

Assessment criteria

18. For details of the assessment criteria, please see Annex A 'Application process, selection and timescale' [Annex A, B4].

Application process, selection and timescale

19. Organisations are invited to submit proposals for funding using the guidance in Annex A.

21. Following submission, bids will:

- Go through initial assessment by the IoC Delivery Board, who will provide comment and recommendations.
- Pass to the Industry Advisory Board (IAB) for review against the criteria set out in Annex A. The IAB will make final recommendations on funding.
- Move to the co-Chairs of the IoC Governance Board for final review
- Go to the OfS for final sign off.

22. The lead partner for each bid will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible and the successful organisations may commence expenditure from 31st January 2019, subject to the finalisation of a contract with the IoC's lead institution (the University of Bath), provision of a monthly expenditure profile, and the agreement of project success criteria.

23. A detailed timetable for the Future Projects Fund competition can be found in Annex A, Section C.

Key dates

Date	Detail
24.08.18	Launch of Future Projects Fund (FPF)
05.09.18	Town Hall Meeting for interested bidders (University College London)
16.10.18	Town Hall Meeting for interested bidders (Manchester Metropolitan University)
26.11.18 (noon)	Closing date for applications
w/c 17.12.18	Funding decisions made
31.01.19	Projects can commence from this date
31.03.19	Last date for projects to commence
31.01.19 – 31.01.20	Regular project monitoring
31.01 20	End of Future Projects IoC/OfS funded period
31.01.21	End of Future Projects matched funding period

Monitoring and evaluation

24. A timetable of monthly finance and progress reports against agreed milestones is already in place across the IoC project, and all Future Projects Fund award holders must report into this process. Quarterly reports are also required for any co-investment. Full guidance will be provided by the IoC.

25. Projects may be audited by the OfS, or an organisation commissioned by the IoC, at any stage. The OfS may also seek information on an ad hoc basis to inform updates to the Department for Education and HM Treasury. Successful bidders will be asked to submit a final evaluative report at the end of the project and may be asked to participate in a OfS-commissioned evaluation.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

26. Both the OfS and the IoC are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which gives a public right of access to information held by a public authority. This may result in applications, communications between the OfS and the funded organisation, information arising from this work, or the outputs from the work undertaken being subject to disclosure, if a valid request is made to us. We will comply with such requests in accordance with the legislation and our own policies.

27. Bidding organisations can, if they wish, provide potentially sensitive information (such as information relating to commercial interests) in a separate annex attached to the business case. This will highlight to us that there are concerns about disclosure.

28. Where we consider it to be appropriate and practicable we will seek the views of applicants before disclosing this information in response to a Freedom of Information request. Applicants should be aware that even when concerns have been expressed, the OfS may nevertheless be obliged to disclose this information.

29. Our assumption will be that all information in the main application documents can be disclosed on request. Further information about the Freedom of Information Act is available at www.ico.org.uk.

Complying with state aid and other relevant legislation

30. Bidding organisations should take into account the need for allocations to be compatible with all existing legislation. Funding will not be allocated unless sufficiently clear evidence of compliance with state aid rules is provided. Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with state aid regulations, which can be viewed online at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-aid-the-basics.

Further information

31. If you have any queries about this competition, contact the IoC at ioc@bath.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Professor Bernie Morley
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost
University of Bath (IoC Lead Partner)

Downloads