

25 : National Grid for Learning

Objectives

- B25.1 This grant is intended to take forward the programme of equipping and networking schools to the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) which began in 1998-99 to support the raising of educational standards and the development of teachers' and pupils' information communication technology (ICT) capabilities.

Expenditure to be supported in 2000-2001

£205 million. The grant is available at increased levels in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 to encourage schools to take advantage of NGfL-approved managed services, and to allow a start to be made on the development of broadband (fast-speed) networking on a regional basis.

Rate of grant

50%

Number of LEAs to be supported

All LEAs, subject to satisfactory applications.

Basis of allocations

- B25.2 The application and allocation process for 2000-2001 is greatly simplified. Provided that the criteria set out below are fulfilled, basic allocations for authorities will be determined by formula. A 'top-up' following a competitive application process will be available for a limited number of authorities which wish to become part of broadband consortia projects. Each LEA will therefore be entitled to:

- receive a formula-based allocation from a **£155 million** fund to continue the process of **equipping schools** in line with the strategy outlined in its revised ICT development plan. Allocations will be determined with reference to school and pupil numbers. Existing NGfL Pathfinder authorities should indicate whether they wish to maintain funding at 1999-2000 levels or opt for formula funding. At least 95% of this grant must be devolved to schools;
- apply as part of a consortium of LEAs for a share of a further **£50 million** to implement projects focussed on the innovative and sustainable development of **broadband network infrastructure** and suitable content. Existing NGfL Pathfinder authorities will be eligible to apply within consortia as well as continuing their individual Pathfinder status. Proposals for new individual Pathfinder authorities will not be accepted. LEAs may retain up to 100% of this grant.

Criteria for determining allocations

- B25.3 The Department will give particular consideration to the following criteria before allocating basic formula grant support:

- i) whether the authority has agreed a **development plan for ICT in maintained schools (including former GM schools), with links to wider educational provision**. The plan must contain clearly defined implementation targets for the authority focused on the fulfillment of the Government's targets for ICT (as set out in the NGfL Challenge). LEAs will be expected to secure access to the NGfL for **all** maintained schools in their area in the period up to 2002, with allocations to individual schools reflecting local circumstances. The plan, which should be consistent with the authority's Education Development Plan, must cover *content, networking, infrastructure, training, partnerships, sustainability and evaluation*. Further guidance on applying for NGfL funding and ICT development planning will be sent to NGfL Standards Fund contact officers and further

advice will be provided at a special conference for LEA officers and ICT advisers in early October;

- ii) the extent to which the LEA ICT development plan encourages and builds on **individual school development plans for the use of ICT** in the delivery of the curriculum (particularly literacy and numeracy) and teachers' professional development; and which also take account of the use of ICT in management and administration;
- iii) confirmation that both LEA and school ICT plans are made available for parents and other members of the public.

Broadband Consortia Projects

B25.4 For 2000-2001 and beyond the Department is inviting consortia of LEAs, working with library authorities and other agencies, to submit proposals for innovative and sustainable projects for the introduction of broadband services for schools and other learning institutions. This is likely best to be taken forward on a regional basis in order to secure economies of scale in negotiations with telecommunications providers. A **broadband consortium project** might, for example, be formed by authorities within a Government region, and might be developed in parallel with seeking New Opportunities Fund (NOF) support for the development of a regional community grid for learning. The Department would not rule out applications from other groupings of authorities, provided there is a strong rationale and the project offers sustainability. Proposals should take as a benchmark OFTEL announcements of special tariffs for schools and other public institutions, and should build on the continued implementation of network infrastructure in individual authorities by focusing initially on providing co-ordinated and cost effective connectivity for secondary schools - including those in rural areas - at a minimum speed of 2Mbs. Expenditure totalling **£50 million** will be supported to fund such projects in 2000-2001 and successful applicants will be subject to independent evaluation. Proposals must:

- include plans to link with a wide range of other learning sectors and institutions including primary schools, further and higher education, libraries, museums and archives, community and lifelong learning, ICT and Excellence in Cities Learning Centres and Ufl Learning Centres (as appropriate);
- include plans for content development and/or purchase to maximise the educational value of the availability of broad bandwidth; and include plans for hosting such content on the NGfL, for example within NOF-funded regional Community Grids for Learning (CGfLs);
- demonstrate synergies with the NOF- funded training for teachers and librarians;
- demonstrate potential value for money in terms of regionally-procured broadband telecommunications, by comparison with nationally-agreed tariffs for public institutions;
- indicate the extent to which the consortia will select NGfL-approved managed services to supply the local infrastructure and service component of the regional grids. Where NGfL-approved managed services are not the chosen supply model, proposers will be required to demonstrate that alternative supply models offer better value for money;
- indicate preparedness to meet costs on a 50% matched funding basis;
- indicate the proportion of secondary and other schools participating within each partner authority; which schools are designated to participate; and the nature of any agreements with schools to contribute delegated NGfL funding for central purchase of broadband and related services.

B25.5 The Department and BECTa will evaluate broadband consortia projects alongside the existing individual authority pathfinders.

Eligible expenditure

B25.6 Expenditure **by schools** benefiting from this grant should be focused on raising standards in the school curriculum and may also support the use of ICT by senior school staff and teachers for their professional development and for administrative work associated with the delivery of the curriculum. Expenditure incurred should relate only to the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001, and where the grant is used to fund rental or leasing arrangements, only that proportion of the contract falling within this period may be supported. Eligible expenditure includes:

- **NGfL-approved managed services.** (A list of services approved in 1999-2000 will be sent to NGfL Standards Fund contact officers along with the guidance referred to above);
- external network connections at a bandwidth equivalent to **at least ISDN2** standard. Bandwidth at 2Mbs or greater is mandatory for institutions designated under broadband consortia proposals.

B25.7 In addition (or as an alternative to NGfL-approved managed services) schools may purchase:

- local network infrastructure which is compatible with the external network connections described above;
- ICT equipment (this may include class sets of portable computing devices; whole class teaching aids such as projection equipment; digital cameras, scanners and digitisers and other equipment which can be used to help create educational resources);
- associated technical ICT training which complements (but does not replicate) the pedagogical training for teachers which is supported by the New Opportunities Fund;
- services and software to ensure best use of the infrastructure, including Internet services;
- on-line curriculum resources, software, and other curriculum ICT applications, including services relevant to the local creation and publication of educational content.

B25.8 Where additional grant has been obtained as part of a broadband consortia of authorities, expenditure should be restricted to payment by the consortia for broadband telecommunications links (both central spine and links to schools) and central network infrastructure, and on the development costs of regional content for schools. Links may, for example, include cable-based, satellite or microwave-delivered communications or combinations of these.

B25.9 Expenditure on central network infrastructure (eg servers for CGfLs capable of hosting large amounts of digital resources within the authority and supporting high bandwidth Internet gateways) is only eligible for support from this grant in so far as it relates to learners of school age. Authorities are asked to plan the development of such infrastructure in co-ordination with applications for support from the Community Access to Lifelong Learning programme funded by the New Opportunities Fund.

B25.10 Eligible expenditure for the NGfL grant may be re-defined in the light of the monitoring of the implementation of the programme.

Devolution to schools and other proposed requirements of grant

B25.11 **LEAs should ensure that grant is devolved only to those schools which have in their view satisfactory plans for ICT.** In so doing they should take account of the full-time equivalent number of pupils, as well as the additional needs of small schools, isolated schools and special schools. Where appropriate, LEAs should consider the needs of non-maintained special schools which serve pupils from their areas. NGfL funding may be provided to such institutions at the discretion of the LEAs concerned, subject to satisfactory ICT development plans.

B25.12 **At least 95% of the formula-based grant should be devolved to schools.** No more than 5% should be retained by the LEA to manage and monitor a co-ordinated approach as appropriate, including the validation of schools' ICT plans and the hosting of locally specific schools content, for example in Community Grids for Learning as part of the NGfL. **LEAs which are successful in**

applying for broadband consortia projects may retain up to 100% of the non-formula based grant but must provide justification for doing so, and in any case are encouraged to devolve as much as is practicable to schools.

B25.13 To help stimulate curricular content and software purchase and development for - and by - schools **at least 15% of the grant devolved to schools should be earmarked for content and software purchase (including purchase through NGfL managed services) and on the development of content by schools themselves.** Content development funded in this way must be published freely on the NGfL. 'Content' may include on-line educational resources and services. Supply cover is not eligible for support under the NGfL grant, but teachers may be remunerated for content development which they undertake outside school hours.

Virement flexibility

B25.14 No virement allowed from this grant.

Information to be provided by the LEA

B25.15 Each LEA must return the following documents to the contact officer at the Department named below by no later than Wednesday 17 November. Failure to supply any or all of this information may result in the delay or failure of an application to receive grant in this or future years.

- a revised version of its development plan for ICT in schools which provides a named contact officer, sets out proposed expenditure in 2000-2001, and takes account of the advice offered by the Department in this Circular and in the guidance which will be sent to NGfL Standards Fund contact officers;
- a list of schools which it is proposed will benefit under the grant for 2000-2001, in respect of which the Department may ask to see some or all of the individual school ICT development plans.;
- examples of ICT development plans for 2000-2001 and beyond for primary, middle (where appropriate), secondary and special schools. Examples should differ from those previously supplied to the Department. Outline plans will not be considered;
- a report on how the LEA's development plan for ICT in schools is being implemented up to and including 1999-2000 (in the short pro-forma format requested in the Department's letter of 20 August);
- a copy of the information supplied by the LEA to its schools about the 2000-2001 NGfL Standards Fund programme; and
- (*where applicable*) details of proposals for broadband consortium project funding as part of a consortium of LEAs. These should make clear the membership of the consortium, enclose any formal agreements and terms of reference and outline any support agreed with other public and/or private sources. Proposals may be sent by one LEA on behalf of others in the consortium, but LEAs should clearly indicate if they are part of a bidding consortium.

B25.16 Wherever possible, the above **information should be submitted electronically in Rich Text Format (RTF) to john.tallantyre@dfee.gov.uk**. If this is not possible, either in whole or in part, then hard copies of the relevant documentation should be submitted to John Tallantyre at the address below in single sided A4 format, loosely bound.

B25.17 At a minimum, LEAs should also supply to each of their schools:

- a copy of the LEA ICT development plan;
- details of the actual amount of funding devolved to the individual school for the NGfL purposes;

- a description of what the amount (up to 5%) retained by the LEA will be spent on;
- details of the LEA funded guidance and support services available to schools.

Monitoring and evaluation

B25.18 The implementation of the National Grid for Learning and progress towards the objectives of this grant are being evaluated and informed as follows:

- by pro-forma questionnaires from LEAs in the Autumn term 2000 and Autumn term 2001 outlining how their ICT development plans are being implemented;
- by an independent evaluation of Grid development which is focusing on the implementation of the ICT policies of the NGfL Pathfinder authorities and will help to identify and promote good practices. This will be extended to include broadband consortia projects identified in 2000-2001;
- by a longitudinal study of the impact of ICT on pupils' attainment;
- by OFSTED through a qualitative evaluation of the impact of the NGfL and related policies, and in the course of its regular work;
- through a series of independently evaluated pilot projects evaluating the educational potential of emerging technologies and how these might impact on the future development of the Grid; and
- by the Department's annual statistical survey of ICT in schools.

Duration of grant

B25.18 Support will continue at an increased level in 2001-2002.

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