

# Expression of interest

# Title: Employer Skills Survey development - Lot 1 Questionnaire and sampling design

**Project reference: DFERPPU/2018061/1**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 10am 17/12/2018**

**Max word count: 1,000**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to develop the questionnaire and sampling approach for a revised Employer Skills Survey, which will involve merging with former Employer Skills Survey and the Employer Perspectives Survey.

## Background

Employer experiences, behaviours and attitudes are important to a range of policies across higher and further education.

DfE inherited two UK-wide employer surveys following the closure of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills: the Employer Skills Survey[[1]](#footnote-1) (ESS) and the Employer Perspectives Survey[[2]](#footnote-2) (EPS). Both are large, nationally representative telephone surveys of employer establishments (local sites).

The ESS historically has captured information on recruitment, skills lacking from applicants, skills lacking from current employees, the scale and nature of training, and business practices to best utilise employee skills.

The EPS historically covered some similar topics - recruitment, the nature of training - plus other topics such as work placements, apprenticeships and vocational qualifications. The main focus of the EPS has been on employer engagement with the external education and skills system.

DfE has decided to merge the two surveys for efficiency and to maximise cross-analysis of the survey topics. The new survey will retain the ‘Employer Skills Survey’ (ESS) name and DfE proposes to run a large version of the survey in 2019[[3]](#footnote-3), accompanied with a small version of the survey in 2021[[4]](#footnote-4), with the intention that this four-year cycle could be repeated.

The other lots for this project, which are being tendered separately, are:

* Lot 2 – Lead contractor. (For 2019 survey: overall management of the project and fieldwork, large multi-site fieldwork, investment in training module fieldwork, analysis and reporting. Sole responsibility for all aspects of 2021 survey.)
* Lot 3 – Fieldwork contractors (mainstage fieldwork only for 2019).
* Lot 4 – Online methodology (testing an online methodology in FY 2020/21). This lot will be procured later than the other lots.

## Research aims

The aim of the overall project (i.e. beyond just this lot) is to successfully run the new Employer Skills Survey, maintaining the key measures of skills demand, skills utilisation, training, and engagement with the wider skills system.

The two roles for this lot are to:

1. **Design and test the merged questionnaire.** One of the aims is to combine the ESS and EPS questions into the new survey in a sensible way. To do so we envisage modularisation of a number of topics and questions, which will need to accommodate the steering group’s requirements. The other aim is to develop a limited number of new questions based on input from DfE and the survey’s steering group. This reflects the fact that elements of the Employer Perspective Survey questions changed from survey-to-survey to provide policy-specific findings. In order to ensure the merger and new questions work well we expect significant testing to ensure the telephone interviews flow and are an appropriate length.
2. **Design the sampling and weighting strategy**. The aim is to review the approach taken for the most recent ESS and EPS, and assess the best approach for the merged survey. In particular we are keen for the contractor to design the overall sampling approach. The 2019 survey will need to provide robust data on a number of the measures at LEP level, whereas the 2021 survey will need to prioritise which measures are available at regional level, and which are only available at a national level.

## Methodology

#### Questionnaire development

The questionnaire development will require close working with DfE and the survey’s steering group. We expect the development to balance the desire to minimise disruption to time series comparability where possible with the need to merge the surveys successfully and capture new concerns.

The [2017 ESS questionnaire](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733737/ESS_2017_Mainstage_Questionnaire.pdf) and the [2016 EPS questionnaire](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677857/EPS_2016_Questionnaire.pdf) are available online. Some additional details on questionnaire development are available in the technical reports: [2017 ESS](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733999/Employer_Skills_Survey-Technical_report.pdf) and [2016 EPS](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/622346/EPS_2016_Technical_Report.pdf). We also expect the contractor to also build in the existing ‘investment in training’ module and retain it as a follow-up module – more details available in the [ESS supplementary documents](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-skills-survey-2017-supplementary-documents).

We require the contractor to sufficiently test the questionnaire although we expect the lot 2 contractor to perform the full dress rehearsal pilot.

We do not expect the Lot 1 contractor to translate the final questionnaire into the specific scripting software of the lead and fieldwork contractors, but we do expect the scripting to be polished and thoroughly quality assured such that other contractors can easily programme the questionnaire into different forms of CATI software.

We do not expect the Lot 1 contractor to produce a micro-site, as was produced for the [2017 ESS](http://www.skillssurvey.co.uk/), but we do require the contractor to review this and make suggestions for how any such micro-site (if viewed as necessary) will interact with the questionnaire.

#### Sampling and weighting

We expect the contractor to:

* Review and set out in detail the sampling approach including sample strata and sizes.
* Review and set out in detail the weighting approach, including for providing findings at local levels.

All of the above will require extensive engagement with DfE and the steering group.

More details on previous sampling approaches can be found in the technical reports as highlighted above.

#### Reporting

In addition to draft documents and workshop materials, we expect the contractor to produce:

* A sampling and weighting review report (including the detailed strategy for ESS19 and high-level suggestions for ESS21)
* A questionnaire review document incorporating results from testing, plus suggestions for ESS21
* A final fully annotated questionnaire able to be programmed easily into different CATI systems (for both 2019 and 2021).

## Timing

**Procurement**

* Deadline for EOIs to be sent to DfE – 10am 17th December 2018
* DfE issues ITT – 20th December 2018
* Deadline for tenders – 5pm 21st January 2019
* Interviews with shortlisted bidders – Week of 28th January
* Contract in place – early February 2019

**Project**

* Initial questionnaire developed – early March 2019
* Test questionnaire – March 2019
* Final questionnaire sent to lead and fieldwork contractors – end April 2019
* Sampling and weighting strategy finalised – early May 2019
* Recommendations for 2021 survey – start June 2019

## Assessment criteria

* Expertise in employer/business telephone questionnaire design and testing
* Expertise in sampling and weighting methodology
* Understanding the policy environment

| **Closing date for EOIs: 10am 17/12/2018**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**oliver2.shaw@education.gov.uk**](mailto:oliver2.shaw@education.gov.uk) **and** [**employer.surveys@education.gov.uk**](mailto:employer.surveys@education.gov.uk)  **Max word count: 1,000** |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the [Department’s Terms and Conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. Previous survey: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-employer-skills-survey-2017> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Previous survey: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-perspectives-survey-2016> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. With a sample size of at least 71,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. With a sample size of at least 10,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)