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**Request for Quote:**

**Outline Business Plan for higher-technical education involving regional Further Education Colleges, Group Training Associations, and Universities**

**Industry:** Research and development services and related consultancy services

**Location of contract:** NW

**Value of contract:** £0 - £24,999

**Published request for quote date:** 19/05/2021

**Closing date:** 04/06/2021

**Closing time:** 12 Noon

**Contract start date:** 28 June 2021

**Contract end date:** 01 October 2021

**Description**

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) has been awarded pre-development funding from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to develop an outline business case for a regional higher technical skills progression framework to underpin innovation in the region and respond to demand from new and emerging sectors. LJMU is working with three regional Further Education Colleges (FEC), two Group Training Associations (GTA), and the Merseyside Colleges Association, to explore the feasibility and development of the project.

# Scope of work

LJMU is seeking the professional services from a suitably skilled consultancy, with experience in higher technical skills as a driver for current and future economic growth and productivity gains.

The proposed work concerns the development of a robust and reliable feasibility study, to provide a level of confidence among delivery partners in the financial viability of the model, with a view to piloting the model from September 2022.

This first step involves a 3-month review focused on the Engineering curriculum. The work will include working 1-2-1 with partners to deliver:

1. An Outline Business Case compliant with HM Treasury Green Book methodology including:

* Presentation of the short-listed options[[1]](#footnote-2) and articulation of the rationale for the proposed way forward\* including independent analysis of the levels of demand, potential growth, and risk assessment;
* Outline delivery model for the preferred option including timelines;
* Articulation of the reference case (business as usual), against which the preferred option can be assessed;
* Calculation of the gross and net economic benefits, profiled over an appropriate appraisal period and discounted in line with HM Treasury Guidance;
* Calculation of Value for Money indicators including the Net Present Value of the preferred option and the Benefit Cost ratio; and
* Sensitivity analysis at project level, including switching values analysis where appropriate.

For each, this should be summarised in a report setting out, inter alia, the approach adopted, and assumptions made in accordance with HM Treasury Green Book methodology. Any areas of uncertainty should be highlighted.

\* It is anticipated the scope of the pilot will include:

1. Regional provision for Level 3 ‘bridging/access’ programmes designed for people with a Level 3 'Craft’ apprenticeship qualifications to progress to Level 4+.
2. The development of a shared core curriculum at Levels 4 to 5, and sharing of specialist technical higher education modules which are currently not viable in terms of student numbers and recruitment/retention of specialist staff. A model of pooling student numbers from a number of regional colleges to achieve critical masses of learners.
3. Establishing a viable collaborative model for degree apprenticeships between the region’s FECs and GTAs, and regional HE.

# Information to be provided in the quotation

The following information is required in response to this quotation request:

1. A comprehensive proposal covering all aspects of the scope of work.
2. A project plan with defined stages, including key deliverables at each stage and overall timeframe.
3. A demonstrable track record of experience in the relevant field, to include a statement of experience listing any similar projects and CV(s) of the consultant(s) who will undertake the project.
4. A budgetary estimate of the fixed price (inclusive of VAT).
5. A statement agreeing to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement to protect commercially sensitive data and to share all intellectual property (IP) with the partner consortium and the LCRCA.

Responses should be sent to Helen McCormack – [H.McCormack@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:H.McCormack@ljmu.ac.uk) by no later than 12 Noon on 4th June 2021

The anticipated contract commencement date is 28th June 2021, or earlier at mutual agreement.

# Timescales

Subject to the timely provision of information, the successful company should aim to provide the appraisal findings **within 3 months** of commencing work and preferably by 01 October 2021. If the deadline provided is unachievable, the consultant should provide an indicative timescale of when the work can be completed by.

In order to achieve the timetable set out in their submission, the Company should provide an indicative guide to the information required to undertake the appraisal.

The commitment and evidence of the capacity to achieve the proposed timetable will be determinant in the selection of the consultant.

# Assessment criteria

Project plan (20%)

Evidence of understanding of the policy area, and track record in this field (30%)

Project budget (30%)

Evidence of professional/technical ability to undertake the work (20%)

Please limit responses to a maximum 4 A4 pages – font 12 - Arial.

The scoring mechanism for scored questions is as follows unless stated otherwise.

| **Score** | **Meaning** |
| --- | --- |
| 0 | Unacceptable response. Requirement level not met. Many important issues are completely un-addressed or response wholly inadequate or inappropriate. Concerns are serious and risk levels unacceptable for many areas. |
| 2 | Poor response. Requirement levels are adequate for only some important issues. Some important issues are largely incomplete. Concerns are serious and risk levels unacceptable for some areas. |
| 4 | Adequate response. Requirement level partially met. Overall, the proposals are satisfactory, but some issues are weak. Risk levels apply but Bidder has demonstrated understanding of how they will meet all minimum requirements. |
| 6 | Good response. Requirement level partially met, competence demonstrated in all areas but there is scope for more detail and more depth in some areas. |
| 8 | Very good response. Requirement level met with only a few minor weaknesses or queries. Competent bid demonstrating overall understanding of requirements and experience in all areas. |
| 10 | Excellent response. Requirement level fully met. All key issues addressed. Range of examples of good practice, experience, understanding of requirements. |

**Supporting information - Higher technical skills in the Liverpool City Region**

# Introduction

Productivity gains through socially-inclusive green growth and innovation are at the heart of national and regional government plans to Build Back Better. The UK has the second lowest productivity rate in the G7. Over the last 10 years productivity has fallen from an annual rate of 2.6 per cent to around 0.4 per cent. The capacity of firms to absorb innovation is strongly linked to the availability of skilled technical labour at Levels 4 to 5 (HNC, and HND) delivered by the regional Further Education Colleges (FEC) and Group Training Associations (GTA), and Level 6, 7, and 8 (Degree, Masters, Professional Doctorate) technical and management qualifications delivered by universities. **It will be the skills of a region’s workforce that will determine whether opportunities for innovation are recognised and taken up by firms, and aspirations for regional productivity growth realised.**

Government policy recognises the role of Further Education in addressing the problems of productivity, social mobility, the increasing need for labour market flexibility, and the acute national and regional shortage of skilled technicians.[[2]](#footnote-3) Technicians occupy roles that require intermediate skills in technical subjects (Levels 3 to 5). The availability of technicians significantly increases the capacity of businesses to innovate.[[3]](#footnote-4) A recent research study concluded that degrees and apprenticeships alone will not be enough to fill the UK’s higher technical skills gap. [[4]](#footnote-5) While in Germany 20% of the younger workforce have a Higher Technical Vocational qualification, in the UK just 4% hold similar qualifications. This compares with over 30% who have a qualification at Level 3 (e.g. A-Level) and Level 6 (degree)[[5]](#footnote-6).

# Problem to be addressed

(1) Large numbers of people with ‘Craft’ Level 3 Apprenticeships are currently unable to progress to higher technical qualifications, at Levels 4 to 5; (2) Low numbers of learners at Levels 4 and 5 results in individual colleges being unable to economically deliver specialist technical units (particularly at Level 5); (3) Low numbers of people progressing to Level 5 qualifications leads to lower numbers being able to process to Level 6 top-up degree programmes, which in turn affects the viability of these courses.

# Proposal to address the problem

LJMU, with partners, is exploring the opportunity to simplify the plethora of L4 and L5 delivery options[[6]](#footnote-7) using the existing regional FE/GTA skills infrastructure – with Higher Education (HE) helping plug curriculum and staffing/delivery gaps (specialist engineering and construction subject knowledge; delivery staff; specialist equipment and infrastructure).

Skills delivery post-pandemic needs to be low-risk, capital-lite and agile. If feasible, this model could provide a flexible and responsive alternative to the current portfolio of FE-HE collaboration models - merger (e.g., London South Bank University Group); strategic partnership (e.g., Middlesex University-Capital City Colleges Group); Institutes of Technology; and Foundation Degrees.

# Higher technical skills in the Liverpool City Region

The City-Region aspires to replace fragmented provision and learner confusion with a ‘joined-up’ system of higher technical skills training that supports innovation, part-time learning and enables seamless skills progression and upskilling opportunities for all age groups throughout their working lives. It aims to address this through the development of a model for regional Further Education Colleges, Group Training Asiocations, and Universities to be able to collaborate to deliver technical vocational education from Levels 4 to 8 (HNC to Professional Doctrorate).

1. Short-listed options include: Business as usual, Regional College of Technology, and the proposed collaborative option [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Skills for jobs white paper [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [‘Technicians and Innovation: A Literature Review’](https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/technicians-and-innovation.pdf) Lewis (2019) for Gatsby Charitable Foundation [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [‘Higher technical education consultation – analysis’](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903521/Higher_technical_education_consultation_analysis_York_Consulting.pdf) Department for Education (2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Post-16 education: highest level of achievement by age 25 (Department for Education, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Almost 3,400 qualifications from 150 different awarding bodies are offered at Levels 4/5 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)