



Invitation to Quote

Providers, Consultants and Associates for Skills for Growth – SME Support Programme

Ref Q2129

September 2021



1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to select and appoint a consultant, provider, or associate for the following activity/service to support in the delivery of the ESF fund Skills for Growth – SME Support Programme.

This Invitation to Quote is part of a pilot/test in advance of the release of the Dynamic Purchasing System to procure a framework of providers, consultants, and associates.

This document presents the detailed purpose and requirements of providers wishing to submit a quote for this contract.

2. About the GC Business Growth Hub

GC Business Growth Hub service helps ambitious businesspeople to realise their growth potential by offering access to a range of practical services, from assessing growth options to unlocking finance or accessing experienced business mentors.

GC Business Growth Hub service is offered by GM Business Support Limited, which is part of The Growth Company. The group employs over 1,000 staff and delivers more than £60m of business support services annually.

For more information about Business Growth Hub, which is a trading name of GM Business Support Limited, please visit us at: <http://www.businessgrowthhub.com>

Accountable to the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), GC Business Growth Hub's challenge is to ensure that companies across Greater Manchester, and beyond in some instances, reach their full potential and are able to access the right support and services to meet their needs. These include:

- Personal support to identify and address business growth opportunities and challenges.
- Business to business networking through growth lunches and specialist events.
- Expert growth advice and planning under Growth and Scale up, Growth Start-up, Leadership and Workforce Development, Mentoring, Digital Growth, and Access to Finance, Innovation, Sector Support and Green Growth.
- Access to a wealth of public and private sector business and professional partners with a range of specialist knowledge and skills including a network of committed private providers who share our vision for supporting growth.

Complementary support is also provided by DIT Trade and Investment services and MIDAS, to attract inward investment and support re-investment by companies.

The delivery of support under ESF requires GM Business Support Limited to comply with ESF and public procurement guidelines. As a result, this tender is designed to enable GM Business Support Limited to demonstrate compliance with these guidelines, ensure value for money and offer the opportunity to deliver the proposed support services for this project in an open and competitive way.

3. European Social Fund (ESF)

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** supports activity which increases labour market participation, improves youth employment for hard to reach groups, promotes social inclusion and develops the skills of the potential and existing workforce.

Greater Manchester (GM) has secured approximately £40m of ESF funding to identify and fill occupational skills gaps identified by employers in the city-region, which will be delivered through the **Skills for Growth programme**.

4. GM Skills for Growth - Overview

The **GM Skills for Growth programme** activities will align with the city-region's existing priorities around supporting business growth and delivering an integrated approach to employment and skills. It will also enable providers of education, employment and training to better meet the needs of residents and employers through the creation of new partnerships and innovative methods of delivery, resulting in better progression and improved career prospects for GM residents.

The **GM Skills for Growth** programme has been designed to provide the SME'S of Greater Manchester and fill occupational skills gaps identified from employers, who have continually highlighted to us that they can't find the technical skills in GM required to support and grow their business and therefore specific provision is needed that is flexible enough to respond.

We are launching this call during a time of crisis linked to the covid-19 pandemic. The support provided by this programme will be critical to GM's economic recovery and addressing the **skills system** needs that emerge from the economic shock, whilst still having the ability to deliver on the growth ambitions identified prior to the pandemic, and therefore assisting GM's economy to "build back better".

The Skills for Growth programme provides an opportunity to support businesses as they rapidly develop and innovate to maintain and create economic activity and jobs, with a focus on increased productivity through developing the skills of their workforce. Previous to the pandemic, the foundational and frontier growth sectors identified in [GM's Independent Prosperity Review](#) (IPR) and [Local Industrial Strategy](#) (LIS) were key priorities for this programme in the city-region. Skills provision in these areas continues to be just as, if not even more, critical to GM's recovery from covid-19.

5. Strategic Background

Skills underpin every facet of life in GM, from running the businesses our economy needs, to building the homes we live in and delivering the public services we rely upon. As set out in The Department for Education's January 2021 [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#), both nationally and in GM, there is a pressing need for more highly skilled people than ever before, trained effectively to grow the economy and raise productivity.

Our underpinning strategies, the [Local Industrial Strategy](#) (LIS) and the [Greater Manchester Strategy](#) (GMS), recognise the critical role of effectively targeted and delivered skills investment in unlocking and enabling economic growth, with a system built with employer skills requirements at the heart. They recognise the central role of skills in determining an

individual's employment status and prospects, along with the necessity of a skilled workforce in driving overall productivity.

GM needs an education, skills and employment support system that works for everyone, as set out in the priorities within the GMS:

- Young people equipped for life and work
- Good jobs with opportunities for people to progress and develop
- A thriving and productive economy in all parts of the city-region

The GM skills system is facing a number of challenges both now and into the future. The full impact of covid-19 and of Brexit on the labour market are yet to be seen, however, GM businesses will need to continue to adapt to new models in order to survive, which in turn will impact the skills needs within our workforces. Greater international competition, the impact of global warming and faster technological change will put many roles that exist today at risk. However, with these challenges comes a myriad of new opportunities for the city-region. GM's economic strength now is in its diversity: in contrast to many other cities in the UK, the city-region is not reliant on a single sector for growth and that offers real opportunities for both business and residents. All of GM's skills and work programmes form part of a broad and complex skills landscape contributing to the talent pipeline which supports that economic growth.

Forecasts suggest greater demand for higher-level technical and specialist skills in the future. To realise our ambitions for GM as a dynamic, inclusive and knowledge-intensive city region, GM's current ranking for skills levels among Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) must improve. Despite recent progress and the commitment, expertise and enthusiasm of providers and stakeholders, the current skills system does not deliver enough people with high quality, relevant skills and, at higher levels, the technical knowledge required by employers

6. Requirement

GMBS would like to procure providers, consultants, and associates to assist in the delivery of Skills for Growth – SME Support Programme.

Skills for Growth – SME Support is a fully funded, tailored service to help up-skill businesses and their employees and improve business productivity. The programme will help business leaders grow their business through re-shaping, developing their talent and enhancing their team's performance. Offering impartial advice and guidance to both the business and the individual employees, through one-to-one consultations either with our skills coaches, wellbeing champions and apprenticeship specialists or our procured providers, consultants, or associates. The programme and the team have been developed to help Greater Manchester come back stronger from the challenges presented before, during and after the pandemic, this time better equipped and better prepared with the skills for the future. The Skills Coaches will provide impartial brokerage through to training solutions and funding supported via the commissioned skills delivery element of the Skills for Growth Programme.

Businesses and individuals accessing the programme will need to meet the [ESF National Eligibility Rules and Programme Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/esf-national-eligibility-rules-and-programme-guidance) and responsibility for

collecting evidence on individuals (at entry to the programme), results and outputs will be the procured providers'. Please see guidance on [ESF Data Evidence Requirements – Eligibility and results - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/esf-data-evidence-requirements-eligibility-and-results) for more detail on evidencing.

The programme will have a core focus on supporting those employed and in work, definition as per ESF guidance. In addition to the ESF eligibility, individuals will also need to evidence at entry to the programme the following requirements. They:

- Must be in work at time of entry to the programme (in work with a zero hours contract, furloughed, in work claiming Universal credit and self-employed are all considered eligible), or unemployed with prior approval as mentioned above.
- Must be able to evidence right to work and live in the UK
- Must be aged over 16.
- Must live and/or work within Great Manchester

The programme offers SMEs and their employees 26 weeks of fully funded support, tailored to their needs, a dedicated Skills Coach and includes access to Health & Wellbeing and Apprenticeship Specialists who will work with the business to:

- Develop their team through skills
- Maximise future opportunities
- Provide career's information
- Provide advice and guidance
- Reshape their business
- Assist with employee wellbeing
- Training and personal development activities via GM Skills Map
- Redundancy support and planning – business and individual
- Employability skills and information through EmployGM

Delivery can be consultative, group or digital and be bespoke to the business. The process begins with a Skills and Productivity Consultation with the business owner/leader by their dedicated skills coach/ consultant, provider, or associate, including productivity planning, skills need identification, productivity, and skills implementation. These 3 activities lead to the completion of an SME Skills Productivity Plan (SPP). All activities must demonstrate how they will help the businesses become more efficient, sustainable, profitable, boost skills, and increase turnover. SMEs are expected to be on the programme and receive support for 26 weeks and they can identify as many of their employees as they wish to participate in the programme over this 26-week period.

The individual employees identified by the business owner/leader in the business plan will work with their dedicated skills coach/ consultant, provider or associate to identify their skills development needs, source suitable training provision to meet these needs and commence on their learning journey. The individual employee will receive an Individual Skills Development Plan (ISDP) as a result of working with the Skills Coach/Provider.

Once the SPP and ISDP(s) have been completed, the dedicated Skills Coach will access the GM Skills Map portal to identify suitable and appropriate training solutions and providers to meet the needs of the business and individual. Funded, part funded, and commercial training solutions are available and the best option for the business will be put forward to the business owner/leader for approval before any training/development is authorised to proceed. The business owner/leader and individual employee have unique access to GM

Skills Map for them to search for appropriate training solutions in addition to the Skills Coach searches.

The Skills for Growth Programme – SME Support is a digitally enabled programme, and everything is completed using digital portals and systems with digitally enabled signature software. Examples of the SPP and ISDP are contained within annex one and two.

We are keen to receive applications from consultants, providers and associates to identify eligible SMEs in Greater Manchester to participate in the programme, confirm the SME eligibility through due diligence/state aid checks, complete the SPP with the business owner/leader, work with the individual employees identified by the business (up to maximum of 10 employees), confirm the individuals identify and ESF eligibility, complete the ISDP with that individual and then hand the findings and client over to a Skills Coach to complete the training research and account manage the client for their remaining time on programme - up to 26 weeks.

All SMEs accessing the programme will be established trading businesses (minimum trading period 6 months).

Full training and support will be provided to the successful bidder/s on the SPP/ISPD portal and our internal CRM “ BASIL ” system. As previously detailed, providers will be expected to complete the business eligibility checks, employee identify checks, complete all data fields contained within the SPP/ISDP, obtain the digital signatures for both types of plans, submit these for quality and compliance checking and make any corrections as identified on the plans for them to pass audit.

7. Period of delivery and Budget

The activity will be delivered from 15th September 2021 until March 2022. The maximum budget for this activity is **£20,000.00 (exc. VAT)**

Bidders should note that spend with individual organisations will be dependent on number of SPPs and ISDPs completed, and no guarantee of a minimum value is given.

GMBS reserves the right to extend the duration up to 3 months after the above completion date of 30th March 2022.

GMBS will pay the consultant, provider or associate a maximum cost of £450.00 + VAT for the identification of a business, the signed SPP and a minimum of 3 signed ISDPs.

Each additional ISDP completed with a business (to a maximum of 10) will be paid at a maximum of £50,00 + VAT per ISDP.

Payment will be made upon receipt of the signed SPP/ISDPs and upon confirmation they have passed quality and compliance checks completed by GMCA on a monthly basis following submission.

8. Quotation submission requirements

Interested bidders are asked to submit a quotation by email: -

- a) Skills and professional experience to be detailed of person involved in the delivery of the support (40%)

- b) Examples/case studies that demonstrate your ability to deliver the requirements (30%)
- c) Confirmation of forecasted number of SPPs and ISDPs to be completed from bidders existing networks/portfolios of clients (30%)

9. Quotation Returns

Please return a copy of your completed quotation form (Part 2) and additional information by email before 12:00 noon on 13th September 2021 to:

Dawn Duggan

Head of People, Skills and Talent

dawn.duggan@growthco.uk

Please submit any questions regarding this quotation to the email address above.

10. Contract Conditions

The Contract/Framework Agreement and all tasks carried out under the agreement will be governed by GM Business Support Limited Contract Conditions.

11. Your Information and Data

At the Growth Company we recognise the importance of the privacy and the security of your personal information. Please see the below link to our Group Privacy Notice which explains how we process and look after your personal information and data.

<http://www.growthco.uk/privacy-policy/>

Please note that by submitting a response to one of GC Business Growth Hub's procurement opportunities, your bid (whether successful or unsuccessful in obtaining the contract) will be held and processed in accordance with our Privacy Policy. In order to demonstrate our competitive procurement procedures for future audit and contractual compliance (such as those required by our funders) your response to GC Business Growth Hub's procurement will be held and archived for a period of 25 years following the end of the contracted period.