**Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

BEST (Business Essex, Southend and Thurrock) Growth Hub

BEST Business Support Workshop Contract

Specification of Requirements

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Civic Centre

Victoria Avenue

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Essex

SS2 6ER

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**Introduction**

The ‘Business Essex Southend & Thurrock (BEST) Growth Hub’ is an initiative that aims to create a central repository of information, advice and support for businesses across the Essex, Southend and Thurrock area.

The BEST Growth Hub (BGH) is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and is overseen by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. Delivery of the project is being managed by a collective of Local Authorities, led by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

Successful Bidders will be awarded a contract which will enable them to charge a pre-determined fee for providing a set of courses for businesses (specific details are given below) according to the instructions laid down in this specification.

There is one single contract on offer that covers two aspects of business support. The first is a business support workshop programme for existing businesses which should account for 80% of workshops delivered. The second is for a business support workshop programme for start-up businesses and should account for 20% of the total number of workshops delivered. The total value of this contract is a maximum of £39,000 to cover the geographical area of Essex, inclusive of fees, expenses and disbursements but exclusive of VAT.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council requires the contract to be in operation no later than Monday 22nd August 2016. The contract will conclude when the proposal has been fulfilled no later than the 31st March 2017.

This work will be commissioned through a single stage quote process. Prospective suppliers are requested to submit their bid submission to georgiasearle@southend.gov.uk with the email heading *‘BEST Workshop Programme Support Initiative’* no later than **17:00 Friday 26th August, 2016**. Bids received will be evaluated by the client group using the evaluation criteria detailed below.

All successful bidders will be notified in writing, by **17:00 Friday, 16th September 2016** and invited to an inception meeting on **Thursday 22nd September 2016**.

Any clarification questions from the Bidders to the Council should be sent to georgiasearle@southend.gov.uk

Bidders should note that all clarification questions must be made in writing (including email). The Council at their discretion reserves the right to circulate any response to all providers. All clarification questions must be clearly marked CLARIFICATION with the question and Provider details clearly set out.

To allow information to be circulated in time, the deadline for receiving clarification questions is **17:00 Friday 19th August 2016**. **To receive clarifications Bidders should register their interest to the email address above: confirming the individual and the email address the clarifications are to be forwarded to.**

**Business Support Workshops**

# The BEST Growth Hub

The BEST Growth Hub will function as a ‘one-stop shop’, collating various facets of business support such as: access to training, finance, marketing and local authority services. The Growth Hub will aim to improve and simplify the Essex business support landscape, increasing the overall take-up of business support and presenting a clear and uniform offer to businesses across the area.

This will be done through the delivery of three strands of activity:

1. The BEST Growth Hub Website
2. The BEST Growth Hub 1:2:1 business support service
3. The BEST Growth Hub Referral Network

# The Best workshop Programme

The BEST Workshop programme will form a vital part of the 1:2:1 business support service outlined above. To be eligible to access the BGH Workshop programme, businesses must be: an SME (according to the EU definition, including start-ups/ pre-starts), based in an Essex, Southend or Thurrock local authority area, and not have received over the EU De Minimis aid levels.

# Geographical area

For the purposes of the BGH, the delivery area will be split into 4 quadrants encompassing the following local authority areas:

* **Haven Gateway**: The District and Borough areas of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring
* **Heart of Essex**: The Borough, City and District areas of Brentwood, Chelmsford and Maldon
* **West Essex**: The District areas of Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford
* **Thames Gateway South Essex**: The District areas of Basildon, Castle Point and Rochford in addition to the Unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend on Sea

Businesses from all 4 quadrants in Essex, as listed above, need to be serviced by, and should have access to, the workshops on offer. Bidders must provide an outline of how the workshops will take place geographically across the 4 quadrants. There should be delivery of workshops in each local authority area and as far as practically possible, the delivery of business support services should be split evenly across the areas, ensuring that all businesses have equal access to the workshops.

# The BEST workshop programme delivery

The BGH workshop programme will consist of a number of bespoke courses to be delivered on a 1 to many basis. This will include intense start-up workshops (20% of total workshops delivered) to allow individuals to be ready to trade including start-up basics such as:

* Legal structures
* Market research
* Tax / VAT
* Insurance / licences
* Cashflow forecasting / basic book keeping

The remaining 80% of total workshops delivered, will be courses for existing businesses, this should include but should not be limited to:

* Social Media
* Marketing
* Web design and Ecommerce
* Taking on your first employee
* Funding your business / alternative funding
* Increasing sales
* Book keeping
* Bidding and tendering

The winning bidder must be able to provide a minimum of 8 different course types for existing businesses.

The BGH would like to make some content from the workshops available on the BGH website. We are therefore seeking proposals of how to facilitate this.

It will be the responsibility of the successful bidder to arrange the trainer, content, venues and catering if required. It is also the responsibility of the bidder, that any trainers undertaking the provision of the services will have the experience, knowledge and expertise to deliver the contract required by the Council.

The bidder will be required to submit a comprehensive schedule of workshops for the approval of the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader at least two weeks prior to the delivery of such workshops. The council reserves the right to amend or change the schedule of workshops as it sees fit.

# Webinars

The BGH requires the provision of business support seminars that consist of digital workshops/webinars, as well as the hosting of in-depth support workshops advising on a wide range of business strategies, topics, and improvement. We would like to see 10- 15% of all workshops to be conducted digitally.

The content of the webinars will be available in recorded format to be displayed on the BGH website at no extra cost to the Council.

It will be the responsibility of the successful bidder to arrange the trainer, content venues and webinar tools for facilitating the digital webinars and any actions stemming from them.

**Research**

The BGH needs to ensure that business support provision across Essex meets the needs of local businesses. Therefore, we require desk based research to be carried out to map the support already available to ensure that we are filling the gaps in provision and not duplicating workshops / courses already available. This should be presented in a report to the BGH team. Based on the results of this, the bidder will be required to submit a comprehensive schedule of workshops, for the duration of the contract, for the approval of the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader (Georgia Searle) at least two weeks prior to the initial delivery.

**Evidence of Work Undertaken**

To evidence business support delivered through the workshops, the Bidder must collect data on a number of key deliverables for each business participating. These will include, but are not limited to:

* A Completed/Signed Business Engagement Form (details of information to be included will be supplied)
* A signed register for candidates who attended workshops
* A feedback form completed by the business

We will also require copies of presentations or materials used during the workshops.

This information will be presented at bi-monthly meetings between the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader and the nominated Project Lead for the successful bidder.

The BGH reserve the right to request a report on this information at any time that must be returned to the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader within 5 working days.

The BGH reserve the right to request and be provided with any raw data collected by the Bidder in relation to all workshops. This includes but is not limited to the initial engagement forms, feedback forms and signed attendance records. This information must be returned upon request by the BGH within 5 working days.

# Referrals

If a business in attendance is seeking further business support, then referrals are to be made to the BGH Team by the successful bidder according to a formal process:

* Each workshop participant will be asked if they would like an appointment with a business navigator on either the registration forms or the feedback forms
* This information will then be passed to the BGH using the [info@BESTGrowthHub.org.uk](mailto:info@BESTGrowthHub.org.uk) email address

# Marketing/generating Leads

The BEST Growth Hub (BGH) will be undertaking a marketing campaign over the next few months including: social media, website promotion and networking & events.

In addition to the leads generated by the BGH, the successful bidder will be expected to generate candidates to attend the courses that can be translated into outputs for the BGH. The successful bidders will be provided with relevant material by the BGH to enable them to market the BGH services on the courses.

The successful bidders will be expected to liaise on a regular basis with the local authorities across Essex, Southend and Thurrock to aid delivery of the workshops as well as promotion.

All workshops and all marketing activities related to them, must display the BEST Growth Hub logo and relevant branding in accordance with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Growth Hub branding guidelines that will be supplied to the successful bidder. Each workshop must include and promote information on the services that the Growth Hub can offer to businesses.

All events will be advertised on the BEST Growth Hub website with a link to the booking form to assist the successful bidder in marketing the workshops.

# Targets

The successful bidders must maximise the maximum £39,000 budget allocation, ensuring that a maximum amount of workshops are run within the allotted budget and that attendance is maximised at each workshop delivered.

Each workshop must accommodate a minimum of 10 to a maximum 35 candidates, dependent on the intensity and level of the course outlined. All workshops are to be delivered within the period: 22nd September 2016 – 31st March 2017. The successful Bidders will also be expected to meet specified targets around business support. These Activities will be agreed with the successful bidder. However, they will include but not limited to; the number of businesses engaged, the number of businesses receiving 12 hours support, number of businesses receiving a diagnostic meeting as a result of attending the workshop.

# Management and liaison

The Project Lead for the BGH Business Support Service will be the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Economic Development Manager (Chris Burr) who will hold overall responsibility for the contract. Day to day contract management will be through the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader (Georgia Searle) who will be the primary point of contact for: reporting achievements, processing payments and advising on delivery, etc.

Bidders must identify and confirm a lead individual within their submission that will be fully accountable for the delivery of all project outputs, paperwork and information.

In addition to regular liaison meetings with the Business Engagement Team Leader, the successful Bidder may also be required to attend occasional meetings with both the Project Lead and the BGH Steering Group – as directed by the BGH Team.

# Monitoring/reporting

Successful Bidders will be required to attend bi-monthly update meetings with the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader. Successful bidders will also be required to submit monthly reports, including metrics of all workshop attendees to the BGH Business Engagement Team Leader. We reserve the right to convene an update meeting at any time if we see fit.

In order to enable payment, bidders will be required to submit completed and signed copies of all relevant paperwork. BGH reserves the rights to amend what constitutes ‘relevant’ at any time and to carry out spot-checks on the work of successful bidders to ensure that quality of delivery is maintained. The BGH will also require copies of presentations and any materials used for audit purposes. Successful bidders may also be required to provide evidence on the marketing activity or number of enquiries they have received on BGH services. Any request for information made by the BHG must be fully answered within 5 working days

# Payment

Part-payment in advance of delivery may be possible. This will be discussed with the successful bidder. The remainder of the payment will be on successful delivery, on the submission of evidence for completed business workshops undertaken, comprised of the elements of paperwork listed above.

# Budget

One contract will be awarded for the Value of a maximum of £39,000. The total value of the contract is inclusive of all fees, expenses and disbursements but exclusive of VAT.

# The Quotation Requirement

Bidders must provide a comprehensive proposal, of no more than 6 printed sides of A4, for delivering BGH workshop programmes service in all 4 quadrants identified above.

Bidders must provide a breakdown of proposed courses (minimum of 8 for existing businesses) and cost implications of each as well as including details of the following;

* Your justification for choosing these particular courses
* how you propose to deliver the courses
* what level of provision will be provided
* the proposed content of the workshops
* The duration of the courses – half day, full day or more
* the methods your organisation will use to ensure attendees find the workshop useful and informative
* how the content will be made available on the BGH website
* how you propose to carry out research to map the support already available

As the BGH services all of Essex, we must see in your proposal how you will manage the geographical needs of the 4 quadrants to ensure that all areas within the quadrants are serviced and an outline timeframe of when and where these workshops will take place across the serviced area.

As well as the above points, proposals should also cover:

* Methods for marketing the service and an estimated level of take-up
* How the quality of each type of course provided will be ensured
* Plans for supporting businesses/delivering outputs
* How data will be collected from businesses including the booking methods
* The skills and experience of the staff that will be providing support
* The location of the workshops across the 4 quadrants (geographical areas)
* Managing referrals and a seamless customer journey
* Managing project administration/reporting
* Named Contract Manager and outline of responsibilities
* What research will be undertaken to optimise the service that you deliver

# Evaluation criteria

Bidders must confirm, within their proposal, how they will achieve high quality outputs and identify the person within the organisation’s project team who will be responsible managing this throughout the life of the contract.

To realise the delivery of the project the successful bidder must be able to effectively evidence how the company’s and the trainer’s previous experience will be used to deliver and benefit this contract.

The comprehensive written submissions will be formally evaluated against the following criteria:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Weighting (%)** |
| Price – average cost per workshop and number of workshops deliverable under this contract. | **30** |
| Evidence of successfully providing similar services in respect of recent similar projects on time and to budget that will benefit this contract; | **20** |
| The robustness and suitability of the proposed approach for meeting the requirements of this specification; | **20** |
| Relevant knowledge, skills and experience of the delivery team that will benefit this contract; | **15** |
| Suitability of the proposed workshop programme schedule | **15** |
|  | **100%** |

**GENERAL SCORING METHODOLOGY**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scoring Methodology** | **Score Range** |
| No information provided | 0 |
| Insufficient information provided / unsatisfactory response. | 1-2 |
| Limited information provided / standard response | 3-5 |
| Good, comprehensive response | 6-8 |
| Outstanding response provided / very good, full and robust response. | 9-10 |

# 

# Commercial Questionnaire

The weighting for this Commercial Questionnaire is 30%. It is made up of the 2 questions below. Tenderers must ensure that all required fields for this Commercial Questionnaire are fully complete: as any bid left incomplete will automatically lead to rejection of the bid.

Question A (25%)

The quote determined by the Council to be the lowest cost submission (£) for Question A will receive the maximum score (25%). All other bids will be allocated as a percentage score. This will be achieved by dividing the lowest bid value by the higher bid value and multiplying it by the percentage score available.

Question B (5%)

The quote confirming the highest minimum number of workshops for Question B will receive the maximum score (5%). All other bids will be allocated as a percentage score. This will be achieved by dividing the lowest bid value by the higher bid value and multiplying it by the percentage score available.

**Pricing of your Quote**

The pricing information submitted by the successful bidders as part of this process will be pricing information applied to the contract.

Bidders must ensure the price provided for Question A is inclusive of all related costs. This includes but is not limited to; all expenses, management, staffing, marketing, administration, printing, accommodation, etc

**Fixed Price**

The Bid is accepted on a “Fixed Price” basis and the Provider will not be entitled to claim and the Council will not allow any increase in the price of the service and / or cost of, or incidental to, the employment of labour, and the prices included in the Bid shall be the maximum payable by the Council for the initial period of the Contract.

**V.A.T**

The price inserted by the bidder for each item on the schedule of rates must be based on rates that exclude Value Added Tax (V.A.T). This tax, if applicable, will be paid by the Council as an addition at the appropriate rate on the invoices when submitted.

**Lot One Question A (25%)**

The cost of each business support workshop delivered (this price must be inclusive of all related cost and actions as specified above and the invitation to quote document) this should be calculated on an average 3 hour (half day) workshop:

|  |
| --- |
| £ per workshop |

**Lot One Question B (5%)**

What are the minimum number business support workshops that your company will deliver as part of your organisations bid? Again this should be calculated on an average of a 3 hour (half day) workshop.

Please note that all Bidders will be provided the same information from the Council. To ensure the validity the responses for Question B in terms of practical application and delivery, all responses to this question will be cross referenced against criteria including but not limited to:

* Bidders response to Question A
* The information made available to the Bidders by the Council
* Technical Response
* How the service will be marketed
* Budget

\*\*Important\*\* Those bids that are found to be unrealistic or impractical in the amount of business support workshops confirmed under Question B; will be marked Zero for this question and the Bidder will not be permitted to submit a revised bid for the minimum number of Workshops to be delivered.

|  |
| --- |
| Minimum Number of business support workshops (3 hours) deliverable under your Bid: \_\_\_\_\_ |