

Request for Quotation – Marketing Consultancy Flexible Learning Fund – Digital Skills

Background

St Helens Chamber is seeking expert marketing consultancy to assist in the delivery of our new 'Flexible Learning Fund' project.

St Helens Chamber was selected as one of 32 successful bids to this new national Department for Education fund in March 2018. Our proposal was to deliver a digital skills project aimed both at people currently in work, and also those looking to return to work after a break ('Returners').

In 2017, St Helens Chamber secured funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to develop a new 'Digital Hub' in St Helens, and this will be completed in July 2018. This 'Hub' provides a brand new facility to support the development of digital skills in St Helens for everyone – businesses, start-ups, employed people, unemployed people and young people. It will provide a base and 'launch pad' for this Flexible Learning Fund project. The combination of these two projects creates the opportunity to make a 'step change', ensuring St Helens is at the forefront of digital skills in the future.

Requirement

St Helens Chamber has a small but highly effective marketing team, and this project includes a new marketing post to focus on the project, especially engaging with Returners. The project includes a significant marketing budget, enabling us to deliver a transformative campaign to promote the importance of digital skills; the support available via the project; and to access and engage with Returners – traditionally a difficult and diverse group to reach.

We require assistance with three aspects:

1. Branding
2. Marketing Research on how to engage with Returners
3. Marketing Campaign Plan to reach Returners and deliver the project as a whole

Further detail on each element is included below.

St Helens Chamber may appoint one agency to deliver all three elements, or may appoint more than one, and so agencies are asked to quote separately for the three elements.

1. Branding

As explained above, this project will be based within our new 'Digital Hub' which has not yet itself had a new name and brand identified. We do not want to proceed with two new brands, as this will add confusion and it would be challenging to launch two new

brands at once. We therefore require one brand to cover both the project and the new building – a brand which will create an identity for the Digital Hub itself but which will be used as the brand for the project marketing campaign detailed below. The branding for this project needs to be modern, aspirational, bold and exciting. It must offer something different, which doesn't exist in St Helens, and become the central point of digital skills, digital business development and networking. It needs to speak to a range of different groups and organisations, but the focus should always be on improving for the future.

The 'Hub' can and should act as gateway, bringing people and businesses through the doors, who wouldn't necessarily think to engage with St Helens Chamber.

As part of this process we need to establish a name for the new centre and project, a colour scheme that can be incorporated into the physical decoration of the building and of course a visual identity to be rolled out through future marketing campaigns.

A further challenge is that it needs to fit within the 'family' of Chamber brands, which is already becoming somewhat disjointed. Our main St Helens Chamber brand works well for us and we don't feel this needs changing. The Chamber brand is also synonymous with a number of our quality standards and achievements such as The Queen's Award for Enterprise which we won in 2017 and our 'Good' Ofsted rating.

However changes in the operation of parts of our business are creating challenges with some of our sub-brands and we feel these need to be considered before we can roll out the addition of a new brand.

In creating the new 'digital' brand, account will need to be taken of our existing branding challenges.

We have two 'sub-brands' that overlap with this project. We are open either to getting rid of these brands, or changing them. The two brands we refer to are;

- **Starting Point**

Starting Point offers information, advice and guidance on jobs, education and training to local people. We have offered this service for almost 20 years and the brand is well established in the local area, especially with local job seekers.

Since it was established, Starting Point has had its own physical presence, with a separate building in St Helens town centre. In November 2017 we closed this building for refurbishment into the new Digital Hub and transferred the existing activities to the main St Helens Chamber building. This transition has worked well and we have had no adverse reaction to the change from our existing clients.

Moving forwards our plan is to integrate the information, advice and guidance service more fully into our day-to-day training activities, and therefore we will not be moving the Starting Point service back to its previous site. We will also be working primarily with people who are self-motivated to find work.

The dilemma we now face is whether we should retain the Starting Point brand moving forwards and if so, how we link it to the digital project and the Chamber as a whole.

- **St Helens Chamber Business School**

We have successfully delivered quality business training for many years. In 2013 we created the St Helens Chamber Business School brand in order to better position our training as a quality offer for local businesses.

The first challenge around this brand is that its use has been inconsistent. Although it is used on our website and all marketing collateral used to promote our training offer, is not used in our internal documentation or by our training staff who are usually the face of this part of our business with customers. As a result we think that most of our training customers probably still recognise us as St Helens Chamber rather than St Helens Chamber Business School. We need to decide how this brand fits with our promotion of digital skills training.

2. **Market Research on how to engage with Returners**

A major focus of our Flexible Learning Fund project is to engage with Returners, who potentially present an untapped pool of labour attractive to local businesses. A major factor holding this group back is likely to be outdated digital skills, or a complete lack of them.

In our experience, Returners are a particularly difficult group to access due to the diversity of their backgrounds. Skill levels, previous work history and future ambitions vary enormously. The key to engaging with this target group is communication, making them aware of what is available and how easy it will be to access the training. This is why a significant proportion of the budget we have secured will be used for market research and communications. The market research should ensure that our marketing campaign is designed to be highly effective in reaching Returners. We would envisage the market research including use of surveys, focus groups and discussions with partners. We would be keen to hear about the experience of agencies in reaching similar target groups for other campaigns, or their understanding of how other similar campaigns have been successful.

3. **Marketing Campaign Plan**

Our bid to the Flexible Learning Fund recognised the need to invest in a major campaign to attract and engage with people, in particular Returners, to encourage them to

improve their digital skills. A budget of approximately £80k is available for this campaign, to run from August 2018 – March 2019, with the main focus required during the latter part of 2018.

We require support and advice to produce a Plan. The delivery of the Plan will rest with our marketing team.

The Plan will need to

- Clearly articulate the services available through the project and the Digital Hub.
- Taking full account of the market research, identify the target audiences and profiles of service users of the project and the Hub, focussing particularly on Returners.
- Confirm key messages.
- Identify the brand infrastructure requirements – brand, marketing materials, signage design etc.
- Identify the on-line infrastructure requirements (web, social media, on-line tools etc).
- Confirm an 8 month campaign activation plan – what will happen when and how (media, digital, partner activity, events, social media, engagement etc).
- Confirm costs, roles and responsibilities.

Next Steps

Proposals should be forwarded to Kath Boullen at St Helens Chamber by 24th April 2018. We will aim to notify results by 4th May 2018. Timescales required for the 3 elements are as follows:

1. Branding - completed by 31st May 2018
2. Market Research – mid-May to 22nd June
3. Marketing Campaign Plan – mid-June to 20th July.

The budget is expected to be in the region of £10-12k in total.

Please direct any queries to

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