

# Expression of interest

# Title: Employer Skills Survey 2019 and 2021 - Lot 2 Lead contractor

**Project reference: DFERPPU/2018061/2**

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

**Max word count: 1,000**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought for the lead contractor role for a redeveloped Employer Skills Survey to run in 2019 and 2021.

## 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 (ESS) and the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS). Both are large, nationally representative telephone surveys of employer establishments (local sites).

The UK 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 UK 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 telephone survey will retain the ‘Employer Skills Survey’ (ESS) name and DfE proposes to run a large-scale survey in 2019 (minimum sample size 71,000), accompanied with a smaller-scale version of the survey in 2021 (minimum sample size 10,000), with the intention that this four-year cycle could be repeated.

The other lots for this project (being tendered separately) are:

* Lot 1 – Survey development and design (questionnaire, sampling and weighting design, for both mainstage surveys and investment in training follow-up module)
* 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 is to successfully run the new merged Employer Skills Survey, including the key measures of skills demand, skills utilisation, training, and engagement with the wider skills system, while ensuring the survey is conducted more efficiently as a result of the merger.

The roles for the lead contractor are:

**2019 Employer Skills Survey**

* Overall management of the project
* Conduct dress rehearsal
* Conduct large multi-site telephone fieldwork
* Conduct all investment in training module fieldwork
* Management of fieldwork contractors, including quality assurance
* Adherence to the questionnaires, sampling and weighting strategy produced by the design contractor
* Analysis and reporting

**2021 Employer Skills Survey**

* Final design of questionnaire, sampling and weighting approach, informed by design contractor’s proposal
* Overall management
* Conduct all fieldwork
* Analysis and reporting

## Methodology

#### Overall project management

Given the ambitious changes to the Employer Skills Survey, contractors will need to show expertise in managing a complex project, to tight timescales, while ensuring high quality outputs.

#### Working with other contractors

A particular important element of the lead contractor role is the ability to work in a collegiate manner with the fieldwork contractors in 2019, acting as a critical friend where appropriate. We also expect robust procedures to deal swiftly with any fieldwork or data quality issues.

#### Pre-fieldwork

We expect the lot 2 contractor to take the questionnaire developed by the Lot 1 contractor and to pilot this in a dress rehearsal in order to ensure timings are correct and to iron out any problems.

We also expect the lot 2 contractor to arrange for the final questionnaire to be translated and programmed in Welsh.

#### Fieldwork

The lead contractor will be required to conduct telephone fieldwork in the 2019 survey for large multi-site organisations, some of the most challenging to conduct. We also require the lead contractor to conduct all fieldwork for the 2019 Investment in Training survey, plus all fieldwork for the 2021 survey. We therefore require expertise and a track record of conducting excellent large-scale telephone fieldwork for employer or business surveys. We are particularly interested in the lead contractor’s skill in minimising non-response bias and ensuring accurate data.

Additionally, depending on the outcome of the Lot 4 project trialling an online methodology, we may want to include a mixed-mode element into the 2021 survey. It is therefore important that the contractor also has expertise and ability to run online surveys as well.

Comprehensive and proportionate quality assurance is a priority on all aspects of the survey, so the lead contractor will need to have strong procedures for ensuring interviews are conducted in a proper and consistent manner.

Any survey fieldwork with employers in Wales will need to be offered to be conducted in Welsh.

#### Coding

A number of questions throughout the survey will require coding of free text responses. In particular, certain ESS questions obtain information on industry and occupation, and we require these to be coded to 4-digit SIC and SOC. We require the lead contractor to have expertise in accurately coding to these standard classifications.

#### Analysis and reporting

Quality assurance of data processing and survey outputs is crucial to the role of lead contractor. Given the ESS is a large and complex survey, we expect a thorough and intelligent approach to quality assurance.

We expect the contractor to produce a range of outputs including main reports for the surveys, technical reports, extensive data tables, SPSS datasets, and other accessible formats. For all written outputs, we place importance on clarity of expression, simplicity, and technical accuracy. We also expect the contractor to have expertise in communicating results in visually stimulating ways. As well as producing basic descriptive statistics accompanied with statistical testing, we are interested in any relevant sophisticated statistical analyses that can contribute to our evidence base.

## 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 2019
* Contract in place – February 2019

**ESS 2019**

* Implement questionnaire and sampling strategy from Lot 1 (survey development and design) contractor – May 2019
* Fieldwork and management of fieldwork contractors – June to November 2019
* Initial findings – January 2020
* Final findings – May 2020

**ESS 2021**

* Survey design (leading on from recommendations from Lot 1 contractor) – early 2021
* Fieldwork – summer 2021
* Findings – early 2022

## Assessment criteria

* Expertise in employer survey fieldwork – both telephone and online
* Expertise in consortium management
* Expertise in data coding and cleaning
* Expertise in analysis and reporting
* Understanding the policy environment

| **Closing date for EOIs: 10am 17/12/2018****Send your EOI form to:** **oliver2.shaw@education.gov.uk** **and** **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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