



**Soft Market Testing**

**PROVISION OF A DIGITAL GROWTH FACTORY**

**Request for indicative pricing – IN CONFIDENCE**

**Confidentiality**

All information included in this Soft Market Testing questionnaire is confidential and only for the recipient's knowledge. No information included in this document or in discussions connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without prior written authorisation from the Council.

**Introduction and purpose of this exercise**

Winchester City Council has received an allocation of £1m HM Government UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) over three years to 31 March 2025 to support projects and activities under three investment priorities: Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and Skills and People. For further information regarding the fund see [UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND – INVESTMENT PLAN](#).

The Economy team at Winchester City Council are applying for £40,000 of funding to deliver a Digital Growth Factory project which would meet the outputs and outcomes aligned with 'supporting local business'.

The aim of this soft marketing exercise is to:

- inform our draft budget
- ascertain the approximate number of attendees on each element of the courses
- obtain quotes for the project, please see details below
- ensure our project and the outcomes and outputs are feasible and deliverable within the budget and
- provide suggestions for alternative delivery modules if the budget is not sufficient.

For the avoidance of doubt, this notice is for the purpose of conducting a soft market testing exercise and will not formally begin the procurement or constitute any commitment by Winchester City Council to undertake any procurement exercise.

**Background information and requirements**

If successful in our application the Economy team is seeking to procure a company or individual to deliver a digital growth factory which could include any or all of the following elements:



• **Commercialisation course:** aimed at new entrepreneurs, early stage start-ups or SMEs looking to refresh/strengthen their business model. These courses will provide, over a two-day period, all the fundamentals required to develop a viable business model. The courses aim is to engage entrepreneurs to reflect around the problem their business idea is trying to solve, the customer journey and need, the size of the market, the finance and numbers, to develop entrepreneurial skills and provide a peer-to-peer learning experience. The course will also include investment pitch training. Enrolment on this course will be through direct expressions of interest or referrals from other business organisations. This course will also be a vehicle to identify businesses that are ready to access incubation or acceleration support.

• **Acceleration support:** this is an intensive 3-month programme targeted at early stage companies that already have a marketable product and a founding team. Through weekly sessions the beneficiaries will be guided through the various steps they need to take to their business model to the next stage to achieve seed or late seed funding.

• **Incubation and scale up course** – this aims to accelerate the growth of start-ups and scale-ups that require bespoke and hands-on support to guide them through the various stages of the business journey from concept to commercialisation and ultimately to growth and resilience. The support will be delivered over a sustained period (around nine months) so that beneficiaries are mentored and advised to build a scalable business model and a repeatable sales process or to support the transition from a single to multiple products and services. Through the incubation and scale-up support, beneficiaries will be prepared for securing funding.

• **SME Digital Productivity Programme:** the aim of the programme is to develop founders' leadership skills and their adoption of proven change management practices and process re-engineering tools that deliver productivity growth by digital means. SMEs will focus on identifying their least productive processes and then set goals to redress the gaps in productivity they have identified. The programme is delivered as a series of six workshops over a three-month period in each year.

The confirmed outcomes and outputs we need to deliver for UKSPF from these programmes are:

|           |   |    |
|-----------|---|----|
| Output 1  | <b>Number of businesses receiving non-financial support (numerical value)</b>                       | 20 |
| Output 2  | <b>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready (numerical value)</b> | 5  |
| Outcome 1 | <b>Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm (numerical value)</b>                  | 3  |
| Outcome 2 | <b>Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity (numerical value)</b>         | 20 |
| Outcome 3 | <b>Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes (numerical value)</b>    | 10 |
| Outcome 4 | <b>Number of businesses with improved productivity (numerical value)</b>                            | 10 |

*Please note that one business may deliver several outputs or outcomes*

In order for the Economy team to establish the costs of delivery of this programme we require the recipient to provide a detailed draft budget and quotation for each of the courses/programmes outlined above.

The budget will need to include all delivery costs including:

- trainers/speakers (and their transport costs)
- online platform hosting
- room hire, catering and equipment
- publicity and course materials
- monitoring and evaluation against outputs and outcomes and
- any other costs associated with delivering the programme.

Please provide a financial breakdown for each of the items listed above as well as the numbers you envisage attending each element of the programme.

We would also welcome your feedback on feasibility and deliverability of the project and on any alternative solutions that would also achieve the outcomes and outputs, above, required by the UKSPF.

Please submit your response by 1 October 2023 including any further information that you think we might find useful to:

[awoods@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:awoods@winchester.gov.uk).

#### Contact details

For questions regarding this process you are welcome to contact Alison Woods, Business Engagement Manager, [awoods@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:awoods@winchester.gov.uk).

#### Confidentiality

Where confidential information is provided by the council to the respondent all recipients of council information must treat the information provided as confidential and to use the information only for the purpose provided.

Where the respondent reasonably requires any information submitted in its proposal to be treated as commercially sensitive and/or confidential, the onus is upon the respondent to mark it as such and to set out the basis upon which the information is to be treated as confidential.

Any agreement entered into by the council is not intended to fetter the council's legal obligations in relation to any requests made for disclosure under Freedom of Information legislation and/or Environmental Information Regulations and the council has ultimate discretion as to whether information provided by the respondent is subject to disclosure.

#### General information

For the avoidance of doubt no information provided in response to this questionnaire will be used by the council in assessing providers during a subsequent procurement process.

The council will not reimburse any costs associated with the submission of a response to this questionnaire.

This questionnaire does not constitute an offer which is capable of acceptance and no contract will be entered into on the basis of the respondent's response

to the soft market testing. The council reserves the right to terminate this process at any stage.

Respondents intending to submit a response must obtain for themselves all information necessary for the preparation of their response. Information supplied by the council or contained in the questionnaire is supplied only for general guidance in the preparation of a proposal. Respondents must satisfy themselves as to the accuracy of any such information and no responsibility is accepted by the council for any loss or damage of whatever kind and howsoever caused arising from the use of such information.

#### Data protection and privacy statement

All personal data will be processed in accordance with the council's privacy policy. Prior to submitting personal data respondents should refer to the Council's privacy statement, details of which can be found on our website:

[Data Protection and Privacy - Winchester City Council](#)

Where the respondent receives any personal data from the council and/or where any personal data is generated as a result of this soft marketing exercise the respondent undertakes to comply with relevant data protection legislation at all times.