



Skills Funding  
Agency



European Union  
European  
Social Fund

**INVITATION TO TENDER\_29811**

## **GREATER MANCHESTER SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAMME**

Read Me First and Instructions Document

Date: 23 July 2015

**You are advised to read this document prior to  
completing the Invitation to Tender**

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## **1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT**

- 1.1** The Contracting Authority is the Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills acting through the Skills Funding SFA referred to as SFA in this document.
- 1.2** The SFA is looking to award a single contract for the delivery of education training and support to unemployed adults aged 19+ (or 18+ if in receipt of benefits) in the area covered by the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP).
- 1.3** This document forms part of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) to procure the delivery of Greater Manchester Skills for Employment pilot.
- 1.4** The ITT has been issued to all candidates who have completed The Register of Training Organisations refresh as at July 2015, and indicated they were interested in delivering:

- 16-18 Apprenticeships
- 19-23 Apprenticeships
- 24 Plus Apprenticeships
- Traineeships
- Skills for Life
- Pre-employment training
- Community Learning
- ESOL
- Education and vocational skills training for employers
- Skills support for the employed
- Skills support for the unemployed

**In the Greater Manchester LEP area.**

**Please note that the SFA will only evaluate responses to this ITT from candidates who have submitted a successful application to the Register of Training Organisations.**

- 1.5** The details of the Services being procured by the SFA are set out in the Specification document included as an attachment in the ITT.
- 1.6** This document sets out instructions to candidates on submitting responses to the ITT using the online e-tendering portal.
- 1.7** Part A of the document details the general information and requirements for submitting a response to the ITT.
- 1.8** Part B sets out the specific information and requirements for this ITT and includes such aspects as the timelines and information about the criteria against which compliant bids will be evaluated.

- 1.9** You should note that any mention of “We” or “Us” or “Our” or “SFA” refers to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills acting through the Skills Funding SFA and “You” or “Your” or “They” or “Their” refers to candidates.
- 1.10** You are advised to read this Read Me First and Instructions Document together with all other documents attached before answering the questions and publishing your submission(s).

**Please note that your response(s) to this Invitation to Tender must be submitted on or before 11 September 2015 at 5:00pm**

## **PART A**

### **2 COMPLETING YOUR RESPONSE**

- 2.1** It is important that you complete your response in line with the requirements detailed in both Part A and Part B and the specification(s). Non-compliant bids will not be evaluated.
- 2.2** You will need to respond to all elements of the tender which may include online questions, declarations and/or attachments that need to be downloaded, completed and uploaded before publication.
- 2.3** Each text based question has a locked in character limit which cannot be exceeded. A character in this instance is defined as follows:
- A number
  - A letter
  - A punctuation mark
  - A space
  - A carriage return
- Unless specifically requested in the question, diagrams, tables etc. are not allowed in spaces provided for answers
- 2.4** You should ensure that you provide all of the information in the specified format and order.
- 2.5** Your response to a particular question should be contained in that question's answer box. The SFA will only consider responses provided against each question and will not look for extra information in another question's answer box when evaluating responses.
- 2.6** If any information is supplied in response to individual questions that has not been requested, the SFA will ignore it during the evaluation process.
- 2.7** The SFA reserves the right to modify, amend or provide further clarification regarding the on-line tender documents at any time prior to the deadline for completion. The SFA will notify you either by direct communication or as a broadcast message on the online message board. Where such modifications constitute a significant change, the SFA may, at its discretion, extend the deadline for completion of the documents.
- 2.8** The SFA cannot access any submission until after the closing date and time has passed. The SFA cannot see anything candidates have partially or fully submitted until this time.
- 2.9** You are actively encouraged to respond to this ITT as early as possible to ensure that you meet the deadline. You can submit partial bids during the timeline as long as you complete the responses before the closing date and time. However, you should note that each time you submit an updated bid it

overwrites completely any previous bid that has been submitted. This should be taken into account if you are publishing or attempting to publish your response close to the deadline.

- 2.10** If at any time during this procurement process you experience technical difficulties or require technical assistance, you should contact the e-tendering helpdesk at [help@bravosolution.co.uk](mailto:help@bravosolution.co.uk), supplying a “screen dump” depicting any error messages you have received. Candidates should note that this email address will not be able to answer policy and/or procurement questions.
- 2.11** You are advised that nothing in this on-line document or its Appendixes or any other communication from or with the SFA shall be taken as constituting a contract or other binding agreement or a representation that any contract shall be offered.
- 2.12** You are not entitled to claim from the SFA any costs or expenses which may be incurred in the preparation of your submission.

### **3 ONLINE MESSAGE BOARD**

- 3.1** You should only contact the SFA by using the online message board attached to the specific ITT on the e-tendering portal. This is to ensure that the SFA can maintain the integrity and robustness of the tendering process and guarantee that answers given are consistent.
- 3.2** You must not contact any employee of the SFA to obtain any additional information about this ITT. Any contact made other than through the online message board may result in your submission being excluded from the evaluation process.
- 3.3** We will make every effort to respond to any query within 2 working days of receipt on the online message board. This timeline may be extended where more complex queries are submitted.
- 3.4** Please note that from 5pm 23 July 2015 to 9am 28 July 2015, the SFA is having work done on their business systems, which may impact on the ability to answer messages on the e- tendering portal
- 3.5** We reserve the right to make our response available to all candidates invited to tender dependent upon the nature or content of the message.

### **4 CONTRACT AWARD**

- 4.1** Full and final feedback from the ITT will be provided in the form of an Award Decision Notice in line with the timetable shown in Part B of this document.
- 4.2** Award decisions will be made in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in Part B in addition to the following general principles.

- 4.3** The SFA reserves the right not to proceed with the award of a contract to any candidate that is not a legal entity at the time the contract is due to be entered into.
- 4.4** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract where such an award would result in a candidate exceeding its Recommended Funding Limit. This is determined as part of the SFA's assessment of financial capacity. The financial health assessment measures a candidate's financial status in terms of current financial performance and ability to meet ongoing financial commitments. Further information on this assessment can be found at: [SFA financial health assessment - Publications - GOV.UK](#)
- 4.5** Where an existing college or provider does not have an RFL, then the SFA reserves the right not to award a contract where such an award would result in the candidate growing their contractual commitment with the SFA by more than 100% cash value.
- 4.6** The SFA reserves the right to undertake an assessment of a candidate's financial health prior to awarding a contract which may result in a change to a candidate's Recommended Funding Limit (RFL). Where this is the case, the new RFL will be used to inform award decisions as per point 4.4.
- 4.7** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract if, between the evaluation of responses and the decision to issue a contract, any candidate having been inspected by Ofsted (or by an equivalent inspectorate) is awarded Grade 4 for Overall Effectiveness.
- 4.8** The SFA will not award a contract where any of the criteria set out in Regulation 57 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 apply to the candidate.
- 4.9** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract where any of the following criteria apply to the candidate:
- previous activities that have resulted in significant repayment of SFA or Government funding (£100,000 or 5% of contract value, whichever is the higher) within the last two years, this includes funding paid to a sub-contractor to deliver education and training funded by the SFA
  - failure to repay funding due to the SFA or other government body
  - failure to repay funding due under a sub-contract to deliver education and training funded by the SFA
  - information from awarding bodies identifying significant irregularities in the award of qualifications
  - two or more instances where the SFA's staff or agent have audited the provision of the provider and identified issues of non-compliance with conditions of funding within the last 2 years
  - on-going investigation relating to suspicion of fraud or irregularity or possible failure to comply with conditions of funding under an existing funding agreement or sub-contract
  - early termination of a funding agreement or a sub-contract to deliver education and training funded by the SFA

- withdrawal of funding following the failure to comply with a withdrawal of Funding or failure to remedy a serious breach of contract
  - Or where the candidate has a director who was previously a director, or governor, or a senior employee, or shareholder, in another provider where one or more of the above criteria apply
- 4.10** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract where the candidate has a director who was previously employed by the SFA or a predecessor body, or other Government body, and who was dismissed for gross misconduct, or who resigned whilst suspended from employment and subject to a disciplinary investigation concerning allegations of gross misconduct.
- 4.11** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract if it does not receive sufficient bids of the required quality during this procurement exercise.
- 4.12** The SFA reserves the right not to award a contract where information it already holds about the applicant, it obtains from other Government bodies, or is already in the public domain causes the decision to award to be called into question.
- 4.13** The SFA will only award a contract for adult education and vocational training to a candidate listed on the Register of Training Organisations, current at the time of award.
- 4.14** You should note that there is **no separate right of appeal** against the award decisions made. However if you consider that the SFA has not followed the published process or the decision made is unreasonable, you are able to make a complaint under the SFA's complaints procedure which can be accessed at :  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>
- 4.15** Any communication received outside the SFA's complaints procedure will be treated as a normal message or letter and responded to in that format and timeline (if applicable).

## **5 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

- 5.1** The SFA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Under the provisions of the FOIA, the SFA is required to provide information it holds in response to a request made in accordance with the FOIA. This includes information about third parties. Applicants are referred to the SFA's Freedom of Information Policy available on its website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act>
- 5.2** If, when completing your submission(s), you consider that any of the information you are providing is "Commercial in Confidence" you must indicate what this is in a message sent via the online message board before

the deadline for closing the ITT. Should we then be asked for this information under FOIA, we may choose to apply an exemption.

## **6 SUB-CONTRACTING**

- 6.1** In line with the SFA's terms and conditions, it is a requirement that where you wish to appoint sub-contractor(s) for the first time during the life of the contract, you must seek the consent of the SFA in writing by providing full and accurate details of the proposed sub-contractors. The SFA reserves the right to refuse an organisation as a sub-contractor.
- 6.2** You are expected to provide the SFA with details of all of your subcontractors bi-annually by fully and accurately completing the Declaration of Subcontractors form in line with the Funding Rules.
- 6.3** The SFA reserves the right to request a copy of any sub-contract you have entered into at a later date.
- 6.4** The SFA reserves the right to request a copy of any sub-contract you have entered into at a later date.
- 6.5** Only one level of sub-contracting is permissible.
- 6.6** The SFA reserves the right to request that if you are proposing to work with sub-contractors you provide letters of support from your sub-contractors before a contract will be issued.

## **7 PRESENTATIONS**

- 7.1** In very exceptional circumstances, candidates may be asked to give a presentation as part of the procurement process.
- 7.2** If agreed that a presentation is required, a threshold will be set out as part of the procurement process. Candidates scoring above this threshold will be invited to present.
- 7.3** If selected, bidding candidates will be invited via the e-tendering portal at least a week before the presentation date.
- 7.4** The invite will include details of the subject of the presentation together with the scores that are available.
- 7.5** Please refer to Part B to see if presentations apply to this procurement.

## PART B – Specification Specific

### 8 PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE

- 8.1 The timetable set out below is fixed. However, the SFA reserves the right to amend the timings as necessary and any such amendments will be advised via the online message board.

TASK	DEADLINE
Publication of ITT	23 July 2015
ITT clarification event	29 July 2015
ITT closes	11 September 2015
Presentations if required	9 October 2015
Notification of tender results	23 October 2015
Day 1 mandatory standstill period	26 October 2015
Day 10 mandatory standstill period	4 November 2015
Contracts issued from	6 November 2015
Delivery commences from	November 2015

Please note the candidate clarification event will be held on 29 July 2015 commencing at 12pm at the following venue:

New Economy Boardroom

1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Churchgate House  
56 Oxford Street  
MANCHESTER  
M1 6EU

Candidates are asked to limit attendance to two people from their organisation and confirm attendees by 27 July 2015 to the following email address: [sarah.harris@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.harris@sfa.bis.gov.uk)

### 9 COMPLIANCE

- 9.1 Non-compliant bids will not be evaluated.
- 9.2 A compliant bid must include the following documents which you need to complete in full:
- Specification questionnaire
  - Online questionnaire
  - Delivery Profile for Local Growth Deal funding
  - Sub contractor declaration form
- 9.3 You must publish your response before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.

- 9.4 The online technical envelope contains information regarding the ITT, a number of declarations that you are required to confirm and the fields where you will need to upload the questionnaire(s) and delivery profile spreadsheet(s) for each of the lot(s) for which you wish to bid.
- 9.5 You should note that the fields are NOT mandatory for uploading your attachments and therefore you must ensure that you have uploaded the correct questionnaire(s) and spreadsheet(s) to the correct field(s).
- 9.6 The questionnaire consists of 6 questions, all of which require a response from you. Please ensure that you follow the instructions in the questionnaire for answering each question.
- 9.7 You will need to download and complete the delivery profile spreadsheet on the tab annotated Local Growth Funding attached to the ITT by following the INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION included in it.
- 9.8 In order to submit both the specification questionnaire, delivery profile spreadsheet and subcontractor declaration, you will need to WinZip them into a single folder that is NOT password protected and upload this folder to the relevant field in the technical envelope before publishing your response in full to the SFA.

## 10 EVALUATION

- 10.1 The criteria against which your response will be evaluated are shown below including the maximum score awarded for that criteria:

CRITERIA	RELATED QUESTION	MAXIMUM SCORE
Capacity and Provider Readiness	1	100
Track Record	2	100
Partnership Working	3	100
Management and Quality Assurance	4	100
Market Intelligence and Local Knowledge	5	100
Management information and reporting	6	100

**For Question 1, you will need to achieve a score of 75 [meets most criteria] or more for the remainder of your bid to be evaluated.**

**10.2** The Delivery profile will not be evaluated separately but will be taken into account as part of the evaluation of question 1.

**10.3** Scores will be awarded in line with the following regime:

<b>Meets all criteria</b>	<b>Meets most criteria</b>	<b>Partially meets criteria</b>	<b>Fails to meet criteria/no answer provided</b>
100	75	40	0

**10.4** Following evaluation of the tenders received, the SFA reserves the right to invite the top 3 scoring candidates to present to a panel of SFA staff and representatives of GMLEP. The requirements of this panel, including details of the presentation to be provided and scoring structure, will be communicated to candidates in advance of the panel. Scores awarded at the panel will be added to those awarded at tender evaluation and the candidate with the highest total score will be awarded the contract.

Scores for the presentation will be awarded in line with the following regime:

<b>Meets all criteria</b>	<b>Meets most criteria</b>	<b>Partially meets criteria</b>	<b>Fails to meet criteria/no answer provided</b>
100	75	40	0

A candidate in the top 3 following evaluation of the tenders will not be invited to a presentation if the difference between its evaluation score and the highest score achieved would mean that the presentation would not affect the final award decision.