**Haven Gateway Partnership**

**(Essex County Council)**

**Request for Quotation**

**I-Construct ERDF Project**

1. **Communications and Marketing Services**
2. **Website Development Services**

**August 2020**

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**Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP) requests tenders to support the development and roll out of the I-Construct project.**

The I-Construct project is an exciting new business support project focused on Essex, Kent and East Sussex, part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and led by the Haven Gateway Partnership.

The Haven Gateway Partnership is an organisation through which both the public and private sector organisations work together to promote the sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The Haven Gateway Team are experienced at working with SMEs and running business support programmes and our current ERDF project TALE is the most recent example of a sector specific innovation support programme: <https://www.tale.org.uk>

Essex County Council is the accountable body for the Haven Gateway Partnership and the I-Construct Project, so all contracts are awarded via Essex County Council systems and processes.

Essex County Council is dedicated to improving Essex and the lives of our residents. Our ambition is to deliver the best quality of life in Britain. We will achieve this by providing high-quality, targeted services that deliver real value for money.

ESIF/ERDF is the main funding body for the I-Construct project, providing 50% of the funding for the project. The 2014-20 European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) Growth Programme provides investment to projects that improve local innovation and growth, create jobs and promotes social inclusion. ESIF comprises three different funds including European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which focusses on research and innovation; supporting and promoting small and medium enterprises; and the creation of a low carbon economy.

**Background**

**What will the project do?**

The I-CONSTRUCT project helps companies working in the construction and built environment marketplace to access new business opportunities and to improve their profitability and sustainability.

Located in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership area of Essex, Kent and East Sussex, I-Construct is designed to help local companies and budding entrepreneurs to benefit from the massive amount of infrastructure and housing development planned in the area and the growing operations and maintenance market.

I-Construct stands for Innovation in Construction because we will work with client groups, project commissioners and industry experts to help SMES and new businesses to grow by opening up new opportunities to win work and helping them to:

* join local supply chains, access new bidding opportunities and explore new client groups or business models;
* respond to and profit from trends like the growing use of Building Information Modelling (BIM), off-site construction methods, the growth of renewable energy, smart buildings, new regulations around zero carbon, use of automation and robotics in building and maintenance;
* launch new products or services and link into wider national innovation work and R&D funding

I-CONSTRUCT offers SMEs membership of the I-Construct network and a free individual business support and financial grant programme totally focussed on their business development needs.

We are also building a dedicated I-Construct Innovation Hub in Braintree, Essex for companies to use for business development and networking and to try new technologies. The building has been designed to BREEAM excellent standards and will help companies understand how these high environmental standards can be achieved and how off-site construction techniques can be incorporated into a building. The project will be following the construction process starting in August 2020 and then the building will open for use in Spring 2021 and will include conference and networking facilities, technology and product demonstration space.

**Why Construction?**

So much is happening in the wider sector and it is a very exciting and challenging time to be working in it, particularly now that companies are grappling with COVID-19 conditions and the prospect of a recession, alongside the government’s Build, Build, Build programme. Construction affects all our lives and underpins the national economy. The industry created £370 billion turnover in 2016, adding £138 billion in value to the UK economy, and exported over £8 billion of products and services. Construction is a major employer, with around 3.1 million people working in the sector.

However, the sector also has the lowest productivity in the UK, struggles to invest in innovation at scale and is facing major labour supply and cost inflation issues as a result. See Mark Farmer’s review Modernise or Die.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/construction-labour-market-in-the-uk-farmer-review>

And the government’s Construction Sector Deal which sets the sector a challenge of achieving the following through greater adoption of digital techniques, off-site manufacturing and whole life asset performance approaches:

* a 33% reduction in the cost of construction and the whole life cost[8](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/construction-sector-deal/construction-sector-deal#fn:8) of assets
* a 50% reduction in the time taken from inception to completion of new build
* a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment
* a 50% reduction in the trade gap between total exports and total imports of construction products and materials

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/construction-sector-deal/construction-sector-deal>

Within the industry there is recognition of the need for innovation and change and work is being done by larger players and government projects, but most small to medium sized companies focus on the day to day needs of their businesses and find it difficult to find the resource for strategic planning, innovation, change management and new business development. This is not a problem that is restricted to the construction industry – see the Business Basics Programme for further research into barriers to innovation for SMEs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/business-basics-programme>

Our own market research exploring what support construction companies needed to gear up for growth and innovation opportunities highlighted that:

* There is a real demand to network and share information
* There is no construction sector focussed innovation centre in SELEP so no focal point/ anchor for the sector to connect and cluster around
* No targeted support is being provided to link construction to other sectors
* There is no co-ordinated approach across the SELEP to using the public sector pipeline and market to stimulate innovation and SME growth directly, although there is best practice on a site specific and policy level
* There is a lack of profile and recognition of the SELEP area as having major competitive strength in Construction meaning missed inward investment opportunities
* SMEs in Construction do not seek help or know where to go for help, are not aware of the housing and infrastructure development pipeline and do not know how to engage with the public sector or how to link with other SMEs
* SMEs recognise the potential business benefits of adopting BIM or of being able to offer off-site and modular build related services, but many do not have business development strategies in place or access to legal and other professional advice to make this happen
* There was a call for demonstrations of the application and benefits of BIM using real case studies and support for its implementation
* They would like help in long term strategic planning and growth and space and thinking time to do this
* Grants would be welcomed to help implement these plans to help secure the bigger prize of contracts in the development pipeline and opportunities for jobs growth

**I-Construct Solution**

I-Construct is therefore designed to help to overcome these barriers to innovation and our mission is to help and encourage companies to carve out the time for business plan development and to connect them to others who can help and inspire them so that together network members can prosper individually but also help each other along the way.

Through I-Construct our aim is to create a sustainable network of businesses which will become self-funding, that fosters long-term thinking, collaboration across the supply chain and promotes the innovative future of the industry.

**Who is it for?**

Businesses can apply for I-Construct support if they are SMEs either in the construction and built environment sector, supplying to the construction and built environment sector or from a different sector e.g. ICT wanting to get into the construction and built environment market. We can also support entrepreneurs to explore the construction market and to launch a new business or product into the construction market.

However, the project is designed to engage with and support the whole sector develop by strengthening local supply chains and encouraging an appetite for innovation, collaboration and growth.

**I-Construct Approach**

Through I-Construct our mission is to create a sustainable and valued network of businesses and stakeholders that by working together, foster long-term thinking and promote the innovative future of SMEs within the industry.

I-Construct aims to help to overcome barriers to innovation and to help and encourage companies to carve out the time for business plan development and to connect them to others who can help and inspire them.

We will also be focussing on the long-term trends in the industry and the construction and maintenance development pipeline as well as boosting their procurement readiness so that companies can plan ahead, build capacity and invest in innovation with greater certainty and confidence.

We take a bottom up approach by working 1:1 with businesses on their business plans and then connecting them to relevant commercial opportunities, new clients, business partners and practical help, resources and knowledge.

Given the fact that SMEs are hard to attract to support projects like I-Construct, because they have so little time for networking, it will be key for I-Construct communications to be industry relevant and high impact, communicating what they can specifically expect from the project and the benefits of joining the network.

It will also be key to attract wider audiences to join, participate and contribute to the I-Construct network and to clearly show the project’s benefits to funders, policy makers and industry leaders.

I-Construct therefore has a wide range of target audiences:

* SMEs either in the construction and built environment sector or supplying to the construction and built environment sector.
* Entrepreneurs
* University and college students
* Construction Clients and Commissioning bodies or client groups.
* Large companies in the construction and built environment sector or supplying to the construction and built environment sector.
* Industry and professional membership bodies
* Research and Innovation community including Transforming Construction Challenge projects and university and college academics
* Business support – referral networks and professional services
* Government – MHCLG as funding body, national and local government

We also recognise that we are part of a wider business support landscape and will be working alongside our Growth Hubs and other ERDF projects so that we can collectively overcome barriers to SMEs accessing support, maximise impact from public investment and provide a holistic experience for SMEs. As the LEP Growth Hubs have a remit for co-ordinating business support and advising SMEs, I-Construct has strong operational links with Growth Hub teams across the LEP. This will also help us to ensure we are reaching SMEs across the whole of the SELEP area.

However, it will also be key to differentiate I-Construct from other offers and avoid duplication. So, the project is also building two-way links with other projects and industry networks and research and innovation programmes so that our network members are better connected to what is happening elsewhere and we can get involve in wider activity.

**Who is behind I-Construct?**

I-CONSTRUCT is part funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), with match funding also provided by Braintree District Council and BRE. The project is led by the Haven Gateway Partnership and its delivery partners: Braintree District Council, The BRE (Building Research Establishment), Colchester Institute and Daedalus Environmental Ltd. I-Construct benefits from the support and guidance of the members of the South East LEP’s Housing and Development Group and we will collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders and industry bodies to deliver the project. The £7.4M project opened in July 2020 and will run until the end of 2022. Companies are eligible for support if they are an SME working in or supplying to the construction and built environment sector.

**I-Construct Communications and Marketing Objectives**

Our draft objectives are outlined below along with the measures of success. These will be reviewed as part of the development of a marketing and communications strategy and implementation plan which needs to be agreed by the project Steering Board.

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| **Objective** | **Measurement of success** |
| To identify potential SME beneficiaries. | Mapping and segmentation of potential beneficiaries  Growth Hub engagement |
| To raise awareness of I-Construct amongst target SMEs and other target audiences | Social Media analytics  Media coverage  Participation in market research  Google analytics on website traffic  Webinar sign ups and enquiries  General enquiries generated  Contacts added to CRM |
| To encourage SMEs and other target audience member groups to join I-Construct network | Leads generated for eligibility checks and follow up diagnostic sessions.  General enquiries generated  Contacts added to CRM  Member sign ups  Diagnostics completed |
| To create a sense of membership and common interest within the I-Construct Network | Membership numbers and participation in programme  Members retained after funding support ends  Support Plans agreed  Member to member communication via website |
| To connect members of the network to each other and celebrate their success | Introductions made by HGP  Member to member collaborations  Client supply chain new entrants from membership  Member to member communication via website |
| To connect members of the network to each other and raise awareness of the development pipeline and quality standards required by clients/commissioners for successful tendering | Client supply chain new entrants from membership  Meet the Buyer event/webinar participation  Procurement readiness |
| To increase SMEs capability for and openness to innovation, trying new technology and the development of new products and services | Webinar participant numbers  Technology take up  Case studies generated  Outcomes celebrated Customer retention  Achievement of 12-hour assists (C1) through attending workshops and events, 1;1 support and grant take up  Draw down of grants (C2)  New products and services launched |
| To increase awareness of the construction sector as a marketplace and employer and enhance its reputation | Entrepreneurs engaged in the project  FE/HE students attracted to work in or supply to the sector  Media coverage |
| To provide an excellent customer experience and continuously improve our support by listening to customer feedback/using data analytics | Customer satisfaction levels  Improvements made to service in response to feedback  Compliments and Complaints received |
| To provide data to help evaluate the impact of I-Construct project interventions | Case Study impacts captured  Unmet business support needs captured  SME evaluation of support provided  Impacts on SME businesses captured |
| To ensure compliance with ERDF Publicity requirements and cross cutting themes of sustainable development and equality and diversity | Monthly monitoring of use of ERDF branding and publicity guidelines  Positive promotion of the project’s contribution to sustainable development and equalities |
| To enhance our reputation as a champion for innovation and the construction industry and its supply chain | I-Construct profile  HGP profile in media  SME awareness of HGP and I-Construct  Retention of I-Construct Members once funding ends |
| To create leads for new opportunities for collaboration and follow-on funding | Industry and Stakeholder member numbers  Enquiries from potential project partners  Collaborative projects within the  programme e.g. development site or infrastructure supply chain opportunities  Further SME business support needs captured  Funding body recognition  Other grants drawn down as a result of the project by HGP and by SMEs  Long term collaborations with the network |

**Project Launch**

We were awarded our grant agreement in July 2020 and we are now planning to formally launch the project in October with a soft launch in early August.

Our soft launch will involve a press release, social media promotion and website content around the award of the contract for the project, using our existing Haven Gateway channels. We may also do some specific PR around the I-Construct Innovation Hub construction with Braintree District Council. The aim will be to raise awareness of the project amongst the Business support community so they refer companies to us and to encourage SMEs to sign up to our introductory webinar series which will run from September. In tandem with this we are developing our first Meet the Buyer and innovation webinar sessions in the Autumn.

We are planning our formal launch in early November and it is for this deadline that we need to have the full project branding and collateral in place.

We had also originally planned a series of “State of the Nation” half day workshops for the project for local SMEs, public sector site promoters and the wider development industry. These events were to raise awareness about the issues the project is aiming to address and also capture the views of the SMEs in terms of their ability to respond to these opportunities and barriers to innovation adoption as part of our Baseline analysis. Summaries and video-clips of the debate at the workshops would then be used to communicate the findings and engage more SMEs in the project.

Due to the COVID--19 restrictions around face to face large scale events – we are now considering other ways to capture industry views to ensure we establish two-way communication links form the offset.

1. **Summary of requirement**

**Part One: Communications and Marketing**

The Haven Gateway Partnership would like to appoint a marketing and communications agency:

- to create communications strategy and launch campaign, including a social media schedule and style guide

- to create a brand identity and guidelines for the I-Construct encompassing the I-Construct Network and the Innovation Hub offer. This will include logo/s and associated imagery which will be applied across the project website, social media and all printed and digital materials formats. There will also an accompanying simple brand guidelines document which will include consideration of tone of voice and key project messages taken from the communications strategy work.

- to develop an initial suite of materials and brand assets to support the launch, working with the I-Construct team on content editorial as well as visuals and design.

In the first stage we envisage that the following will be required to support the project launch in October/November:

* Brand Identity and guidelines
* Content editorial / copywriting for web pages and written materials generally using text supplied
* Photography to support the brand identity – stock and original
* Animation/video/infographic to communicate the I-Construct offer
* Project 2 page digital brochure – design and edit
* Innovation Hub 2 page digital brochure
* E-Mail signature
* PowerPoint template
* SME Support Plan Template design

Following the project launch additional materials will be required by December

* E-Newsletter template – 4 pages
* Content development support for the first Newsletter to be issued in January 2021 and ongoing quarterly issues

Our Communications and Marketing manager will be responsible for implementing the communications strategy but we would like our preferred agency to provide on-going marketing and content development support until the end of the project. However, we envisage the bulk of the work required will be carried out in the first 6 months of the contract.

1. **Considerations for Brand Identity**

It will be important for the I-Construct project identity to work as a sub brand to the Haven Gateway Partnership brand identity and reflect the values of the Haven Gateway Partnership which are:

* Collaborative
* Dynamic
* Aspirational
* Innovative
* Quality
* Focus
* Influence

All publicity also has to comply with the ERDF publicity requirements and complement the Haven Gateway Partnership branding – see link for ERDF publicity guidelines.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836956/ESIF-GN-1-005_ESIF_Branding_and_Publicity_Requirements_v8_updated.pdf>

We must also consult our delivery partners in the development of the project branding and in particular Braintree District Council as owner and landlord of the Innovation Hub Building. However, this will be tightly managed by the Haven Gateway Partnership Team to ensure efficient decision making.

**Part Two: Website Development**

The creation of a new website for the I-Construct project, using the new brand identity and visual assets developed via the delivery of part one of the requirement above. The website is a key engine and virtual hub for the project and needs to be designed to drive membership acquisition and retention, support two-way engagement with members of the I-Construct network, member to member interactions and a sense of community and common purpose around innovation and business growth.

Given the tight deadlines we envisage a launch site with the key functionality and information being in place by the end of October, followed by a second phase of development in November-December so there is a fully functioning site up and running by January 2021

* Ongoing or annual charges including licensing, hosting, maintenance and security updates should be clearly shown.
* You should also provide the cost for design/technical amendments that cannot be made by the HGP team as an hourly/day rate.

All of the sections of the website must:

* Include an SSL certificate
* Be a bespoke CMS system.
* Be fully updatable by the HGP/I Construct team.
* Be able to hold secure data for project applicants in closed areas, accessible by logging in.
* Have storage of users’ data encrypted on the server in accordance with ICO recommendations.
* Be mobile responsive using Flex CSS

All on-line facilities must also be compliant with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

In addition, we require:

* Customisable Administration user levels and corresponding privileges for management of the system.
* An events section to promote our webinars and events.
* A meet the team page.
* A news/article/blog page with structured content creation.
* A case studies page with structured content creation.
* A newsletter page/designer with the ability to send to members through the membership portal.
* An opportunities page populated from the members posts of job vacancies, tender opportunities etc.
* A Closed Membership portal with the following features;
  + Customisable member access levels [eg Std Member, Industry Expert, Pro Member, Paid User] with corresponding access to selectable membership portal sections.
  + The ability for each member to create a bio/profile with a template to capture information, images and contact details.
  + The ability for the members bio/profile page to be pre-filled directly from our SuiteCRM CRM package via their API. A dummy copy of our database will be provided to the successful contractor for development purposes.
  + Password Management by Admin and members
  + The ability to add videos, pdf`s, documents etc to any page, article or newsletter within the site.
  + The ability for a member to post a job vacancy, tender opportunity and other requests that will be shown in the public facing ‘Opportunities Page`
  + An internal messaging service allowing members to send messages to each other. The member would be emailed automatically by the system to notify of a new message in their inbox
  + The ability to design polls and surveys that can be sent internally to all members.
  + Member search box using information from member bios/profiles.
  + The ability for a moderator to approve all modifications before publishing
* Although initially membership of I-Construct will be free, we require the ability in the future to manage and take payments for paid membership or other services. This should be priced as an additional module.
* Training for appropriate team members and online user manual
* RSS Feed connection to display news stories from industry relevant sources.
* Webforms that can be created by the team as required.
* Social media link-ins.

The website will need to be developed in two phases, given the tight timescale we are working to for the overall project formal launch.

Phase 1 – Creation of Launch CMS website – Launched end October 2020. The Launch Website will be a fully functioning live website including the pages, sections and requirements as detailed in Part Two of the RFQ section *without* the Members Portal or the SuiteCRM integration. The website will be ready for Haven Gateway Partnership/ I Construct staff to start populating. This will be Live by the 31st October 2020

Phase 2 – The creation and integration into the launch website of the Members Portal and the SuiteCRM API integration. This will be Live by the 31st January 2021

* The following websites can be used as a cue for the layout, styling and functionality;
  + Cambridge Wireless - <https://www.cambridgewireless.co.uk>
  + Construction Line - <https://www.constructionline.co.uk>
  + Build Offsite - <https://www.buildoffsite.com>
  + Supply Chain Sustainability School - <https://www.supplychainschool.co.uk>
  + UK5G Innovation Network to add to the examples - <https://uk5g.org>

1. **Project Management**

Day to day project management will be carried out by the HGP Communications and Marketing Manager and all decisions will be signed off by the HGP Management Team.