

# Expression of interest

# Title: Apprentice Experience Survey

**Project reference: 2019/026**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 11.30AM, 21 October 2019**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to deliver a survey to validate the findings from a smaller scale qualitative project on apprenticeship experience.

Research is needed to explore what apprentices consider most important for successful completion and what drives their satisfaction. We are looking for a contractor to collect primary research data for us by way of a survey. The Department will be responsible for the design and analysis of the survey, although some input on the questionnaire from the contractor may be appropriate.

We anticipate the project will last no longer than 6 months.

## Background

There have been significant reforms in apprenticeship policy in recent years that may be changing apprentice experience. These include: the Apprenticeship Levy, a minimum 20% OTJT requirement, the removal of exemption for the 12-month minimum apprenticeship requirement, as well as the move to apprenticeship standards.

The Department wants the apprenticeship programme to work for individual apprentices, meeting their aspirations and needs. The Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey (see 2017 published [Learner Report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-evaluation-2017-learners-survey)) and FE Choices (see 2018-19 [Learner Survey](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fe-choices-learner-satisfaction-survey-2018-to-2019)) both capture satisfaction of apprentices with their apprenticeship, including some individual components of apprenticeship (e.g., training quality). However, neither survey captures much about the detailed experiences of apprentices. The Department wants to ensure that our current data sources are valid in their measures in satisfaction.

Qualitative research is currently being undertaken through an internal Discovery project which has asked apprentices what they consider most important for successful completion and what drives their satisfaction. Emerging themes from this research point to apprentice concerns around the quality of job roles, line manager understanding of apprenticeship, how to complain about poor training quality, and responsiveness from training providers more generally. It is important to ensure that policy and operational decisions are based on evidence that can be considered representative of the apprenticeship programme, especially given the diverse characteristics of apprentices. We therefore seek to undertake research that can validate the findings from the Discovery project and ensure the findings are representative of apprentices.

## Research aims

The purpose of this research is to build on the Discovery project undertaken to assess on-programme apprentice satisfaction, and to assess whether the insights drawn from this work are valid for the apprenticeship population at large, which we know to be a diverse group. Among other things, this will help the Department assess whether the existing questions in the Apprenticeship Evaluation are fit for purpose.

The aim of this research is to consider the following two issues:

* What do on-programme apprentices consider most important for successful completion and what drives apprentice satisfaction?
* How does on-programme apprentice employment experience compare to new best practice metrics around ‘good work’?

## Methodology

The Department has the following suggestion for how this work can be carried out, but we do invite potential bidders to suggest an alternative methodology if they believe this can better address the research questions outlined above. However, bidders should recognise that the Department are only seeking to procure the data collection element (including sampling and weighting) of this project.

**Note for potential bidders:- Under GDPR requirements, bidders who will require access to personal data held by the Department will be required to submit up-to-date DBS forms for all individuals who will have access to the data once the contract is signed.**

The Department proposes that the contractor conducts telephone surveys with approximately 500 apprentices. The survey will find out about apprentices’ views on satisfaction and what factors influence successful completion, and will test emerging findings from a smaller qualitative project. The Department will design the survey questionnaire, although some involvement from the contractor is expected to ensure the design is suited for their survey software prior to launch.

#### Sampling

The Department’s preferred approach is to recontact AEvS 2018/19 learner survey respondents who consented to being recontacted for any related research – giving us a pool of around 1,000 apprentices on Standards from which to sample. The Department would prefer to sample from those on Standards as future apprentices will no longer be on Frameworks.

In order to attain sufficient sample for smaller groups of interest, it is likely that the sample will need to be topped up with data directly from the ILR.

### Project

The Department envisages the project will run in three stages:

**Finalising research tools and securing contractor**

*(November-December 2019)*

In this stage, the Department will finalise the survey questionnaire internally with some input from the contractor to ensure the format will work for their survey software, as well as some piloting/testing of the questionnaire. The Department will first design the survey during the procurement stage, and then seek contractor input after the project begins.

**Fieldwork**

*Telephone survey with apprentices (January-February 2020)*

The Department propose 15-20 minute long telephone surveys with approximately 500 apprentices with a set number of calls before sample is discarded. The survey will find out about apprentices’ views on satisfaction and what factors influence successful completion, and will test emerging findings from a smaller qualitative project.

This will be the main stage of contractor involvement in the project.

**Analysis**

*(March 2020 onwards)*

Following successful completion of the data collection, the contractor will ensure the data is weighted, cleaned and QA’d before sending to the research team in the Department. The Department will subsequently analyse the data and disseminate the findings of the research.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 11.30AM, 21 October 2019
* Invitations for ITT – WC 28 October
* Deadline for ITT – WC 18 November
* Contract awarded – WC 25 November
* Inception meeting – WC 2 December
* Work begins – WC 9 December
* Fieldwork – January-February 2020
* Transfer final SPSS data files to Department – WC 16 March

The project needs to be completed by the end of March 2020. There is no flexibility to push the final deadline beyond this point.

## Budget

The budget for this project, including expenses and any respondent incentive, is £25,000 (**including** VAT).

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed on the following criteria:

- **Survey methodology**:- This covers an assessment of the bidder’s sampling methodology and fieldwork approach (including an approach to maximising response rates, and contingencies if response rates are lower than expected, and if a telephone survey is suggested, the number of call-backs). (30%)

- **Relevant experience**:- This covers an assessment of the bidder’s expertise and experience in relation to conducting data collection (surveys) of this scale. The moderation panel will be keen to see evidence of experience of similar data collection work, including evidence of a track record of securing good response rates and sampling approaches taken to capture smaller subgroups. (40%)

- **Ability to undertake the work**:- This includes an assessment of evidence of the bidder’s ability to work to tight timescales and the bidder’s proposed team structure with responsibilities, risk register, and outline of data security approach. The moderation panel will be keen to see evidence that bidders have resource and capacity to deliver this work in January and February, and that they are able to complete the project before the end of March 2020. (30%)

| **Closing date for EOIs: 11.30AM, 21 October 2019**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**Lee.Slater@education.gov.uk**](mailto:Lee.Slater@education.gov.uk) |
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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 & Conditions, copy available attached to the Contracts Finder listing. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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