

Invitation to Tender – Digital Tools for Access to Finance

Client: Oxford Innovation Services – Financial Readiness Project (Access to Finance)

Date: 23rd November 2020

1. Introduction, background and business context

Oxford Innovation Services (OIS) is the UK's leading specialist business support company. We work with businesses at all stages of development to maximise their growth potential, benefiting both the enterprise and its people through uniquely tailored programmes.

OIS has been awarded a three-year extension to our project to deliver financial readiness support in Cornwall & Isles of Scilly.

The Access to Finance project (A2F) is financed by the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), part of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) portfolio 2015 to 2020. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the managing authority for the fund, which was established by the European Commission to help improve the competitiveness of SMEs by increasing their capacity and capability and promoting entrepreneurship to strengthen the pipeline of high growth businesses across England.

A2F supports enterprises throughout Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The extension to the original contract period will run from January 2020 – December 2022. This is a flagship business support project for the region and continues to attract significant attention from all stakeholders.

A2F's team of highly experienced Business Finance Specialists work with eligible* businesses seeking to achieve growth and thus drive forward economic success. In addition to the 500+ businesses signed up to the Project, support will be delivered to a further 550 businesses through workshops, masterclasses and 1:1 mentoring in the development of compelling funding applications and raises. The source of these funds will be traditional debt, grant, angels and VCs plus emerging sources including the Crowd.

**Please see Annexe 2 for an overview of ERDF eligibility.*

We are also able to provide a limited amount of support in the form of grants including:

- Due diligence work related to funding raises
- Video and marketing related to crowdfunding
- The recruitment of senior finance personnel
- The appointment of NEDs

An ability to innovate underpins A2F's blend of mentoring, giving clients access to a broad range of practical expertise and knowledge. Our Finance Specialists have all held senior commercial positions and bring first-hand experience of the challenges of raising investment capital. This approach and experience add real value to the beneficiaries of A2F.



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



Our approach ensures we embed learning at an individual level, which brings sustainable and enduring results for the client organisation. We consistently deliver strong results for all stakeholders – individuals, client businesses, funders and partners.

2. Organisational structure

Oxford Innovation is part of the SQW Group which comprises:

- **Oxford Innovation Services** (the focus for this brief)
- Oxford Innovation (providing managed Innovation Centres and office space)
- SQW Consulting (providing public policy consultancy services)

Please see the websites at:

<http://oxfordinnovationservices.co.uk/>

<https://a2fcornwall.co.uk/> - the project relating to this tender

<http://www.oxin.co.uk/>

<https://www.sqw.co.uk/>

3. Key objectives of this brief

To obtain competitive tender proposals from suitably qualified providers for the provision of a video-based peer group learning platform as well as its online content.

- Development, installation, hosting and operational support of virtual classroom software and underlying operating system.
- Creation and production of video and digital course content to then be delivered on the platform, developed from the Project's existing 'Finance for Start Ups' course material
- In addition to a virtual classroom, the platform should be capable of hosting our bespoke, Excel based, forecasting toolkit and outputting finished financial plans in pdf (or similar) format.
- This is the first of what are anticipated to be a collection of online courses related to the key themes of the Access to Finance Project so the platform must have scalability.

More detail on the requirements can be found in the Appendix 1 and 2; Software Specification and Course Content.

4. Target audience

The target audience is wide-ranging and includes current and new clients in the following categories:

- Businesses – SMEs, pre-starts, start-ups and sole traders in Cornwall and IoS
- Not for Profit / Charities in Cornwall and IoS

A2F has the potential to benefit clients when they display a desire to raise finance to fund a new venture, grow or sustain business activities.

The **A2F programme** is targeted to provide a minimum of 1,100 Cornwall & IoS SMEs with a structured, tailored programme delivered by Business Finance Specialists. A client's experience of the programme will vary depending on their individual needs and funding requirements.

Part of this work involves helping Start Up businesses understand financial forecasting so that they are able to create budgets and cashflow forecasts through various group workshops/sessions. These sessions are designed to help support applications for funding but also to provide beneficiaries with an enhanced understanding of the key financial metrics of their business.

Summary of required key features

5. Deliverables required

A Specification is provided in Appendix 1. The supplier will be expected to develop the application in line with the Specification document. However alternative approaches and recommendations are welcome from suppliers to achieve the desired objectives, functionality and design in line with best industry practice.

- OIS – Key stakeholders within OIS and potential third parties will work with the successful supplier and provide the associated content, branding and logos for different areas of the application. The system and associated reports will need to be co-branded to comply with the latest ERDF branding and publicity requirements (*logos to be provided by OIS, as well as any branding specific to the programme and sector-targeted branding*).
- The supplier will be expected to develop the application to the required specification and provide any additional recommendations to achieve a best in practise, user-friendly tool which offers an intuitive and responsive system and user-experience. The Specification provides an outline of the requirements and features we would seek to achieve from the system – however the supplier should provide recommendations to maximise the flexibility and functionality of the system and work closely with OIS during the scoping / development to raise any queries or suggest areas of improvement as required.
- The supplier will be expected to provide an intuitive software design for the system back-office administration / operator functions as well as the customer-facing user-interface to achieve a best in practise, user-friendly and responsive system and user-experience.



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



- The supplier will be expected to modify the Project's current course material (delivered face 2 face or via live stream) in addition to creating new content required in order for the group sessions to be delivered over the digital platform
- As noted in the Specification, all IP rights including bespoke developed software funded through this contract, content, data and design will be owned by Oxford Innovation Services.

Timeline for development and Project Management

A key requirement of this contract is development and implementation of the platform as soon as possible within 8 - 10 weeks of contract award, including scoping, development, acceptance testing, training, and handover. Ideally, we would like the system to be developed and in-use for the project sooner than this timescale where possible to meet the developing needs of our clients on the programme - capacity to meet or exceed timescales will be scored accordingly (as noted under Section 8 Criteria).

The supplier will be expected to provide a proposed timeline and project management plan to show key milestones and how they will develop and implement the tool within the desired timescales, including proposed key dates / points where OIS stakeholder input will be required.

Budget

Development - up to a maximum of £30,000 (ex. VAT)

- Development and implementation of the platform as per the Specification (and any agreed recommendations)
- Development of
- Additional development support and minor change requests after initial acceptance testing/go-live

Hosting and Operational Support of the software and underlying platform - Annual Budget up to a maximum of £7,500 (ex. VAT)

- Hosting of the application
- Operational support of the application and underlying platform

We seek responses to this tender from suitably qualified organisations who have the current capability to deliver the essential elements required of this platform.

WE WILL NOT CONSIDER BIDS FROM COMPANIES SEEKING TO BUILD A NEW PLATFORM TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS TENDER OR FROM ORGANISATIONS WITH PRODUCTS UNDER DEVELOPMENT.

Contract Duration

The contract will be until 31st December 2022, with the possibility of extension thereafter at OIS' sole discretion (up to 2 years' extension thereafter).

6. Account management and review process

The supplier relationship will be managed by key members of the OIS Access to Finance project.

Key personnel: Dedicated supplier point(s) of contact will be required to oversee and co-ordinate the development, new requirements and a dedicated account manager with overall responsibility for any issues.

Support and Maintenance

The supplier will also be expected to provide a team of skilled technical support staff to handle support and maintenance, available by e-mail, phone and web portal during core hours (to be agreed – likely between the hours of 8am – 6pm).

The supplier should ideally provide a web based portal allowing Oxford Innovation to log support requests and view Incident progress. All support requests communicated by any means must be logged in the system. This system must provide a prioritisation mechanism with the facility to escalate certain incidents.

KPIs will be set during the contract with the successful supplier to monitor ongoing performance of the contract.

The Supplier should provide their proposal for the SLA and will be required to meet all agreed KPIs, SLAs and milestones set during the contract as a condition of the contract. Support and Maintenance agreement will need to include response and resolution times according to impact and urgency of the issue. The below categorisation and target times are suggested to ensure reasonable response and resolution targets to issues. The supplier may propose alternative escalation / categorisation of issues and SLA. The proposed SLA's will be scored according to their commitment to providing a responsive support and maintenance service to ensure we maintain an optimum level of service for our clients.

Classification of incidents will be based on reported impact and urgency where the impact reflects the number of customers affected and urgency reflects the component / functionality of the service – e.g. client-facing issues would be urgent. OIS reserves the right to define and determine and escalate the relevant category of fault as required.

		Impact		
		High	Medium	Low
Urgency	High	P1	P2	P3
	Medium	P2	P3	P4
	Low	P3	P4	P4

The target resolve times for incidents are as follows:

Incident Priority	Target time to resolve (hours)
P1	4
P2	8

P3	48
P4	120

An escalation matrix should also be agreed and shared with Oxford Innovation Services; the escalation matrix will be used to notify Oxford Innovation Services of P1 and P2 faults that are not resolved within the agreed target time.

Event and Incident Management

Monitoring tools should be used to ensure that service affecting events are identified, logged and categorised as incidents within 20 minutes.

All incidents should be managed according to their priority and SLA. If a P1 or P2 incident requires the intervention of third party organisations, tickets should be raised directly with the third party with minimal delay.

Support and Maintenance should also include any necessary upgrades to the application and operating system to ensure the security of the system and compatibility with new versions of software and web-browsers is maintained, including any patching and maintenance of third party and developed software required for the platform to operate on current supported versions of software.

7. How to respond to this brief

Please indicate your interest in the tender by e-mailing the below contact to register your interest and ensure you receive a copy of any additional questions and answers to date.

Please complete the Supplier Questionnaire and provide a Tender Proposal as requested in Annex 1.

Any clarifications must be sent in writing by e-mail to the below contact.

Access to Finance contact details

Email: bnorton@oxin.co.uk

Ben Norton, Project Operations Manager

Address: Unit 1a (G) Gateway Business Centre, Barncoose Gateway Park, Redruth, TR15 3RQ

Telephone: 01872 300386

Suppliers must confirm their expression of interest in this tender by e-mailing the above contact to ensure you receive any further information and clarifications.

8. Evaluation process

- In response to this Invitation to Tender document, and Appendix 1 and 2, please complete the Supplier Questionnaire and provide a Tender Proposal as requested in Annex 1.
- Tender submissions will be scored against the criteria on the next page.

Due to the nature of the procurement, OIS may undertake detailed clarifications with tenderers at any point of the tender process to ensure the proposal meets requirements.

Tenders will be evaluated according to the following assessment criteria:

Scoring

Comment	Judgement	Marks available
Meets the requirements fully	Excellent	10
Meets the requirements substantially but not completely	Good	7-9
Meets half or more of the requirements but not all.	Satisfactory	5-6
Meets some of the requirements but fails to meet more than half	Unsatisfactory	3-4
Substantially fails to meet the requirements but meets some or meets some in part	Poor	1-2
Does not meet the requirements at all	Failed	0

Criteria & Weightings	Score – 1 - 10	Category Total
Section A		
Supplier Questionnaire: For Information, with the exception of the following Pass / Fail questions: Q4) Supplier Financial check Q7) Insurance – Confirmation of Required Insurance Q9) Acceptance of OIS Terms and Conditions	N/A – Pass / Fail	Pass / Fail
Section B		
Experience, Staff Resources and Project Management: 25% - Do they have experience of successfully managing similar projects / developments? - Have they provided similar, relevant, detailed examples? Are suitable references available*?		



<i>(OIS reserves the right to contact any references and request further clarifying information regarding / adjust scoring in the event of negative feedback)</i> • Do they have adequate resources to meet current and ongoing requirements? • Are staff suitable experienced and qualified? • Do they demonstrate good communication and relationship management skills? • Has the supplier provided a clear, project management plan and approach? Do they have the capacity to meet or exceed the required timescales?		
Development, Implementation and Handover Approach: 30% • Does the proposal meet all specified requirements, objectives and deliverables? • Does the supplier demonstrate ability to meet the required roles, including any additional recommendations to achieve desired functionality and objectives? • Do they provide suitable System Hardening, Acceptance Testing, Documentation and Training and warranties? • IPR ownership and ability to support all future enhancements – <i>Pass / Fail and then Scored</i>		
Ongoing Support, Maintenance and Hosting: 15% • Does the Support and Maintenance agreement, including service desk, SLAs and support hours, meet requirements? • Are there good ITIL processes in place to address service operational requirements? • Can the supplier meet the RPO and RTO and DR objectives?		



Are their adequate processes in place for Capacity Management, Change and Release Management, Patching and Hosting?		
Pricing 30% *Scoring will be based on total price for the contract in comparison to other tendered prices. Price scoring will be based on standard relative methodology, whereby the lowest, commercially viable, priced bid is divided by the score of the bid being evaluated, multiplied by the maximum weighting (30%)	N/A – see notes*	
Total		

9. Timing and selection process

The schedule below outlines key timings.

Action	Date
Brief published	23 rd November 2020
Deadline for raising queries	13:00hrs 1st December
Deadline for clarifications	13:00hrs 3rd December
Deadline for response to brief	18:00hrs 7 th December 2020
Notification of successful tenders	10 th December 2020
Delivery	Launch – March 2021

10. Additional information

- Annexes:
 - 1 - Supplier Questionnaire and Request for Proposal
 - 2 - ERDF Eligibility
- Appendix 1 - Software specification
- Appendix 2 – Course content
- Appendix 3 - OIS Terms and Conditions