

**Advice Skills Academy**

**Procurement Framework**

**1 Background**

The Advice Skills Academy (ASA) is a European Social Fund (ESF) funded project, funded from October 2016 to September 2019 (subject to change control approval), which will develop a co-ordinated approach to identifying learning and development needs of staff within local Citizens Advice services in the Liverpool City Region (LCR). The project will: develop a calendar of training opportunities to meet the needs of staff, including internal Citizens Advice delivery, and externally procured delivery; identify other learning and development opportunities, including e-learning, coaching and mentoring; and support the development of learning organisations that are responsive to the needs of staff, volunteers, and their learning, development and progression goals.

The project has been developed to:

* Address higher level skills shortages in specialist advice services
* Provide training and support for people within the workforce to improve skills, knowledge, progression and productivity
* Provide a training and support route for disadvantaged groups seeking to access further job opportunities in the sector
* Improve management, leadership and progression capacity
* Promote equality by improving the progressions prospects of women within the workforce

The project is being delivered as a partnership between Citizens Advice local offices across the Liverpool City Region. Participating partners are:

* Citizens Advice East Liverpool
* Citizens Advice Halton
* Citizens Advice Knowsley
* Citizens Advice North Liverpool
* Citizens Advice St Helens
* Citizens Advice Sefton
* Citizens Advice South Liverpool

The accountable body for the ASA project is the Women’s Organisation, who will be the procuring organisation for the goods and services to be procured for the ASA project delivery. The project partner organisations will be leading on the establishment of a procurement framework that ensures that suppliers have the relevant technical expertise to deliver the goods or services required. As the focus of the ASA project is learning and development, the nature of the contracts are likely to be around learning and training delivery (in the main), and this framework sets out how the ASA project will establish a Preferred Suppliers List, in order to identify suitable suppliers to advertise contract opportunities to (within EU regulations on procurement processes).

The procurement processes for the ASA project have been designed to ensure that the processes are transparent, and applied in a manner that ensures equal treatment, and non-discrimination.

**2 Preferred Suppliers**

The ASA project will establish a list of appropriate preferred suppliers as approved suppliers in advance of a ‘call off’ for goods and/or services required up to a total budget value of £30,200. Those suppliers who have been assessed and approved at this stage, will then be informed of ‘call off’ opportunities as they arise.

The Preferred Suppliers list will comprise of not less than two approved suppliers, but is likely to contain more.

Suppliers being entered onto the Preferred Suppliers List are not guaranteed the awarding of a contract for delivery of goods or services.

**3 Application to Preferred Suppliers List**

In order to be considered for the delivery of goods or services that are being procured for the ASA project, organisations will need to complete a Preferred Suppliers List (PSL) application. The application will comprise information on the supplier, including areas such as:

* Legal status
* Financial viability
* Business continuity (or what happens in the event that a supplier can’t deliver something they were contracted to deliver)
* Insurance – public liability and employers liability
* Licences and registration (if applicable)
* Legal and any previous disqualification
* Health and safety
* Equal opportunities
* Confidentiality and Data Protection

The submitted PSL applications will be assessed against set criteria, and those who are successful in meeting the criteria will be added to the Preferred Supplier List. Any applications received late, or not meeting the minimum requirements will, by default, be rejected at this point, with no right of appeal.

Following the establishment of the first version of the PSL, the project will provide at least one additional opportunity to apply to the PSL likely to be early summer 2018. At that point organisations that were unsuccessful in a previous round, will be able to reapply, but must still meet the set criteria.

At the second or subsequent application points, all suppliers who are on the PSL will have their performance and PSL scores reviewed based on the quality of quotes and their performance delivering any goods or services. Where we consider suppliers have consistently been unable, or unwilling, to meet our requirements over the course of the year we will remove suppliers from the PSL. Suppliers being removed from the PSL will be notified in writing and will have one week to appeal against the decision.

Organisations will normally have 2-3 weeks to complete and submit their PSL application. The decision making process will take approximately 2 weeks. All organisations who have submitted an application will be informed of the decision within no more than 4 weeks following the closing date for submission of their completed application.

**4 ‘Call off’ processes**

ASA will identify a range of goods and services to be delivered, and, where appropriate, will provide a combined contract opportunity for goods or services that are similar, and (where expenditure thresholds do not exceed procurement limits set under EU legislation), will publicise a ‘call off’ of delivery opportunities amongst approved suppliers who are on the PSL only. For contracts that exceed the procurement limits (currently £10,000) the tendering opportunity will also be publicised on Contracts Finder, and suppliers that are not on the Preferred Suppliers List will also be able to submit a tender for such a contract.

During the ‘call off’ process preferred suppliers will have 2 weeks to complete a tender application responding to the detail of the delivery requirements.

ASA will review and score tenders based on set criteria, which will be publicised at the start of the ‘call off’ stage. Any bids received late, or not meeting the minimum requirements will, by default, be rejected at this point, with no right of appeal.

For suppliers who have met the minimum requirements and submitted a tender within the deadline, but are unsuccessful at reaching required criteria level at the ‘call off’ stage, there will be no right of appeal against decisions made.

Suppliers will be informed of decisions at the tendering stage within 2 weeks of the closing date for tenders.

**7 Award of contract**

There shall be no instruction given to any supplier to deliver goods or services until a delivery contract has been awarded. The award of a contract to deliver goods or services shall contain details of:

* The duration / timescales of the contract
* The specific deliverables
* Details regarding copyright, ownership, use of the ASA project, the ESF, and the delivery agent logos
* Failure to deliver – and whether there will be any financial or other penalties
* Payment terms and conditions
* Dispute resolution

**6 Compliance with reporting requirements**

As a project funded by European Social Investment Funds, ASA require appointed delivery agents to comply with the records and audit requirements of the European Social Fund (ESF). In the main, these are:

* That all participants or beneficiaries must be informed of the support of ESF funds for the activity
* The ESF logo must be displayed on all registration or attendance sheets (and ASA will supply these sheets) – these must be completed and signed by all participants, as well as a representative of the delivery agency
* Where training delivery forms part of the services being delivered, the delivery agent must share with the ASA project team, the learning objectives, and a summary of the contents of the session plan of the training to be delivered, for record keeping for ESF auditing purposes
* Where training delivery forms part of the services being delivered, the delivery agency must indicate to the ASA project team what level of training the learning and skills are for sessions e.g. Entry Level, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 etc., as outlined under International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels
* Delivery agents must comply with confidentiality and Data Protection requirements, and will not be able to use learner / participant contact details without their express permission in writing

**Appendix 1**

**Indicative Learning and Development opportunities**

The ASA project is likely to procure learning and development opportunities in the following areas (N.B this list is not exhaustive, and ‘call offs’ may relate to different subject areas than listed here):

* Advice principles and policy
* Advice skills (generic)
* Advice – welfare benefits
* Advice – debt and money management
* Advice – housing
* Advice – employment
* Advice – consumer
* Advice – immigration
* Advice – family
* Advice – health
* Advice – Law and court procedures
* Advice supervision
* Skills for non-advice roles (research and campaigning, financial capability, community engagement and wellbeing)
* Advocacy
* Marketing, publicity and promotion
* Delivering or co-ordinating learning, development and training (for staff or volunteers)
* Leadership and management (managing people, managing finances/resources, managing quality, managing services, managing self)
* Governance and Trustees (Roles and responsibilities, Charity Law)

**Appendix 2**

**Summary of timescales for Approved Supplier & Call Off processes**

The following timescales are indicative of the usual procurement processes, where contract opportunities are below the EU threshold for publication on Contracts Finder:

**Applications for approval for the Preferred Suppliers List**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Procurement Stage One – Preferred Suppliers List** | **Indicative timescale** |
| Step 1 | Application to PSL publication |  |
| Step 2 | Deadline for Applications | 2 – 3 weeks following publication |
| Step 3 | Assessment decision notification | Within 4 weeks of closing date |
| Step 4 | Creation of the PSL | Within 2 weeks of notification |

**‘Call off’ publication and tendering**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Procurement Stage Two – ‘Call off’ of contract opportunities** | **Indicative timescale** |
| Step 1 | Notification of ‘call off’ to Suppliers on PSL |  |
| Step 2 | Deadline for Tenders | 2 weeks following publication |
| Step 3 | Assessment decision notification | Within 2 weeks following the closing date for tenders |
| Step 4 | Awarding of contract | Within 3 weeks of notification, or as detailed in the tender documents |

Where contract opportunities exceed the EU threshold (currently £10,000), the contract opportunities will be publicised on Contracts Finder as well as Suppliers on the PSL being notified, and revised timescales will be published within the procurement publication.

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