**Essex County Council**

**RFQ Specification for Consultancy Services**

1. **Introduction and background**

Essex County Council (ECC) has published its Sector Growth Strategy, setting out the areas of the economy that ECC will focus on developing to bring more productive inclusive, and sustainable growth to the County over the next 20 years. These are:

* Construction (including green construction and retrofit)
* Clean energy
* Advanced manufacturing and engineering
* Digi-tech
* Life sciences (including med-tech and care-tech)

We need to build an ecosystem that supports the growth of businesses in these sectors so that the benefits are felt by local residents. Currently, Essex has a higher number of SME’s than the national average, but few of them scale up to become drivers of good jobs and increased prosperity for the region, adding to the contribution we make to the country’s wealth.

More women than ever are starting new businesses. Over 140,000 all-female founded companies were created last year, and this figure is growing by over a third each year. Although this shows progress, there is still much work to do to support our local female founders, especially within the targeted sectors shown above, many of which are seen as typically male dominated.

For small startups, there is a plethora of available support both locally and nationally, but the complexity of the system is a barrier to accessing it. The ecosystem in Essex currently includes support to early-stage businesses through programmes such as:

* Essex County Council’s [Backing Essex Business](https://backingessexbusiness.co.uk/), which provides free advice to local small to medium sized businesses as well as business finance options
* ECC’s [Ambitious Women in Essex](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/ambitious-women-in-essex/) programme which supports local women through their careers

Then there is also support for businesses to scale up and grow, but only once they reach a certain maturity:

* [Innovate UK Edge](https://www.innovateukedge.ukri.org/) which offers bespoke support for the growth and the scaling up of innovative businesses

The University of Essex’s [Angels@Essex](https://www.essex.ac.uk/business/knowledge-gateway/university-enterprise-zone/angels-at-essex) investment platform that aims to link angel investors with innovative businesses

1. **Requirements for proposal**

Essex County Council is therefore seeking quotations from bidders to deliver a development programme that identifies and engages local entrepreneurs and innovators and directly supports them to create a business that will go on to thrive. The programme should:

* Identify and engage potential business founders that fall into defined criteria set out below
* Support them to take their start up from idea / early stage to creation
* Support that startup to go on and access further support from the ecosystem, including pitching to accelerators and understand pathways to funding, including advice on writing bids for funding
* Advocate for Essex businesses as candidates for scale-up and accelerator programmes outside of Essex and to investors
* Ensure that at the end of the accelerator programme, the founders have a clear future pathway to success, either through longevity of their current business or understanding how they can follow the same pathway with a new idea
* Provide evaluation of the programme, reporting data on the impact on measures such as: Gross Value Added; Jobs created; Value of business sales; Products developed or launched; Support provided to businesses in Levelling Up areas.

Bidders should note that:

**50%** of the businesses taken through the programme **must** be from the 5 priority sectors set out above.

**50%** of the businesses taken through the programme **must** have a female founder.

**50%** of the business taken through the programme **must** have a founder aged between 16-30.

This programme will take place in a complex environment of other support programmes (as noted above), and bidders therefore **must** demonstrate how they will collaborate with the County Council and partners to build on the existing support.

There is an indicative budget of £60,000 available for this programme.

1. **Milestones**

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| **Milestones** | **Description** | **Required Outcome** | **Start**  **Date** | **End**  **Date** |
| **Milestone 1A** | Businesses signed up to programme (Cohort 1) | At least 15 signed up to programme |  |  |
| **Milestone 1B** | Business Creation Rate  (Cohort 1) | Target startup creation rate set in tender response met |  |  |
| **Milestone 1C** | Programme Evaluation  (Cohort 1) | Evidence of programme impact report to ECC |  |  |
| **Milestone 2A** | Businesses signed up to programme (Cohort 2) | At least 15 signed up to programme |  |  |
| **Milestone 2B** | Business Creation Rate  (Cohort 2) | Target startup creation rate set in tender response met |  |  |
| **Milestone 2C** | Programme Evaluation  (Cohort 2) | Evidence of programme impact report to ECC |  |  |

1. **Timescales**

Please refer to the RFQ Response document for all relevant timescales.