

Invitation to Tender: Agri-Food –Intelligence & Feasibility Project

1. Introduction

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council and local partners wish to undertake research into the Agri-food sector in Norfolk and Suffolk in order to provide greater understanding and evidence of areas of specialism, gaps or weak points, relationships and opportunities.

We will seek to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced consultant or consortium of consultants to work with us to undertake this research which will help us develop projects and programmes to grow and support our sector, and to help us to construct and present key messages to attract and retain inward investment.

2. Background

In 2017 Government published the National Industrial Strategy which contains five foundations of productivity (ideas, infrastructure, people, business environment and places) and four grand challenges (AI & Data Driven Economy, Ageing Population, Future of Mobility and Clean Growth).²

To support the 'Place' foundation, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were tasked with co-developing Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The draft Norfolk and Suffolk LIS, submitted to Government for agreement in 2019, builds on the Economic Strategy, looking in more detail at Norfolk and Suffolk's competitive advantages and develops a plan for how the LEP and partners will collectively cultivate these strengths.

A stronger evidence base on areas of competitive advantage is needed to underpin the delivery of the LIS and enable a targeted approach to investment. The Agri-food Sector Intelligence Project is a crucial element of building this evidence base, for what is a key sector, providing greater understanding of the region's sub-sector strengths and opportunities.

This project will underpin the delivery of two of the LIS key interventions:

- The multi-partner project to create a Food Innovation Centre in Norfolk, with an associated innovation support programme and the development of an agri-food cluster to bring businesses together to innovate and share expertise and ideas. This project will provide the initial evidence base.
- The development of a regional agri-food narrative across Norfolk and Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Lincolnshire. This project would support that objective providing key evidence and analysis to underpin the Norfolk and Suffolk element of the regional narrative and also sharpen our inward investment offer.

The need to support the agri-food sector has only been heightened by the Covid 19 crisis, which has seen huge opportunities for some businesses coping with an enormous increase in demand, significant challenges for others; some of whom have been able to adapt by finding new buyers, or new methods of supplying customers while other businesses, especially in the food service supply chain have really struggled. This volatility is likely to continue for some time, with the huge changes in trade and the funding of agriculture as a result of Brexit also

having a major impact across the sector. While businesses face many challenges as a result, this report should help the LEP, County Councils and partners to enable the sector to capitalise on –

- Opportunities from new food trends, for growers and processors
- Opportunities to develop new routes to market for local and specialist foods, especially capitalising on online sales, and considering new distribution and marketing models.
- The strengths already existing in the sector, so they can be better promoted, sharing of best practice can be enhanced, and connectivity between businesses can be improved
- Opportunities to develop new products or attract investment informed by the expertise in the region's outstanding food research organisations
- Opportunities to add more value to what we grow.

The LEP is working with all its partners, including County Councils and sector groups, on a Recovery Plan to support businesses out of the Covid 19 crisis, so the research and recommendations in this report will inform that Plan.

3. Objectives

The purpose of this project is to create a superior evidence base which builds on and expands existing work.

The project seeks to answer a number of questions which will help to inform our strategy and policy development as well as practical actions to enable economic resilience, recovery and where possible, growth. As much of the evidence collated to date has been quantitative in nature, the primary focus in the questions below is on creating a well articulated and evidenced narrative for the agri-food sector in Norfolk and Suffolk.

- Who are the key companies in the sector and why are they important? Develop a list of (at least) the top 200 by size/turnover and also innovation/diversification, based on a carefully considered methodology or approach which encapsulates our competitive strengths and potential areas of future competitive advantage through a narrated list of businesses with underpinning data and evidence.
- Where are the areas of specialisation in the research base and/or business base that differentiate us from competitors, and how do we evidence this?
- What are the key value chain opportunities to maximise connections between the research base and business base to add value and competitive advantage?
- Are there businesses commercialising research from within the region and what opportunities for further commercialisation exist in line with the businesses capabilities and supply chain?
- Who are the businesses developing niche products in line with current or future food trends and what food trends offer particular opportunity to Norfolk and Suffolk food businesses?
- What is the scope to develop a new (or revived) regional food offer (see 'Taste of the West' as an example), with a linked marketing and distribution system to support local food brands to develop their markets? This analysis should include a consideration of distribution and storage options.
- Briefly set out the key challenges facing the sector in the immediate future, and possible mitigating actions, linked to the research in the report.
- How can we most effectively engage with private sector businesses to develop our specialisation and value chain opportunities?

In order to deliver the project's aims, the appointed consultant will need to review a range of processes including value chain mapping, smart specialisation etc. and recommend a

robust, bespoke methodology which provides the required information and recommendations.

It is expected that that the research will have an element of desk based and an element of qualitative research: engaging with and interviewing key businesses in the sector and economic development specialists.

Some work on gathering data and evidence has already been undertaken and will be shared with the consultants. This includes the extensive dataset from the development of the Local Industrial Strategy and Economic Strategy for Norfolk and Suffolk, and sector knowledge across the LEP Executive team

The consultants will be expected to engage with, and present to the Agri-Food Industry Council, a strategic board of the LEP which represents the sector.

The consultants will be asked to review the work, understand the objectives of the project and assist in finalising the scope and mapping of the project.

The geographic scope is Norfolk and Suffolk benchmarked with the wider East Anglian area (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Lincolnshire), and other national comparators where appropriate.

4. What is Required

The New Anglia LEP and NCC and SCC are looking to appoint consultants to undertake the following:

- Detailed research methodology for high level analysis and in-depth research on focus areas making use of examples of best practice deployed elsewhere
Methodology must include rationale for:
 - Identifying the 200+ illustrated and narrated case studies to include in the project.
 - Addressing value chain geography outside of New Anglia LEP boundaries
 - Capturing specialism/niche areas not previously known and assessing these in the light of the objectives above.
 - Capturing key research and innovation specialisms with value chain potential
 - Collating an illustrated and narrated list of (at least) 200 key businesses – both major sector companies, and smaller niche organisations, or businesses with a unique, important or influential offer (or potential offer)
 - Collating case studies on regional branding, distribution and marketing models and carrying out an analysis of these leading to recommendations
- Project plan outlining the timescale and budget for each stage, plus milestones for any key decisions
- State mechanism for holding data collected (to be handed over with the final written report).
- Consultation plan for engaging with stakeholders, key businesses, local and regional academic institutions.
- Interim report and regular communication on findings to include evidence-based recommendations
- Summary slide pack using maps, graphs and illustrated case studies to evidence recommendations to support sector resilience, rejuvenation and growth .
- Final report of findings with action plan - to include visual mapping of data, and publication quality illustrated case studies for the 200 named businesses (with key contact information) and recommendations for next steps to capitalise on the opportunities identified

- Methodology or framework plus guidance to enable the local partners to update the evidence regularly. We will provide a template for the consultants to complete which will enable us to import the details of the 200 companies plus stakeholders consulted in our CRM database.
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5. Budget

This research project is co-commissioned by New Anglia LEP, NCC and SCC.

There is a budget of up to £30,000, (including VAT) for completion of this project. Milestones linked to deliverables of the various stages of work will act as payment trigger points. These will be agreed at the inception meeting.

6. Project Management and Monitoring

The project will be managed by New Anglia LEP with a project team made up of officers from Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. For the duration of the tender, the preferred consultants will be required to work with and liaise with members of the Project Team.

Day to day management of the contact will be provided by New Anglia LEP. It is expected that the consultants will take part in weekly progress meetings which can be via teleconference and/or video conference and attend steering group and stakeholder meetings to be agreed.

Invoices submitted will require a breakdown of day input per person.

7. Timescales and milestones

- Proposals should be with **Tuesday 7th July by 3pm 2020**
- Shortlisting and interview selection **w/b 13th July 2020**
- Consultant interviews **w/b 20th July 2020**
- Interim report on findings and recommendations produced by **Friday 14th August 2020**
- Final report and slide pack **by 30th Sept 2020**

8. Tender process

Tenders must address all the requirements and be in the format requested below. Tenders not in this format will not be considered.

Applicants are requested to provide core information in summary form with detail in appendices. The following must be supplied:

- Organisation identity including name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, company registration number, VAT registration number and website address (if applicable)
- Details of the main point of contact within the organisation for this tender
- Name, address, telephone number and e-mail address of any third parties involved in this tender
- A brief outline of the methodology and a list of data sets and indicators that will be used where relevant for each element
- Assumptions on the nature and volume of direct contact with businesses, and the nature and number of proposed stakeholder engagements (including method –

- face to face, telephone etc), including likely availability for meetings in the project timescale
- Examples of similar commissions previously undertaken and examples of outputs produced
- Examples of partnership working in areas with complex political arrangements
- A list of key personnel to be deployed on the project and details of their previous relevant experience, along with details of the day inputs by level against each element
- References of three organisations that you have undertaken this type of work for in the last three years.

Applicants will be shortlisted based on their initial tender submissions, with shortlisted applicants being invited to pitch their proposals to a panel. Submissions will be assessed on their ability to deliver:

- Value for money – weighting 30%
- Quality – weighting 70%, made up of:
 - Be in a position to start work immediately upon appointment and complete the work as outlined in the timescales and milestones listed above – weighting 15%
 - Have previous experience of developing and delivering projects of a similar nature, with evidence of the success of these projects – weighting 15%
 - Clearly demonstrate that they can meet all the specifications and requirements outlined in this tender document and show an innovative approach to evidence and data analysis – weighting - 20%
 - Demonstrate the ability to field a team of relevant expertise, deployed appropriately and in line with the work programme – weighting 10%
 - Demonstrate the ability and experience of working with local partners within Norfolk and Suffolk. – weighting 10%

Each element will be scored using a model of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor / does not meet criteria and 5 is outstanding / exceeds the criteria.

Short-listed companies will be invited by email to present their ideas to the tender panel in via video conference.

Consortium bids are eligible; however, a nominated lead will be required, and clear divisions of roles and responsibilities will need to be provided.

9. How to apply

Tenders must be completed in accordance with the format specified above. Tenders which are incomplete will not be evaluated.

Tenders should be submitted in Word or PDF format and should not exceed 10 pages no later than 3pm on **Tuesday 7th July 2020** to the email address below. Tenders delivered after this time will not be considered.

Main contact

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