

# Expression of interest

# Title: National Colleges Process Evaluation

**Project reference: 2018063**

**Deadline for expressions of interest:** **3pm Monday 19th November 2018**

## Summary

1. The Government has awarded around £80m to establish four employer-led National Colleges (Creative and Cultural, Digital Skills, Nuclear, and High Speed Rail). Labour market changes are driving the need for flexible means by which the workforce can gain and retrain in higher technical skills. These place National Colleges central to the Government’s aim to improve the quality of qualifications and encourage more students to study for higher technical courses. Expressions of interest are sought to conduct a process evaluation to explore the process of policy implementation and delivery of National College policy to date, and identify factors that have helped or hindered its effectiveness.

## Background

1. National Colleges are envisioned to deliver classroom-based and apprenticeship training at Levels 4-6 with learners aged 19+ drawn from schools, University Technology Colleges (UTC) and FE colleges. They are pivotal to expanding classroom-based higher technical education to meet the shortfall of higher technical skills in key sectors.
2. Government has awarded around £80m to establish four multi-site employer-led National Colleges across England. The expected benefits are higher learner productivity resulting from high quality teaching that meets employer needs, delivery of critical infrastructure projects and better sectoral economic performance and productivity. Throughout this, it is hoped that the status of higher technical education will also be raised.
3. National Colleges have now reached a pivotal milestone in their delivery timeline. Each of the four colleges have officially opened. There are currently around 1064 students enrolled at the colleges, and this is projected to grow to ~21,000 by 2020/21[[1]](#footnote-1). This represents a key milestone in the initial phase of delivery and provides an opportunity to evaluate the programme activities to date.

## Evaluation aims

1. The Department is in regular contact with the Chairs and Boards of the National Colleges who provide regular updates on general progress and college finances. However, this does not provide an objective and coherent picture of the underlying factors, barriers and enablers that have been driving activities and processes across the programme as a whole.
2. A comprehensive evaluation strategy has been developed for the National College (NC) programme, comprising three key parts: Process Evaluation, Data Monitoring; and, Long-term Outcomes. The data monitoring and long-term outcomes strands are being developed and delivered in house by DfE analysts.
3. **The aim of this project is to conduct the process evaluation strand, to investigate:**
* The process of policy implementation and delivery to date from the perspective of key stakeholders;
* Identify factors that have helped or hindered its effectiveness;

Identify lessons that can be learnt about how delivery could have been refined or improved.

1. Through this research we are seeking to develop a detailed and objective understanding of how National Colleges have been implemented in practice, from the perspective of the key stakeholder groups involved in its development and delivery. The process evaluation should explore to what extent policy roll out has gone well or not and what this might mean for National Colleges delivering the additional benefits outlined in paragraph 3. As such, the process evaluation should identify any lessons for National Colleges and for potential wider application in the roll out of similar, specialist and employer-led [Institutes of Technology](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/institutes-of-technology-competition) (IoTs) from Spring 2019.

## Methodology

9. **Potential contractors are asked to consider and propose methodologies, approaches to sampling and methods they believe would be suitable for this project.** We expect that a staged approach using mixed methods could be the best way to gather data from a range of key stakeholders that were involved in the design and implementation of this policy including, but not limited to: Government (DfE) officials; National College staff and learners; and employers.

1. The approach proposed should facilitate an in-depth investigation of how the policy is working in practice from a range of perspectives. This should provide essential micro-level evidence about how the policy has been implemented in different contexts across the four colleges, which will provide valuable evidence to support and contextualise the monitoring of key indicators. The methodology should also enable the identification of lessons that can be applied in the roll out of IoTs.

## Timing

1. Potential contractors are invited to suggest an appropriate timeline for the work, providing it meets the following key milestones:
* Deadline for EOIs - 3pm Monday 19th November 2018
* Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued - Friday 23rd November 2018
* Deadline for ITT submission - 12pm Friday 14th December 2018
* Potential Clarification Interviews, if required (to be held in London) - Monday 7th January 2019
* Inception Meeting (to be held in London) - Wednesday 16th January 2019
* Interim Findings - W/C 25th March 2019
* Final (publishable) Report - Week Ending Friday 14th June 2019

## Assessment criteria

1. Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria which are equally weighted at this stage:
* Demonstrates relevant methodological knowledge: understanding and experience delivering process evaluations and a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.
* Demonstrates a clear knowledge and understanding of the aims and objectives of the project and of why and how these aims and objectives respond to the current policy context.
* Project management skills and ability to deliver to timescales

| **Closing date for EOIs:** **3pm Monday 19th November 2018****Send your EOI form to:** **earl.kehoe@education.gov.uk** |
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## How to submit an expression 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 and Conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. Figure based on original college business plans, which is likely to be lower once revised business plans have been received from the colleges. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)