**Essex County Council**

**RFQ Specification for developing ‘The South Essex Economic Growth plan for Action’ to boost growth and productivity and achieve South Essex’ full economic potential.**

1. **Introduction and background**

Essex County Council is procuring this consultancy contract on behalf of the Joint Committee of South Essex Councils.

The councils of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County have formed South Essex Councils (SEC).

Through SEC they are working to deliver improved prosperity and wellbeing in the region by:

* tackling problems that members councils can’t solve individually.
* creating collective scale and impact
* providing the place leadership to promote South Essex.

Each partner council contributes resources to the SEC programmes and together they work to win new investment for the region from central government, the private sector and public partners.

The partnership began in June 2016 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2018. In October 2021 the seven councils agreed to form a Joint Committee.

South Essex is a natural economic corridor and currently contributes £17.9billion to the national economy. The ambition outlined in the prospectus <https://ca1-asl.edcdn.com/asela-growth-recovery-prospectus-202007-v01_compressed.pdf?v=1596699780> will see south Essex contribute an additional £15billion to the UK economy and create 100,000 new jobs by 2050.

South Essex has been under-invested in for decades yet still punches well above its weight when it comes to contributing to the national economy, innovation and growth. It will play a significant part in helping the UK economy to recover post-COVID.

At a time when the government is actively pursuing devolution of powers to regions, coupled with their levelling up agenda, it is vital that South Essex is on their plan.

This is a focused, time-limited consultancy commission, with the brief to develop a **South Essex Economic Growth plan for Action** and support the commencement of its implementation, through which success is defined (in consultation with key local authority leaders and business community) and measurable, to ensure collectively increased, well-targeted investments in defined projects.

To include a 15+ year horizon, single economic rationale for the south Essex region (accounting for distinctions/opportunities for business and residents in Greater Essex), setting outcomes for place and people, and **answer the question of ‘what should we (South Essex Councils) do together to boost growth and productivity and achieve South Essex’ full economic potential?’** In plain English, this is about creating jobs and creating *better* jobs to increase wealth.

To this end, on the 28th September 2023, the Joint Committee approved prudent expenditure of up to £100,000 to commission this expert practical support, to ensure that we maximise opportunities for economic growth and set up for ongoing success throughout the medium and long term.

**This *is* about….**

* Working together to ensure shared ownership and action, in the context of working towards devolution opportunities and building a single economic growth service for South Essex
* Filling gaps and using external expertise to create the right pathway to boost growth and productivity in South Essex

**What this is *not*….**

* Fusing our plans together or creating more strategies - instead we focus together on common ambitions, for greater impact, capacity and pace
* More data collection - we have a good evidence base
* Pushing for South to do the same as North Essex Councils, who are developing complementary but separate proposals
1. **Requirements for proposal**

**Our Minimum Requirements are:**

**To produce a report detailing Expert guidance, recommendations, and management support, to develop and implement a South Essex Economic Growth Plan for Action and support the commencement of its implementation.**

1. **Understanding our context**
* Assess the current economic, social, and environmental conditions in South Essex.
* Consider trends, challenges, and emerging issues that may impact the region.
* Consider recent updates to LEP transition from 01/04/2024 specifically with regard to Local industrial Strategy developments.
1. **Conduct a gap analysis of our current evidence base**, **projects and strategies.**
* Building on economic intelligence from existing work, held by South Essex Councils, the County (e.g., Sector Development Strategy for Essex), the Essex Chambers of Commerce (e.g. the Local Skills Improvement Plan), SELEP (Coastal Communities), individual councils (e.g. the Southend Economic Growth Strategy) or individual assets (e.g. the Thames Freeport ambitions).
* Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) using appropriate economic analysis tools.
1. **Identify a pipeline of projects and method for selecting them**
* Consider economic development initiatives, infrastructure projects, community programmes, (appreciating some projects in progress will continue in individual local authorities). These may include projects for job creation, business growth, skilling to access better jobs and income, new housing and improving housing affordability, adoptions of technology and innovation in infrastructure and public service and improving transport/ transport links.
* Evaluate and prioritise potential initiatives based on feasibility, impact, and alignment with regional priorities/ gap analysis outcomes.
* Consider short-term and long-term goals, in particular for the post General Election period and the next Spending Review so we do not lose out on growth/funding opportunities to other parts of the country (e.g., on future Levelling Up investments, Freeports, or their equivalents).
1. **Develop a detailed implementation plan** with timelines, responsible parties, and performance indicators.
* Map existing resources and capacity in South Essex Councils and the optimum way of organising this resource to drive efficiencies and operate within a reducing funding envelope.
* Recommend practical capacity and structures to make a reality of this plan.
* Consider a phased approach to ensure a smooth and manageable rollout.
* Develop a financial plan outlining the budget required for implementing the initiatives.
* Explore funding sources, including public-private partnerships, government grants, and community contributions.
1. **Monitoring and Evaluation and Communication**

**-** Establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the South Essex Economic Growth plan for Action.

**-** Establish and maintain regular communication with the ECC/SEC Project Management Team on project progress.

**-** Establish and maintain regular (at least monthly) senior Consultant briefings with SEC on project progress.

**-** Regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented initiatives and make adjustments as needed.

**Our additional requirements are as follows:**

There will be a requirement of the Senior Consultant Engaged to meet regularly (monthly) during the project to update the joint Committee on progress and:

1. **A dedicated project manager to oversee progress of projects which emerge the plan for Action,** input directly and practically to commissioning specific activities from a (SEC EDO-based) delivery team, setting up systems for the portfolio as a whole, monitoring progress against the KPIs and advising the group on adjustments, then managing progress.
2. **CEO/Joint Committee support service** for milestone events, workshops, reviewing, reporting.
3. **Milestones**

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| **Milestones** | **Description** | **Required Outcome** | **Start****Date** | **End** **Date** |
| **Milestone 1** | Meeting Joint Committee and key stakeholders to outline proposed programme  | Joint Committee/Key Stakeholder buy in |  | 28th Feb 2024 |
| **Milestone 2** | Detailed review of existing partner strategies and plans | Review Document highlighting potential projects | 1st March 2024 | 31st May 2024 |
| **Milestone 3** | Stakeholder engagement activity on priorities |  | 1st March 2024 | 31st July 2024 |
| **Milestone 4** | Production of Draft Action Plan for Joint Committee Agreement | Draft Action Plan |  | 30th August 2024 |
| **Milestone 5** | Agree and publish Full Action Plan  | Full publishable Action Plan |  | 30th Sept 2024 |
| **Milestone 6** | Ongoing project implementation support  | Dedicated project manager allocated and  | 1st October 2024 | 31st March 2025 |

1. **Budget**

An indicative budget to the maximum of £100,000 has been allocated for this work.