**Order Schedule 20 (Order Specification)**

This Schedule sets out the characteristics of the Deliverables that the Supplier will be required to make to the Buyers under this Order Contract

The Small Business Survey (SBS) has operated since 2003 and is the key source of reliable data on small and medium-sized enterprises SME (0-249 employees) performance and the factors that affect this. In 2015, the SBS was developed into a longitudinal survey (LSBS), of which 8 waves have been completed, with the 9th currently taking place. The first phase of this Contract is for Wave 10 of the LSBS, with the optional extensions covering Waves 11 and 12.

LSBS data and findings are highly policy-relevant and are widely used to enable evidence-based policy making by the Buyer, its arms-length bodies and Other Government Departments. For example, previous surveys have been used to measure the impact of the National Living Wage, the awareness of the Scottish Government’s Business Pledge, the uptake and usage of Smart meters, investment in business advice, training and innovation, and HMRC’s ‘Making Tax Digital’ programme. Also, LSBS is the only official data collected on the ethnicity of business owners.

LSBS cross sectional data provides the only reliable data on growth ambition and the business behaviours associated with business performance and growth in SMEs.

Since 2015 LSBS has included additional respondents (top-ups) in order to maintain size of the sample and the cross-sectional representativeness of the data produced and this process will need to be repeated for waves 10,11 and 12.

The Contract relates to the waves 10,11 and 12 of the LSBS; the fieldwork for wave 10 will take place between October 2024 (earlier if possible) and March 2025 and for wave 11 September 2025 and March 2026, and wave 12 September 2026 and March 2027.

The research will be commissioned with an option of extending the Contract for a further 2 years (Wave 11 & 12)..

The award of the Contract will not guarantee that the wave 11 and 12 survey will take place.

The following measures are included in the Contract.

* Survey administration – retention of existing panel, coverage of business population;
* Reporting and Datasets – cleaning, ease of understanding, accuracy of datasets, accuracy, quality of communication of reporting;
* Methodology – sampling, weighting, significance testing;
* Project management – timeliness, risk management, communications with project manager.

The aims of this Contract are as follows:

**Wave 10 of the survey**

To conduct a telephone survey of the panel of businesses with 0 to 249 employees that were surveyed in previous waves of the LSBS. The survey will take place between October 2024 (earlier if possible) and March 2025;

To minimise attrition amongst the panel businesses; the Supplier shall work up the proposals submitted as part of its Tender in relation to minimising attrition amongst the relevant businesses and then to submit these for approval of the Buyer; the Buyer may make reasonable comments and observations for improvement of the proposals which the Supplier shall reflect in updated proposals which it will promptly resubmit to the Buyer.  The Supplier shall implement the relevant updated proposals once they have been approved by the Buyer;

To conduct further telephone-based interviews with a further sample needed to ensure the overall achieved sample is representative. A total of approximately 11,000 interviews are required in wave 10. This shall include a Welsh language questionnaire where respondents request this (Welsh translated questionnaire shall be provided by the Supplier);

To produce three research reports for publication quality preferably in HTML (or proposals for moving the reports to HTML going forward): one for businesses with no employees, one for SME employers and one for findings from the longitudinal data. The Supplier will also be required to produce a comprehensive technical report for publication;

To provide a dataset for use by the Buyer and approved researchers, including providing an appended dataset with all waves. This should be in similar format to the previous datasets in UK Data Service:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/#!?Search=lsbs&Page=1&Rows=10&Sort=1&DateFrom=440&DateTo=2022>

To manage the LSBS academic user group. Particularly, to manage a mini competition that will be used to fund a small number of secondary analysis projects by members of this group.

If the Buyer decides to proceed with wave 11 of the survey

To conduct a telephone survey of the panel of businesses with 0 to 249 employees that were surveyed in previous waves of the LSBS.

To minimise attrition amongst the panel businesses; The Supplier shall work up the proposals submitted as part of its Tender in relation to minimising attrition amongst the relevant businesses and then to submit these for approval of the Buyer; the Buyer may make reasonable comments and observations for improvement of the proposals which the Supplier shall reflect in updated proposals which it will promptly resubmit to the Buyer.  The Supplier shall implement the relevant updated proposals once they have been approved by the Buyer.

To conduct further telephone-based interviews with a further sample needed to ensure the overall achieved sample is representative. A total of approximately 11,000 interviews will be required in wave 11. This shall include a Welsh language questionnaire where respondents request this (Welsh translated questionnaire shall be provided by the Supplier);

To produce three research reports for publication quality preferably in HTML (or proposals for moving the reports to HTML going forward): one for businesses with no employees, one for SME employers and one for findings from the longitudinal data. The Supplier shall also produce a comprehensive technical report for publication.

To provide a dataset for use by the Buyer and approved researchers, including providing an appended dataset with all waves. This should be in similar format to the previous datasets in UK Data Service:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/#!?Search=lsbs&Page=1&Rows=10&Sort=1&DateFrom=440&DateTo=2022>

To manage the LSBS academic user group. Particularly, to manage a mini competition that will be used to fund a small number of secondary analysis projects by members of this group.

If the Buyer decides to proceed with wave 12 of the survey

To conduct a telephone survey of the panels of businesses with 0 to 249 employees that were surveyed in previous waves of the LSBS. The survey will take place between September 2026 and March 2027.

To minimise attrition amongst the panel businesses; The Supplier shall work up the proposals submitted as part of its Tender in relation to minimising attrition amongst the relevant businesses and then to submit these for approval of the Buyer; the Buyer may make reasonable comments and observations for improvement of the proposals which the Supplier shall reflect in updated proposals which it will promptly resubmit to the Buyer.  The Supplier shall implement the relevant updated proposals once they have been approved by the Buyer.

To conduct further telephone-based interviews with a further sample needed to ensure the overall achieved sample is representative. A total of approximately 11,000 interviews will be required in wave 12. This shall include a Welsh language questionnaire where respondents request this (Welsh translated questionnaire shall be provided by the Supplier);

To produce three research reports for publication preferably in HTML (or proposals for moving the reports to HTML going forward): one for businesses with no employees, one for SME employers and one for findings from the longitudinal data. The Supplier shall also be required to produce a comprehensive technical report for publication.

To provide a dataset for use by the Buyer and approved researchers, including providing an appended dataset with all waves. This should be in similar format to the previous datasets in UK Data Service:

To manage the LSBS academic user group. Particularly, to manage a mini competition that will be used to fund a small number of secondary analysis projects by members of this group.

The award of this Contract will not guarantee that the wave 11 and 12 survey will be conducted, or that the Supplier will be appointed to deliver them. Instead, the Buyer has an option under the Contract to instruct the Supplier to undertake wave 11 and/or (if the option to instruct wave 11 was implemented) wave 12 surveys. which if exercised will result in the performance of the same services as applicable under wave 10 for one or both of waves 11 and wave 12, in accordance with the Contract and at the same price as that offered for wave 10 save for the application of indexation in accordance with the Contract clause 4.12.

The LSBS is a longitudinal survey, and key elements of the established approach and methods must be maintained.

The survey shall be telephone-based, rather than online because a large proportion of smaller businesses do not have publicly available email addresses, and online surveys can have lower response rates which would be detrimental to the longitudinal data. The Buyer does not want to introduce a break in our time series by introducing a modal effect (from telephone surveying to another mode).

The approach to sampling and weighting etc. shall correspond directly to the approach which the wave 8 (2022) technical report explained had been adopted in earlier years as set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/small-business-survey-2022-methodology>

A sample of the Interdepartmental Business Register will be provided for identifying businesses which are registered for VAT/PAYE, for sampling purposes. The sampling frame for businesses which are not registered for VAT/PAYE shall be provided by the Supplier. For previous waves a sample from Dun and Bradstreet, Experian and Market Location has been used, the Buyer welcomes proposals for alternatives.

A mean interview length of 25 minutes for waves 10,11 and 12 of the survey. The Supplier will be required to work closely with the Buyer’s project manager and other stakeholders to develop and agree the questionnaires for Years 10,11 and 12. The Supplier shall include provision for piloting of the questionnaires. A copy of the wave 8 questionnaire is included in the above-mentioned technical report. It is likely that some non-core questions will be included in modules that will be asked in parallel to just a proportion of respondents.

Interviews for the panels should take place as near as possible to the dates individual businesses were interviewed in the previous year. The interviews for any boosts should also take place between October 2024(earlier if possible) and March 2025.The Supplier will be supplied with contact details, etc. for the panel.

There are 9,524 respondents in total from 2022. Accordingly, this Contract shall base on a sample of 11,000 businesses. This total includes both the businesses in the existing panel and those being interviewed for the first time.

The surveys have also been designed to achieve samples of 1,000 in Scotland and 800 in Northern Ireland. The Supplier shall maintain cross sectional representativeness and the minimum achieved samples in Scotland and NI in waves 10,11 and12.

Minimising attrition is of paramount importance to this survey. The Supplier shall describe in detail the measures that will be taken to minimise attrition in wave 10 and beyond. The Buyer does not normally favour the use of incentives. The Buyer welcomes proposals to test measures to reduce attrition on a proportion of the overall sample in 2024.

As part of the Contract, the Supplier shall also be required to manage the LSBS academic user group. The Supplier shall include a ring-fenced sum of £25,000 per year that will be used to fund 4/5 small research projects. The key Supplier task here is to manage a mini competition that will be used to fund a small number of secondary analysis projects by members of this group. The Supplier shall make the user-group aware of the opportunity, collate research proposals, contribute to deciding on which research bids to fund, make payments to the successful researchers, and review resulting outputs. Academics bid for funding support and 4 / 5 projects are provided with funding. The research projects inform both wider academia and the Buyer’s policy making. They also encourage further research into the area, to maximise use of the data collected from the LSBS.

The Supplier shall work closely with the Buyer’s project manager throughout this project.

The Supplier shall be required throughout the term of the Contract to ensure the quality of their outputs and keep an updated comprehensive risk register.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Timetable | Key dates and milestones |
| Are there any milestones or interim dates? | The Supplier shall be required to produce the deliverables in relation to Year 10 described below by the dates indicated:1. A detailed work programme (within one month of the Contract being awarded)2. A detailed sampling strategy (within one month of the Contract being awarded)3. An agreed questionnaire for wave 10 (end September 2024)4. Cleaned datasets including all previous waves (August 2025)5. Draft research reports preferably in HMTL: one for SME employers, one for businesses with no employees and a report on the Year 10 findings from the longitudinal data. The supplier will also be required a comprehensive technical report. (July 2025)6. Final reports as above of publishable quality (End of August 2025)7. Associated ‘transparency tables’ for publication alongside the survey reports. (End of August 2025)8. Four or five projects commissioned from the LSBS academic user group. Equivalent deliverables will be required at similar dates for Year 11 and 12 if it goes ahead.**Publication**The final reports for this research project must be formatted according to the Buyer’s publication guidelines, therefore within the statistics template and adhering to Government Statistical Service accessibility requirements for all publications on GOV.UK. The publication template shall be provided by the Buyer’s project manager. Please ensure you note the following in terms of accessibility:**Checklist for Word accessibility** Word documents supplied to the Buyer will be assessed for accessibility upon receipt. Documents which do not meet one or more of the following checkpoints will be returned for re-working at the Supplier’s cost <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/making-analytical-publications-accessible/>.**Checklist for Excel data tables accessibility**Excel documents supplied to the Buyer will be assessed for accessibility upon receipt. Tables which do not meet one or more checkpoints will be returned for re-working at the Supplier’s cost <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/releasing-statistics-in-spreadsheets/#section-13>The project manager will be available for guidance. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key personnel and roles |  |
| Project supervisor | There should be a senior manager within the Supplier organisation who is given ultimate responsibility for the project. This person shall be available in case of any issues what require escalation on the supplier side and to QA deliverables before they reach the Buyer. This person shall have previous experience of similar projects. The Buyer must receive notice if this person will change and the replacement must be of the same seniority, with the similar experience.  |
| Day to day contact | This person shall be available and able to handle day to day enquiries and running of the project on the supplier side. They may be supported by others in doing this. The day-to-day contact shall have a strong, relevant analytical background and ideally knowledge of the subject areas and population of interest, and experience of surveying them. The Buyer must receive notice if this person will change and the replacement must be of the same seniority, with the similar experience. If the contact was supported by a wider team, one of them should take their place.  |
| Analytical and technical support | The Supplier should have in-house analytical and technical expertise to deliver the study and associated deliverables.  |
| Interviewers | If utilising a telephone line, ideally the Supplier will have access to this resource in house.  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Governance** | **Provide a summary of the governance to be applied to the services**  |
| Meeting/report | Content | Frequency | Format |
| **Example**Meeting | Contract performance | Quarterly | Face to face |
| Contact meeting  | Regular updates and to discuss any issues  | As when needed | Teams or telephone call / Video conference  |
| Inception meeting  | To agree scope of project   | At the beginning of each wave  | Video conference  |
| Analysis meeting  | To discuss data analysis required and emerging findings  | After fieldwork  | Video conference  |
| Wash up meeting  | Review processes and outcomes, and identify successes and areas for improvement  | Between each wave  | Video conference  |
| Fieldwork report  | Completion rates   | Weekly or live during fieldwork   | Online dashboard or weekly report  |