**SOFT MARKET TESTING REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

**Women Leading in Education (WLE) Coaching Pledge**

**Section 1 - Introduction**

* 1. This Information Pack and Request for Information (RFI) has been issued by the Department for Education (DfE) with a Prior Information Notice (PIN) ahead of any competitive procurement. The PIN gives outline detail of soft market testing activity and a future procurement for the provision of support for activities linked to the Women Leading in Education (WLE) Coaching Pledge. This soft market testing activity is being carried out under the provisions of regulation 40 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (‘PCR’).

* 1. This RFI is in preparation for a competitive procurement to provide support for activity linked to the Coaching Pledge. DfE is seeking to stimulate the interest of organisations who would consider operating the Service and consider a fresh approach as to how the Service may be commissioned.
	2. Organisations wishing to respond to this request for information and/or register to attend the engagement event detailed below, need to do so by registering in the first instance on https://education.bravosolution.co.uk  and responding to the questions posed
	3. The purpose and aims of this soft market testing exercise are to:
		1. Seek opinion from the potential suppliers to assist in finalising our procurement strategy.
		2. Share our outline for the Service and what DfE would expect from potential suppliers.
		3. Outline indicative timescales for the procurement, transition and implementation of the Services.
		4. Receive responses from potential suppliers of the Service on the impacts that differing potential or proposed service design options may have and on potential commercial arrangements
		5. Gauge the level of interest in the tender to provide the service

* 1. Neither this document nor any of the associated engagement activities comprise any part of any procurement exercise and participation does not imply any intention or commitment by DfE. No information provided in the response to the RFI will be used in any evaluation of any subsequent competitive procurement exercise.

**Engagement Event**

* 1. Potential suppliers that are interested in this planned opportunity are invited to attend a meeting at Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT, 11am to 1pm, on 6 November. This will provide greater detail about the proposed scope of service including further detail of DfE’s vision for the Service, the proposed conceptual design, design constraints and potential areas for innovation.
	2. Reservations to attend the event should be made via the online message board accessed in the e-Tendering portal by Friday 2 November:

**Submitting the RFI**

* 1. Information about our plans for the procurement are set out in Section 2 of this

 document. Potential suppliers are invited to respond to questions set out in Section 3.

* 1. All responses to the RFI must upload to the DfE e tendering portal ; no later than

 midnight on 12 November. DfE are unable to commit to reviewing RFI documents

 uploaded after this deadline.

* 1. The RFI return must be clear and concise. Respondents should submit only such information as is necessary to respond effectively to this RFI. Respondents are advised that:
* Where documents are embedded within other documents, respondents

must upload separate copies of the embedded documents

* The RFI return must be in English
* Each RFI return must be headed with the name of the responding organisation;

and,

* There is no obligation to answer all these questions in the response.
	1. All queries about the RFI process should be submitted via the secure on-line message board within the [e-tendering portal](https://education.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.shtml).

**Indicative timetable for the RFI process.**

* 1. The timeframe for this RFI process is set out in the table below.

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| --- | --- |
| Issue of the RFI document | 24 October |
| Engagement Event  | 6 November |
| Latest date for submission of the RFI | 12 November |

* 1. Please note that DfE reserves the right to amend this timetable. Any amendments to the timetable will be communicated through the portal.

**Terms of Engagement**

* 1. In responding to this RFI, respondents do so on the conditions set out below.
	2. This RFI process does not bind DfE to enter into any formal obligation or commitment to future business with any supplier. All costs and expenses incurred by or on behalf of respondents in respect of this RFI, including preparing and submitting the RFI response are wholly the responsibility of the respondent. DfE accept no liability for these costs, including costs that may arise out of, or result from, any variation or amendment of this RFI process. DfE may withdraw this RFI at any time without incurring any liability.
	3. This document is provided for information and discussion purposes only and does not represent an offer capable of legal acceptance. This document is not intended to be exhaustive and DfE reserve the right to add to or amend the document, as more information becomes known. The information contained herein is the property of DfE and whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of such information, it is supplied without liability for errors or omissions.
	4. All information from respondents will be collated and assessed by the DfE to enable officers to produce any necessary reports and recommendations. Individual responses will not be shared with other organisations, however information and views submitted by respondents may be disclosed in an anonymised form as part of or ancillary to this or later market engagement, and will be shared within DfE and with any advisors and third parties to support the DfE’s commercial and public decision-making process. If respondents consider that any particular information provided within their response is commercially sensitive, this should be clearly identified in the response. In such cases the DfE will take a view as to whether such information can be considered further, and reserve the right to discount any such information from its assessment.

**Confidentiality**

* 1. The information contained in this document and any communications connected to this soft market testing procedure are confidential and only for the recipients’ knowledge. As such, no information included in this document or any communication connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without the written consent of the DfE.
1. **Outline requirement for the planned procurement.**

**Background**

2.1 The Department for Education (DfE) recognises the importance of a diverse teaching workforce and so the DfE is committed to addressing the issue of underrepresentation in the teaching workforce. While data shows that the teaching workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, those from protected groups remain under-represented in leadership. School workforce census data continues to show that women are underrepresented in leadership roles.

* 1. The aim of the Women Leading in Education (WLE) Coaching Pledge, launched in March 2016, is to support the progression of women teachers into leadership. Last autumn, the Teaching Schools Council (TSC) were commissioned by the DfE to host the coach directory on their website for a one-year pilot. Eight TSC regional representatives were also commissioned to deliver local support in their regions to increase take-up and maximise the benefits of the Coaching Pledge.
	2. The TSC communications lead has set up an **on-line database** where coach information is currently accessed. Coaches complete a profile by completing an on-line survey questionnaire. Participants register to take part by completing an on-line survey, which also captures their starting point, including their current role, what they want to get out of coaching and current levels of confidence. Participants can search the database by region to find a coach in their local area.
	3. As set out in the Delivery Service Requirement table we are now keen to build on what has already been achieved by raising awareness and promoting the Coaching Pledge so that it reaches the widest possible audience and supports better matching between coaches and participants.
	4. **To engage coaches and participants**, TSC regional representatives use a range of methods. Many have worked well with existing networks and partners such as the DfE funded Women Leading in Education regional networks, and grassroots organisations such as #WomenEd.
	5. **To help coaches and participants match with each other,** some TSC regional representatives hold training and matching events to which participants and coaches are invited. Others work with individual coaches and participants to facilitate suitable matches.
	6. Feedback from coaches and participants has been positive. Participants report that coaching has supported them to develop their skills in a range of areas, including confidence to apply for next stage promotion, improving their leadership and management skills and developing stronger job applications.
	7. When asked in the feedback survey how the Coaching Pledge could be improved, greater awareness, national promotion, and more opportunities for matching have been suggested by both coaches and participants.
	8. We now want to appoint a provider to raise greater awareness of the Coaching Pledge and maximise engagement on a national scale.

## Scope of the planned procurement

* 1. The scope of the planned procurement is to secure a contract to deliver the Coaching Pledge, which supports our aim of promoting a diverse teaching workforce where we are able to recruit, retain and develop all teachers. DfE is seeking to use soft market testing to explore options around the issues set out below.

**Service requirement**

* 1. Coaches (male and female leaders from all backgrounds) volunteer to complete an on-line profile with details hosted on a central data-base/directory, which is currently hosted and managed by the TSC. To date, approximately 1,000 coaches have provided profiles and approximately 2,000 participants have registered to take part.
	2. We would like to test the level of interest from potential suppliers in delivering one or both of the following delivery service requirements. The first requirement would involve the potential supplier providing a service linked to market and promotion of the Coaching Pledge. The second would involve potential suppliers additionally delivering the management of the on-line database, which is currently hosted/managed by the TSC.
	3. Costings for both these requirements can be found at paragraph 2.18.
	4. Details of both delivery requirements are provided in the table below.

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| --- | --- |
| **Delivery Service Requirement 1** | For this requirement, we would be looking for a provider to encourage schools and stakeholders to use the on-line coaching database as part of the support and CPD that they offer. In practical terms, we would expect the provider to:* increase awareness of the Coaching Pledge amongst women teachers, schools and potential coaches
* increase take-up of the Coaching Pledge amongst returning teachers
* improve the matching process amongst coaches and participants and providing more opportunities for matching to take place, both face to face and on-line
* develop guidelines for what participants should expect from the Coaching Pledge, and what coaches should provide, e.g. how to approach and contact a coach, situations that coaching can help with, suggested number and duration of coaching sessions, formats to use and how to conclude the coaching relationship
* work with local and national organisations to promote the Coaching Pledge and develop new approaches to matching alongside existing, complementary activity taking place within the sector. This will include working with the TSC regional reps, grassroots organisations, training providers and unions to disseminate messaging and incorporate the Coaching Pledge into existing support, training and events.
* meet all GDPR requirements as specified in the final contract.
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| **Delivery Service Requirement 2** | For this requirement, we would expect a provider to deliver the requirements detailed above as for Service Requirement 1 as well as delivery of the:* hosting and management of the database, which hosts the details of the coaches. This will involve building a data-base and engaging with the TSC on the practical arrangements for the transfer of the existing data
* hosting and managing the data-base on an on-going basis including uploading new coaches and ensuring that the data is kept up to date (details of how long the data will need to remain` live’ to be confirmed)
* potentially develop the database in the longer term (see questionnaire at page 8 for more details)
* use the data-base to support communication and promotion of the Coaching Pledge
* meet all GDPR requirements as specified in the final contract.
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* 1. We are seeking responses through the RFI process on the most appropriate methods for the design and delivery of this service.

**Marketing services.**

* 1. We would expect the provider to raise awareness of the Coaching Pledge database/directory through a range of channels to increase the number of coaches registered and the number of participants who are matched with coaches. These include as a minimum:
* Use of digital communications, including social media, email bulletins, twitter
* Road shows
* Promotion via local teach meets
* Engagement with headteacher groups
* Engagement with other stakeholder groups in the education sector
* Press releases
* Advertising in national publications
* Advertising via the radio.

 **Flexibility to support new or adjust to changed requirements**

* 1. The Authority are considering awarding a contract from April (this date to be confirmed) 2019 until March 2020 and will reserve the right to extend for a further 12 months subject to budget availability and satisfactory performance.

**Pricing arrangements for the service and the commercial model**

* 1. We anticipate that the contract value will be set at:
* For delivery service requirement 1 (marketing and promotion only) up to **£82,000**

**OR**

* For delivery service requirement 2 (marketing and promotion and hosting/ management of the data-base) up to **£95,000**.

Within these parameters, we would expect potential suppliers to demonstrate value for money and competitive costing with details of their proposed range of activities for meeting of the requirement.

**Outline Timescales**

* 1. It is anticipated (subject to approval of the outline business case) that the invitation to tender will be issued week commencing 3 December.
	2. We will be asking potential suppliers to include an outline project plan, as part of the Invitation to Tender process, detailing how they will mobilise and implement the service.
	3. It is anticipated that the Service will be ready for use by April 2019.

1. **Section 3 – Questionnaire**
	1. We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions. Your response will assist the DfE in developing our approach further and the formation of the associated tender documents thereafter.

* 1. This is not an invitation to bid, this is solely a RFI and no direct business will be awarded as a result of completing this RFI. Responding to this document does not advantage or disadvantage any supplier in a future procurement process. No supplier selection or supplier preference is implied.
	2. It is not essential that you complete all questions if your organisation is not able, or does not wish, to do so.

3.4 Completed questionnaires should be returned via the Portal by midnight on 12 November:

1. Which aspects of the proposed opportunity appeal to your organisation and why?
2. Paragraphs 2.1 to 2.9 in section 2 of this document sets out the current delivery model of the Coaching Pledge. Are there any aspects of the current delivery model that you would seek to continue? If ‘yes’, why do you think these would be beneficial and how could they be best incorporated into the future service?
3. Would you include training for coaches as part of the service if this was an option?
4. Which of the two delivery service requirements detailed at paragraph 2.14 would be of interest to you? Please keep in mind that delivery service requirement 2 includes all of the requirements listed under delivery service requirement 1, as well as the addition of hosting and delivering the on-line database.
5. What do you consider to be the main challenges/barriers to delivering the service requirement?

1. Which key areas of delivery service requirement 1 may benefit from an alternative approach, and how could these be addressed?
2. If you have indicated that you are interested in delivery service requirement 2, can you provide views about how the database could/should be developed in the longer term, and how the database could be transferred efficiently from the TSC.
3. Do you consider the estimated contract value detailed at paragraph 2.18 to be realistic?
4. DfE is considering adopting a pricing structure based on payment by results, i.e. per successful match made. What are the benefits and or risks if any with this approach?
5. The DfE intends to include in the contract a number of service levels to manage performance. These may action incentive payments for outstanding performance and service credits where there is poor performance.  Does your organisation have any concerns or views around how this is implemented?
6. Do you consider there to be any major risks associated with this opportunity?

You are invited to provide additional information and comments, which you consider the DfE, would find useful to formulate its future strategy.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.