

# Expression of interest

# Title: Opportunity Areas – Place-Based Evaluation

**Project reference:**  **DFERPPU 20-21/012**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 5pm 17/08/2020**

## Summary

EOIs are being sought to deliver a **qualitative** evaluation of the Opportunity Areas Programme. This evaluation will principally involve qualitative research across the 12 Opportunity Areas that focuses on programme beneficiaries as well as delivery partners.

It will build the evidence base on the extent to which location/place, (e.g. rural, coastal or urban regions) affects the implementation and deliverability of local interventions and to gather qualitative evidence on how effective the overall programme approach has been. The research findings will help inform the programme, department, and others, in tackling similar educational priorities in different areas or regions.

An EOI and tender exercise was originally carried out for this project in the summer of 2019. We are now looking to re-procure the project with a reduced scope and budget of maximum £200,000.

## Background

In October 2016 the then Secretary of State announced a new [social mobility package](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-package-unveiled-by-education-secretary). At the heart of this strategy is the Opportunity Areas programme, a targeted three-year, £72 million support programme aimed at improving the life chances of young people in 12 local areas which typically face entrenched and widespread social, economic and cultural challenges. The first six Opportunity Areas (OA) announced in October 2016 were Oldham, North Yorkshire Coast, Derby, Norwich, West Somerset and Blackpool. In January 2017, [a further six Opportunity Areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-6-new-opportunity-areas) were announced: Stoke-on-Trent, Doncaster, Ipswich, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings and Bradford. Nine of the 12 OAs are located in urban areas while three are located in rural areas. Of the 12, four OAs are located in coastal regions. An £18 million extension to the Opportunity Area programme was announced in November 2019. [Year 4 of the Opportunity Areas programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/opportunity-areas-programme-to-support-young-people-hit-hardest-by-pandemic) will focus on supporting young people following the Covid Pandemic. It will also build on previous years learning whereby each of the 12 areas will  ‘twin’ with places facing similar challenges to help unleash the potential among young people in other parts of the country.

## Evaluation aims

The primary aims of this evaluation are:

1. To provide an objective and transparent overview of the programme’s delivery and progress over the years 1-4, including key success factors and learnings
2. To explore a place-based approach to delivery, including how this works on the ground to address key educational challenges - for example by exploring how place influences the programmme delivery and solutions to common educational issues across the range of beneficiaries and delivery partners and areas.
3. To explore local challenges different areas face in promoting social mobility, and the effect these have had on implementation, progress and outcomes and strategies they have developed to overcome these.
4. To examine the potential impact of COVID-19 on the programme’s delivery and provide early indications of how the programme in turn is working to support young people following the Covid Pandemic
5. Explore how learnings have been shared and built upon by the programme, including an exploration of the new ‘twinning process’

## Methodology

The research design should allow for research/ data collection to be conducted in all 12 OAs -although the level of depth in understanding may differ across areas. Research should aim to engage beneficiaries (e.g. schools/ education settings, teachers, Further Education/post-16, mental health practitioners, pupils and parents) of the programme and explore their experiences. It should also explore perspectives of delivery staff and partners to gain a good understanding of delivery in different contexts. We have previously focused research on capturing the views of the partnership boards and DfE staff members - therefore this should not be a focus on this research.

The fieldwork will be expected to run from shortly after the project initiation to Autumn 2021, with a final research report completed by end of 2021. We would also expect interim findings shared with DfE at suitable points. We expect suppliers to need to conduct at least two waves of data collection. We expect potential bidders to provide a rationale for fieldwork timings.

If two waves of data collection were used, we envision that the first wave of fieldwork is likely to focus on reflecting back on years 1-3 of the programme, Covid-19 and set-up of delivery changes in year 4. Whilst the second wave of fieldwork, could build on this and additionally explore how these delivery changes in year 4 have been operationalised and provide some early indication on potential benefits from this.

Potential bidders are invited to suggest innovative and agile methodological approaches that would meet the research objectives of this project.

This research will build on published outputs from the OA programme and other existing qualitative data captured during the previous evaluation opportunities. Data from these waves will be made available to the successful bidder. We also expect the contractor to draw on the monitoring data where necessary and to liaise with analysts working on other areas of the evaluation.

### Outputs

The contractor will be expected to produce an overarching research report combining all fieldwork, data collection and analysis. This should, where possible, be supplemented with previous data collected as well as relevant monitoring data. We will also ask for interim reporting to ensure we are capturing learning and feeding this back into the programme at required stages (frequency and format tbc, but we envisage this will include at least one interim report in the first quarter of 2021).

**Previous place-based OA research**

This research will build on published outputs from the OA programme and other existing qualitative research including:

* A process evaluation of the first year of the OA. This has been published and can be accessed [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-area-programme-research-and-analysis)
* One wave of qualitative data collection based on interviews with OA partnership board members, looking at the progress and delivery of the Opportunity Area programme.
* One wave of qualitative data collection with delivery teams on 15 projects covering five themes across the OA.

Data from these waves will be made available to the successful bidder to build upon the existing evidence base.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 5pm 17th August 2020
* Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued – 24th August 2020
* Deadline for ITT submission – 14th September 2020
* Contract signed – Estimated 28th September 2020

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Understanding of the Department’s requirement, including an outline of the proposed approach to conducting a complex place-based qualitative evaluation (40%).
* Evidence of expertise and experience of the broader methodologies to be used; of research with schools and within the education system; and with senior school and education stakeholders (30%).
* Evidence of capacity to deliver high quality research of a similar scale (30%)

CVs and references are not required at this stage.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 5pm 17/08/2020**  **Send your EOI form to:** [Katharine.BEANEY@education.gov.uk](mailto:Katharine.beaney@education.gov.uk) and [Andrew.ZACHARIA@education.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.ZACHARIA@education.gov.uk) |
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## How to submit an expressions 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 ‘EOI form 2018’ form which can be found under attachments in the ContractsFinder listing. 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.

Expressions of interests submitted must be **no more than** **750 words** overall this includes any website links – anything longer will be disregarded.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Department’s Terms & Conditions, a copy is available attached to the ContractsFinder listing. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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