

## **New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Peer Network Specification**

### **Introduction**

This invitation sets out the requirements for the delivery of facilitation and one to one support as part of the implementation of the New Anglia Peer Network Programme, funded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), to deliver a series of Peer Networks, with cohorts of eleven people, through the New Anglia Growth Hub, consisting of owners and/or managers from the SME business community participating in each network.

### **Background**

In 2019, the Business Productivity Review found that businesses that adopt formal management practices are more likely to achieve higher turnover, employment levels and productivity growth. Evidence also shows that businesses that seek external advice or undertake formal training are more likely to improve their overall business performance, as well as the importance of business managers learning from peers, particularly in their local area.

Peer Networks is a national initiative that will be delivered locally through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) network and their respective Growth Hubs. The Programme's longer-term aims are focused on reducing the UK productivity gap by helping business leaders find practical solutions to strategic and operational challenges. It also forms part of the UK Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing EU transition, seeking to improve the resilience of SMEs, their capability to adapt their business models to the "new normal" and position themselves for future success, driving longer-term productivity gains.

Whilst the long-term objective of this initiative is to drive up productivity and help close the gap with our competitors, this is exactly the support businesses need now to develop the skills to tackle issues they face in relation to COVID-19. As these networks will continue at least to the end of March it is expected that they will also be useful in preparing SMEs for the end of the EU transition period and entry into a new trading environment.

The Programme will see the creation of a series of peer networks (cohorts) through the Growth Hub network, with each group consisting of 11 owners or managers from the SME business community participating in each network. Led by an experienced Facilitator, these Peer Networks will typically meet fortnightly as part of delivering 18 hours of action learning through 2-3-hour sessions. Individual one-to-one support (coaching, mentoring, or advice) will also be provided directly by the Programme, to help to implement and manage change. Active involvement in the Peer Network will enhance the leadership capabilities, knowledge and confidence of business owners and entrepreneurs within a local region. It will help build regional connectivity and strength within the SME business community.

## Delivery Model

Participants will benefit from access to a Facilitator, who will also provide one-to-one support outside of the group sessions. The content of the sessions is driven by the participants from a list of key themes (e.g. business development, marketing, people management, technology adoption, response to COVID-19, EU transition) tailored to participants specific needs, including wider issues that may be affecting their sector, locality or business model. In New Anglia, the programme will target 250 participants across Norfolk and Suffolk in 2020-21, in line with local demand and capacity to deliver. Success will be measured by:

- Firm survival
- Growth in value added as an indicator of recovery from COVID-19
- Improvements in labour productivity
- Participant views on the resilience of their SME
- Participant views on their leadership and management skills
- The SME's ability to recruit and retain staff where appropriate
- The SME's ability to access cash to continue trading
- Changes in the SME's adoption of technology

The Programme is supported by a user Playbook, to provide a common resource, to support delivery partners and help ensure there is consistency in how the programme is delivered, whilst allowing for a degree of local flexibility as appropriate.

The Programme will make use of experienced Facilitators deploying an action learning style to drive the peer network and deliver high-impact outcomes. Facilitators must have the skills, experience and qualifications needed to successfully facilitate sessions with small business owners as well as being able to demonstrate and evidence a track record in facilitation and show how they meet the facilitator specification.

Complementing the delivery of facilitated action learning sessions, targeted one to one support will be provided to individual participants to assist with professional and personal growth achieved through the group sessions. Facilitators will provide one to-one coaching, mentoring and advice, with the one to one support element being specific to the individual needs of each participant. This provision may need to address a wide range of areas across the one to one support spectrum. Therefore, Facilitators must be able to demonstrate and evidence a track record in one-to-one support and show how they plan to meet the specification provided as part of the tender documentation.

The Programme will invite leaders and senior managers from the SME business community who meet the eligibility criteria below to participate in a local peer network that will meet regularly over several months. Target SMEs will meet the following profile:

### Essential criteria:

- In operation for 1 year+
- At least 5 employees
- An aspiration to improve
- A turnover of at least £100,000

### Desirable criteria:

- Scale ups
- Exporters and potential exporters

A team of three Coordinators, employed by New Anglia Growth Hub, will undertake the function of recruiting SMEs onto the Programme, taking careful consideration who is recruited to minimise participant drop out. The Coordinators will also assist with the gathering of relevant paperwork from clients as well as assisting with reporting on progress at regular intervals throughout the delivery of the Programme.

Facilitators are expected to deliver activity in cohorts of eleven business owners or senior decision makers per cohort. Each cohort will be led by the Facilitator using the action learning methodology, the number of sessions will be determined by local individual need, however, sessions are expected to last between two and three hours per session. Each cohort must meet for a minimum of 18 hours. Sessions will typically take place on a fortnightly basis, with all sessions, and any follow up One to One support, fully completed by 31 March 2021.

Given current social distancing restrictions and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the sessions will be delivered virtually, however, there may be a move towards face-to-face delivery should social distancing restrictions be relaxed and it is appropriate for face to face delivery to be undertaken. Each session must be facilitated according to action learning principles.

Individual one-to-one support relevant to identified businesses needs must also be provided. This must equate to a minimum of 3.5 hours per participant. This support must also be completed by 31 March 2021.

Each of the sessions will be led by an experienced facilitator utilising the action learning methodology. This is a highly effective way of running peer networks and provides a common framework to ensure national consistency across all the local groups. The facilitator will lead and host the sessions (using video conference platforms such as MS Teams, WebEx, Zoom, etc.), and use principles of action learning to successfully facilitate each one.

In terms of topics, the follow topic selections could include but are not restrictive:

- Finance
- HR
- Sales and Marketing
- Adjusting to social distancing
- Business Model Innovation
- Change Management
- Embedding formal management processes and systems
- Digital (including adoption and implementation of technology, cyber security)
- Use of data to drive value in the business
- EU transition
- Net zero

## **Role and Duties of the Facilitator**

The role of the Facilitator is critical to the successful management and optimisation of an individual peer network, in supporting the rapid building of trust and collaborative relationships between participants within the peer group (the cohort), providing strong leadership and direction, and driving the in-session action learning process to deliver tangible actions and solutions for each member of the group.

Applicants should provide an overview of their experience and skills in providing one-to-one support, detailing the coaching, mentoring, or advice approaches deployed, what a typical one-to-one session resembles, and how the impact and outcome for the individual and the organisation would be measured in line with KPI and evaluation requirements. They must also clearly demonstrate an ability to provide advice to local businesses looking to diversify into new markets and processes to combat the impact of Covid-19. To ensure this is possible, applicants will need to understand the local business support landscape within the region to ensure that the service provided complements and adds value to the support currently available within the region to help SMEs.

The Facilitators are expected to provide all platforms, equipment and materials required for the delivery of the Programme, unless agreed in advance through specific arrangements. The sessions will run virtually. The wider use of digital technologies to support the efficient, effective, and timely administration, and delivery of activities is encouraged, and providers are recommended to demonstrate how they can meet this requirement.

To ensure successful delivery the facilitator has three main strands of responsibility:

- Management and direction of their individual peer network(s) and its successful facilitation using the principles of action learning
- Individual one-to-one communication with each participant to support reflection and provide signposting to the most appropriate local support
- The capture of information, data, and insight to help inform contract manager and programme about frequent hot topics for delegates

The facilitators must also enable participants to get the most benefit from their cohort experience and encourage participants to:

- Express and discuss their ideas, concerns and understanding of the business situation facing them
- Reflect on and learn from things that did not turn out as expected
- Take responsibility for their own decisions, plans and actions
- Work together to agree both group and personal objectives
- Undertake constructive exploratory discussions within the cohort and avoid conflict.
- Maximise opportunities within their existing business
- Review their progress and identify realistic and practical options to realise their goals
- Connect with other sources of information, advice, or further support when appropriate



Working to action learning principles the group facilitator will have the ability to:

- Respect the needs of participants
- Listen and respond effectively and check understanding
- Keep their promises
- Empathise with a range of different feelings and experiences
- Build and maintain an effective relationship with their participants
- Manage group dynamics and deal with conflict
- Generate creative energy within the cohort
- Develop a resourceful state in others
- Handle and respond effectively to change
- Encourage the group to focus on the output
- Shift group and individual perspective
- Evaluate people and processes
- Ensure the people involved retain ownership of the solutions arrived at
- Challenge people to think

## **Requirements**

Facilitators are expected to undertake the following activities:

- Facilitation of the Peer Network, including hosting a series of sessions (using video conference) that are inspirational and engaging
- Use the principles of action learning to successfully facilitate each session
- Work with participants to develop a collaborative and open culture and supporting behaviours within the peer network cohort
- React and respond to the specific issues presented by participants within the sessions
- Focus the session topics on specific issues as directed by the cohort participants (possible themes and topics provided by BEIS)
- Champion the programme, its benefits, and its impact on productivity
- Gather and capture learnings and good/best practice and provide feedback insight, share best practice, and identify opportunities for improvements and new initiatives
- Work collaboratively with programme colleagues and other facilitators to ensure high quality service provision
- Be flexible and responsive to the needs of participants and the programme managers
- Participate in programme-specific training and orientation
- Maintain participant activity records and documents
- Conform with all relevant contractual requirements, targets, outputs and reporting
- Comply with all aspects of the programme's Quality Assurance Framework
- Support in-programme and post-programme review and evaluation activities



During the course of the Programme, Facilitators are expected to identify opportunities where participants could benefit from deeper support by referral onto the Growth Hub and at the end of the action learning series the Facilitator will hold a one-to-one review with each individual participant to help consolidate their experience into potential next steps. As part of the process the Facilitator will:

- Undertake a structured one-to-one 'review and next steps' discussion (using video conference) to understand the challenges and opportunities they need to address, and develop a short action plan for follow-on support
- Identify opportunities for further business support and ensure effective signposting, referrals, and connections
- Link clients into further one-to-one support if not already connected (offered by the Peer Networks programme) and/or onto appropriate Growth Hub support, and liaise effectively to support relevant account management activities
- Undertake any necessary handover requirements

### **Key skills and qualifications**

Facilitators should have a range of competencies, enabling them to demonstrate their individual credibility to businesses in the network. All will have the following attributes:

- Strong facilitation capabilities and toolset – including the use of action learning principles
- Proven facilitation track record built through work performed with small-businesses, entrepreneurs, ambitious business owners and leaders
- Technical skills to run and manage groups virtually using video conference/collaboration tools
- Excellent understanding of the range of business issues associated with growth, productivity, innovation, strategy, people and skills, driving change, resilience, technology adoption
- Good understanding of the specific needs, characteristics and issues faced by SMEs with the local region
- Appreciation of the business and economic challenges posed by COVID-19



## Key characteristics:

### Essential

- Optimistic, enthusiastic, and self-motivated, with an empathetic approach
- Engaging personal style, energetic personality
- Understanding and appreciation of smaller business – from micros to large SMEs
- Passionate about getting the best out of people, with a genuine interest in supporting others to excel
- Integrity, independence, and patience
- Knowledge and application of facilitation methodologies and toolsets – including action learning styles
- Proven track record in high-impact facilitation in the SME space
- Strong interpersonal skills, with a robust but respectful and constructive approach to facilitation
- Able to offer constructive challenge
- Credibility, a strong business acumen, commercial mindset, and excellent project management skills
- Able to interact comfortably at owner/MD/CEO/Board level, with great communication, collaboration, and storytelling skills
- Flexible approach to solving business problems and the ability to articulate solutions
- High degree of personal ethics, able to understand and reflect LEP/GH/BIES strategy and values
- Ability to rapidly evaluate the needs of participants and suggest appropriate support based on their capacity, ability, and motivation
- Practical understanding of the current landscape of publicly funded business support (local and national)
- Strong IT/technical skills, including an understanding of video conference platforms (e.g. Teams/ Zoom/ Hangouts), computerised management information systems, diary management, and CRM databases
- Excellent stakeholder management and relationship management abilities

### Desirable

- Experience of developing and leading peer-to-peer groups, peer boards, or peer networks
- Experience of operating in senior leadership positions within an SME
- Experience setting up, running, and growing an SME business
- Professional experience of managing and delivering business assessment, advice and development
- Ability to analyse and present complex ideas/data and to resolve complex problems
- Relevant qualifications and accreditations



## One-to-One Support

The Peer Network Programme provides additional one-to-one support for each participant. This begins once the formal Peer Network set is complete and can utilise highly competent business coaches or mentors, the regional advisor network, or existing local business support programmes. When provided within the programme the role requires the provision of one-to-one follow-on business-focused coaching/mentoring/support to individual participants through a mixture of consultations and signposting.

The main duties of the one-to-one support include:

- Analysing the specific difficulties posed to the business by the impact of COVID-19 and what actions should be taken by the SME participant to tackle those issues, in conjunction with their learning from the peer networks
- Agreeing with the SME participant ways to maximise opportunities within their existing business
- Encouraging the SME participant to express and discuss their ideas, concerns and understanding of the business situation facing them
- Supporting participants in creating both business and personal objectives and goals
- Helping the SME participant to review their progress and set realistic and practical options to realise their goals
- Helping the SME participant to reflect on and learn from things that did not turn out as expected
- Signposting the SME participant to other sources of information, advice or further support when appropriate
- Encouraging the SME participant to take responsibility for their own decisions, plans and actions.
- Work with participants to understand their strategy, the challenges and opportunities they face, and agree a plan for follow-on advice which will address specific barriers to productivity and growth
- Deliver a series of structured one-to-one sessions (using video conferencing) to help address the identified challenges and opportunities
- Provide wide-ranging coaching, mentoring, support and direction tailored to individual participants
- Understand the local business support landscape to ensure effective signposting, referrals, and connections
- Refer clients back into (or onto) appropriate LEP/Growth Hub support and liaise effectively to support their account management activities

## Applications

In their submission, applicants will need to provide the following information as well as answer the following questions, with submissions limited to fifteen pages per applicant. Please note that no activity may be subcontracted as part of this tender process or the delivery of this tender:

Question 1: Briefly demonstrate your knowledge, understanding and experience of the local SME business environment, and the challenges and opportunities for business growth.  
Maximum 500 words

Question 2: Outline how you would undertake the requirements of the tender brief, including your capability, knowledge, and resource capacity to demonstrate how you meet the requirements of the tender brief.  
Maximum 1,000 words

Question 3: Give specific details about your track record in the design and delivery of leadership, business growth programmes and small group facilitation to support the development of SME Business Owners, as well as how you have led a client growth journey through leadership and business growth via participant learning, one-to-one coaching, mentoring and/or advice.  
Maximum 1,000 words

Question 4: Provide specific details about your approach to action learning, including your approach to the development of sustainable learning practices, and how you intend to use them to in the design and delivery of this programme, including how you will build a supportive environment then engenders trust within members of a group.  
Maximum 1,000 words

Question 5: How will you ensure participants receive high-quality one-to-one support experiences that reflect and draw from current best practice, whilst also accommodating their differing developmental needs, styles, and levels of expertise? As part of this, how will you support their immediate needs whilst helping them to develop independently over the longer term?  
Maximum 1,000 words

Question 6: How do you measure the impact of the facilitation and one-to-one support you provide?  
Maximum 500 words

Question 7: Please detail any additional value that you would derive for the participating SMEs and/or the [insert LEP/GH] area. This should focus on any additional benefits that your proposals will deliver – above and beyond the core outputs and outcomes.  
Maximum 500 words

Question 8: Please describe your organisation's experience of working collaboratively with programme funders such as LEPs and Growth Hubs to deliver a programme of this nature.  
Maximum 500 words

Question 9: Please provide details of the team involved in delivering activity, including skills or relevant qualifications and/or accreditations, their experience related to the services required, their role in your team structure, as well as providing profiles of all personnel. Maximum one sides of A4 for each person.

Question10: Please give specific details on how you respond to and manage change when delivering projects.  
Maximum 500 words

Question11: Please provide details of up to three contracts/projects/assignments you have delivered within the last two years where you have provided similar services to those required. These can be drawn from the public or private sector, or voluntary, charity or social enterprise (VCSE) that are relevant to our requirement. VCSEs may include samples of grant-funded work.  
Maximum 1,000 words

Question12: Provide details of any quality assurance certification that your company holds (e.g. ISO 9001 or equivalent standard). If no accreditation is held, please provide documentary evidence and brief description of your quality assurance capabilities (e.g. your internal quality policy or manual, GDPR, data security and protection policies).  
Maximum 250 words (copies of policies are not included within the word count)

Question13: Please provide a detailed budget for all costs involved in your proposal for the delivery of the project.

- The budget should give an indication of the cost incurred for the delivery of each individual aspect
- Day/hour rates including and without expenses
- Please state your proposed stages of payment in delivery of the project
- All prices quoted should be exclusive of VAT.

### **Applicant Details**

All applicants are required to provide the following:

- Name of main contact.
- Your organisation details
- Trading name
- Registered company name (if different from trading name)
- Address
- Telephone number
- E-mail address
- Company registration number
- VAT registration number (if applicable)
- Website address

## Contract

The contract(s) is (are) to be offered for the period up to the end of March 2021.

## Price

This is a fixed price contract. Any additional charges/cost variances will not be accepted unless signed off, in writing, by the LEP prior to spend. In terms of budget, there is sufficient funding to deliver 25 individual cohorts of 11 people, giving a total budget of £175,000 including VAT. The price per cohort is fixed at **£7,000 (incl. VAT) per cohort**. This price includes delivering all the aspects outlined in this document. Applicants may wish to deliver one or more cohorts, with the value of individual contracts awarded depending on the number of cohorts delivered by each contractor.

## Potential Extension of the Contract

If the LEP secures additional funding for the Programme, and beyond the above-mentioned dates, then contract(s) could also be awarded after April 2021.

## How to Apply

Please send the information as per the “Requirements” section (no more than 15 pages in total) electronically to Rose Joy **by 5pm on Friday 2nd October 2020** via email: [rosemary.joy@newanglia.co.uk](mailto:rosemary.joy@newanglia.co.uk)

Short-listed companies will be invited by email to present their applications to a Panel as an arranged online meeting on **w/c 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**. If your organisation has been approved as a supplier for the Scheme, you will be notified by w/c **19<sup>th</sup> October 2020**.

## Tender process

Applicants will be shortlisted based on their tender submissions which will be assessed on the following basis:

Criteria	Weighting
Capability/similar examples of the type of work being contracted for	50%
The approach for satisfying the contract	20%
Personnel to be used and their experience	20%
Value for money	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Timescales and Milestones**

- Proposals submitted - **by 5pm Friday 2nd October 2020**
- Presentation by shortlisted applicants – **w/c 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020**
- Awarding of contract(s) – **w/c 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020**
- Start of the contract(s) delivery – **from w/c 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

### **Main Contact**

Rose Joy  
Growth Programme Administrator  
New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership  
Tel.: 07436 139937  
Email: [rosemary.joy@newanglia.co.uk](mailto:rosemary.joy@newanglia.co.uk)