# Soft Market Test

For an

Advanced Digital Skills Programme for

West Sussex County Council

Ref: ADS - Mar 2022

# Section 1: Introduction

## General Requirements

* 1. The purpose of this document is to briefly explain to providers the business and technical requirements (and the expected scope) of a proposed procurement of an Advanced Digital Skills Programme, in order to seek feedback from Service Providers.
  2. **Please note:** this market testing exercise is **not** an invitation to tender or a request for formal expressions of interest. This document does not form any part of an invitation to tender. West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is issuing this request for **information only**.
  3. Any supplier invited to respond to the questionnaire is doing so to support market research only and to help make any potential procurement process more focused, efficient and to inform the specification. No supplier selection or supplier preference is implied.

## Confidentiality and Freedom of Information (FOI)

* 1. **Please note:** all information included in this Soft Market Testing is confidential and only for the recipients’ knowledge. No information included in this document or in discussions connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without prior written authorisation.
  2. All responses will be treated confidentially. However, please be aware that we are subject to the disclosure requirements of the FOI Act and that potentially any information we hold is liable to disclosure under that Act. For this reason, we strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is labelled as such. In the event that a request is subsequently made for disclosure under FOI the request will be dealt with in accordance with the legislation.

## Background

The Council is looking to procure an Advanced Digital Skills programme to support its ambition to support digital businesses with skills gaps and increase aspiration around digital careers.

This is a new initiative for the County Council and does not follow on from, or build on from, an existing Advanced Digital Skills programme.

The programme will be delivered by West Sussex County Council on behalf of all West Sussex District and Borough local authorities.

In order to reflect the varied geographies (coastal, rural, and urban) of the county, it has been agreed that there will be 3 individual projects to be delivered across 3 spatial geographies – Coastal West Sussex (Arun, Worthing, Adur), Rural West Sussex (Chichester and Horsham), and Urban West Sussex (Crawley and Mid Sussex).

## Soft Market Test Timetable

* 1. Please read this document and if you feel that your organisation is able to contribute to this exercise, please complete the questionnaire at the end of this document and return, via SE Shared Services by 12:00 on 24 March 2022.
  2. SE Shared Services is located at <https://www.sesharedservices.org.uk/esourcing>
  3. For technical support or assistance in using the SE Shared Services portal please contact the In-Tend helpdesk:
  + Tel: 0845 557 8079
  + Email: [support@in-tend.com](mailto:support@in-tend.com)
  1. Potential responders will not be prejudiced in any future procurement processes by either responding or not responding to this soft market test exercise.

# Section 2: Identification of Requirement

## Current Situation

* 1. West Sussex has always been an area of great opportunity but with some significant challenges particularly in relation to the resident skill levels. Many of these are long-standing and some have been exacerbated by the covid pandemic.
  2. There is no workforce, labour market or economic recovery programme in the UK not focused on digital skills at its heart. WSCC have an existing longstanding commitment to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) within the county; however, the remote working and contactless connection necessity of the pandemic has accelerated digital transformation by years in most organisations, increasing the need for digital skills and capability yet without the digitally skilled workforce to enable our businesses to fully capitalise on the opportunity or keep pace with the new digital challenges.
  3. The impact of Covid has led to an increase in the need for digital skills and services and has highlighted the discrepancy between the skills of our resident population and the skills need by businesses. Businesses are reporting that the lack of digitally skilled workers is impeding business growth. This is, in part, demonstrated by the large number of job vacancies in roles that require a higher level of digital skills.

## Scope and Objectives of any future procurement

* 1. The objectives of any future procurement are to select a single/multiple supplier(s) who will provide a solution which:
     + - supports businesses with their digital skills gaps
       - increases aspiration around digital careers
       - provides best value for money; and
       - enables the Council to achieve its objectives by working in a collaborative way.
  2. The broad scope of the Services includes the following:
     + - Deliver opportunity to our residents for highly paid jobs
       - Help our businesses in every sector to grow unimpeded by a skills deficit
       - Deliver creative solutions to encourage people at all stagesin their careers and education to consider digital jobs
       - Create a new narrative around the opportunity in West Sussex, **to encourage our young people and those at all stages of their careers** to consider and to be enthused about the opportunity of a Digital career
       - provide additionality not duplication, by being aware of the other projects, partners and stakeholders delivering in the geography.
       - takes inspiration from best practice around the country to meet the unique needs, geography, and business environment of West Sussex.
       - delivers evidence that will help WSCC to better understand the high levels of job vacancies in the digital sector, what is stopping people from taking up job opportunities, how the barriers can be overcome and the pipeline of projects that might develop from this programme of work
       - to be ambitious in our response
  3. The Council wishes to initiate a programme delivering to the specific needs and skills gaps of businesses and resident across the county. The project will work closely with each District and Borough Authority to deliver a targeted programme of activities and interventions.
  4. Central to each Local Digital Programme will be collaboration with local digital businesses and hubs, e.g., collaborative workspaces and/or relevant business networks.

# Section 3: Supporting information

Please note: you do not need to resize the table; it will automatically adjust to fit your response.

## Section A: Organisation and Contact Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Name of your organisation |  |
| Registered office (if applicable) |  |
| Trading address (if different from office) |  |
| What if any local connections do you have with the authority? |  |
| Name of person whom any queries relating to this questionnaire should be addressed |  |
| Telephone Number(s) |  |
| Email |  |
| Address if different to above |  |

## Section B: Questions

Please note: you do not need to resize the table; it will automatically adjust to fit your response.

|  |
| --- |
| **Question** |
| 1. Do you believe the scope of the project will meet the needs of   a) businesses within the county;  b) residents?  Please give reasons for your answers |
| **Response** |
| 1. Are you aware of other public sector organisations who are addressing or have solved a similar issue? (please note, examples can be from any sector) |
| **Response** |
| 1. Do you think that bringing an innovative solution to these issues will create any particular benefits or challenges? |
| **Response** |
| 1. From Contract Award, what would be the ideal mobilisation period length to go-live? |
| **Response** |
| 1. The 3 projects will either be included within the scope of a single tender or be tendered separately. Do you have an opinion as to which option would be most effective and why? |
| **Response** |
| 1. Do you see benefit in an overarching, separately procured, communications contract for the whole project, or would you want to see comms delivered as an integral part of each programme? |
| **Response** |
| 1. Do you think that an independent evaluation process (carried out by a third party) would be of value to the project? |
| **Response** |
| 1. Do you anticipate any particular challenges with delivering projects concurrently across the 3 different geographies? |
| **Response** |
| 1. Are there elements of the scope might not be deliverable/achievable? If so, why? |
| **Response** |
| 1. Do you have any other comments you wish to share at this point? |
| **Response** |

Thank you in advance for completing this soft market engagement questionnaire. The Council may contact you to follow-up on your response.