

## **CARD - Audit, Assurance and Forensic Accounting - Prior Information Notice**

**Dear all**

The Department for Education, on behalf of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), will soon begin market engagement activities to establish a 3-year framework agreement. This will consist of up to three requirements, with a maximum combined spend of £5,700,000 over a three-year period. Our current intention is to divide our requirements into 2-3 lots. The Department intends to build an extension option into the agreement of one year.

The Corporate, Assurance and Restructuring Directorate (CARD) is responsible for providing expert financial support to ensure the ESFA's funding is spent effectively.

### **Our opportunity:**

This is broadly a re-procurement of existing services, as our current framework is due to expire in early to mid 2025. After careful consideration, the Department deems a call-off framework with no commitment to spend as the surest way to deliver value for money while ensuring sufficient capacity to meet our requirements. The Department intends to establish this framework on behalf of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, an Arm's Length Body of the Department.

The ESFA is responsible for funding education and skills providers in England, such as but not limited to local authority maintained schools, academies, colleges, HEI's and Independent training providers. The ESFA ensures the timely and accurate allocation of around £72 billion of funding per year and is responsible for ensuring that providers comply with terms and conditions of funding, ensuring that these public funds are properly managed and used for the purposes intended.

### **Post-16 audits:**

The ESFA has an assurance review programme covering post-16 providers of education and skills training (which includes colleges, academies, HEI's and independent training providers) in England which includes funding assurance reviews, of which around 60 are outsourced to a panel of suppliers via our current framework. We require outsourced capacity from suppliers to deliver post-16 funding assurance reviews to confirm that training providers have claimed funding for learners in line with published funding rules, complete funding assurance review

reports and issue an opinion. We would normally allocate assurance reviews around June each year which must be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> November.

**Pre-16 audits:**

The Department is looking for potential capacity to support our assurance programme for academies, potential new assurance reviews covering early years, technical accounting publications or framework documents. We may outsource the requirement to review academy funding audits, financial management and governance compliance audits or funding assurance reviews of early years providers. Due to the niche nature of the post-16 funding assurance reviews which require in depth knowledge and understanding of post-16 funding rules we are uncertain whether it will be suitable to combine both our Pre-16 and Post-16 requirements into one lot, we shall determine this after our market engagement activities prior to the publication of our tender.

**Counter fraud and forensic investigations:**

The ESFA issues approximately 10 forensic accounting/investigation projects per year, on an ad-hoc basis. This work will differ in scope from our risk and random audits and will therefore be managed via a separate lot. Each commission will require an evidenced based findings report, which will be shared with both the ESFA and the education provider in question. The ESFA will determine what enforcement action should be taken based on the reported findings.

**Next steps:**

Please contact me at [Robert.Alexander@Education.gov.uk](mailto:Robert.Alexander@Education.gov.uk) to express your interest. We will begin our market engagement activities in early October. This shall commence with a presentation detailing our full requirements and will be followed by an expression of interest questionnaire.

Importantly, if your organisation is interested in the above, please ensure you have registered an account our [Jaggaer system](#). To create an account, submit a [Supplier Support Ticket](#). For assistance, call our support desk at: 0800 069 8630.