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| **EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND – NEET SPECIFICATION** |
| **BACKGROUND** |
| **General**  The contracting authority is the Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills acting through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), an executive agency of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills exercising functions to fund adult education and skills.  The SFA, acting as an Opt-In Organisation for the European Social Fund (ESF), is procuring education and training services to meet priorities identified by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) area European Structural and Investment Funds Sub–Committees. As an Opt-In Organisation the SFA provides match funding at Priority Axis level utilising sources of public funding as match for ESF funded activity.  This Invitation to Tender (ITT) supports ESF Investment Priority 1.2 where the need has been identified both in the LEP area and European Structural and Investment Fund Strategies.  The SFA is looking to procure an organisation to deliver education and training services to support young people who are 15-24 who are not in education employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET in the LEP area set out below.  **SEMLEP Area Background**  The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) area’s strengths lie in its strategic location across the Midlands and South East of England; proximity to London; and a network of towns with a track record of delivering new jobs and a commitment to future growth. The population is set to grow by 13% between 2011 and 2021, a rate much higher than the national projected rate of 8.6%.  The SEMLEP area has almost 78,000 businesses and benefits from a natural environment and rural areas that make it an attractive place to live, work and invest.  Furthermore, self-employment levels are higher than national average and the SEMLEP Area has identified key growth sectors that could provide employment opportunities for those currently out of work. These include: high performance engineering, logistics and supply chain, manufacturing and advanced technology, arts, heritage, sports, visitor economy, cultural and creative industries and the low carbon economy. The social enterprise sector is growing in the SEMLEP area providing further opportunities for jobs and growth.  In spite of its many strengths significant challenges must be addressed if SEMLEP is to realise its growth aspirations.  Unemployment rates in the SEMLEP area vary substantially in terms of age, gender, disability and ethnicity. For example:   * in September 2015 the percentage of people of working age who are in receipt of ESA, Incapacity Benefit or registered disabled in the South East Midlands is 5.5% of total claimants compared to 1.3% on Job Seeker Allowance; * Unemployment by ethnicity (16+) highlights the percentage of ethnic minority population wo are unemployed is much higher than the percentage of the white populations; * The number of females of working age (16-64) unemployed has increased from 16,300 in June 2008 to 16,700 in September 2015; * Youth unemployment is fairly low in the SEMLEP Areas but pockets of deprivation exist where rates of youth not in employment, education or training are very high. For instance, the latest 16-18 NEETs figure available for Bedford Borough is 5.5%, Luton is 4.7% and Northamptonshire is 5%  *( The latest 16-18 NEET figures by local authority can be found here:* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training>).   Although educational attainment is generally high in SEMLEP, there is a need to invest in education and vocational training to enable those seeking work to take up opportunities identified by employers and to reduce barriers to further education.  The SEMLEP ESIF Strategy suggests that more needs to be done to build on an already reasonable strong skills base in order to meet the full range of current and future business and employment needs. Employers continue to report job opportunities but with a skills gap for local workless people, including in areas such as leadership and management, mechanical and engineering, as well as technical and basic skills.  Despite over half of the resident population working in higher skilled occupations, the level of out commuting is a major issue for the South East Midlands as significant proportions of residents in employment commute elsewhere for work.  SEMLEP has a diverse population with pockets of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015) reported 27% of Corby’s population, 31% of Luton’s and 28% of Northampton’s living in the most deprived areas of England compared to considerably lower levels in South Northamptonshire (0%), Aylesbury Vale (2.7%) and Central Bedfordshire (7%). |
| **DEFINITION OF TERMS** |
| **At risk of becoming NEET:** Support for at risk young people aged 15 to 24, to prevent them becoming NEET.  **Candidate:** means an organisation who has been invited to take part in this restricted procurement procedure  **Disability**: A person has a disability if they disclose a disability that limits their ability to work.  **Eligibility:** Other than 15-24 year olds at risk of being NEET, only people who are eligible to work in UK are eligible for this programme. Asylum seekers are not generally supported by ESF.  **Employed**: People are employed if they perform work for pay, profit or family gain. People are self-employed if they work in his/her own business for the purpose of earning a profit, even if they are not making a profit or are just setting up.  **Job Seeking:** Where applicable, persons engaged in job seeking is understood to be persons usually without work and actively seeking work.  **Qualifications:** Qualification means a formal outcome assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. Regulated qualifications/aims are those listed in the Learning Aims Reference Service as being regulated. Non-regulated aims are those listed in the Learning Aims Reference Service as being non-regulated.  Regulated and non-regulated aims must be planned to be delivered within budget.  Qualification rates are based on the published LARS rates at the start of the contract.  **Services:** The provision of education, training or support delivered to individuals.  **Start Date:** Employment status and age are determined on the date of starting on the Provision.  **Survey**: Where applicable, long term sustained outcomes over 6 months will be monitored separately. Some ESF indicators will be collected by survey by the ESF Managing Authority directly from the participants.  **Unemployed:** Unemployed are persons usually without work, available for work and actively seeking work. Persons considered registered unemployed would be included. Full time students are considered as inactive as they are not available for work. Long term unemployment is greater than 6 months for under 25 years old and greater than 12 months for 25 years old or more. |
| **SERVICE REQUIREMENTS** |
| **General**  All activities must complement and avoid duplication with other provision, thereby adding value to Department for Work and Pensions, Big Lottery, Education Funding Agency, Skills Funding Agency, Local Authority (LA), National Careers Service and the new Careers Enterprise Company funded provision. Successful candidates will be required to ensure that ESF provision will clearly add value and not duplicate any provision that can be arranged locally through existing mainstream institutions.  ***Capacity and readiness to deliver***  Candidates must have:   * The resources to offer very local and flexible delivery in the areas where levels of NEET are highest. * The capacity to deliver provision immediately upon commencement of the contract and that delivery should not be delayed in any way by any recruitment processes or other processes or relationships that need to be established.   ***Track record***  The ability to deliver the required activity, based on a track record in the successful delivery and management of this type of programme.  Candidates will need to have an understanding of the varied needs of young people and an ability to engage and work with young people, especially those who are disengaged and vulnerable and have particular learning needs or barriers to learning.  Candidates will need to have experience of creating employment opportunities.  And in designing and delivering high quality provision for young people including those who are NEET/at risk of becoming NEET.  ***Management and quality assurance***  Candidates will need to have effective management arrangements in place to ensure all of the requirements of this specification particularly in regard to meeting the identified needs of identified young people are fulfilled. The Services must be delivered to a high quality and successful tenderers will need to have in place quality assurance and improvement processes.  The Service needs to be flexible and responsive to the changing economic and political landscape and take into consideration that the approach and associated processes may change during the life of this contract. Therefore Candidates will be expected to be able to change the delivery of the Services accordingly.  ***Partnership working***  Candidates will be required to work in partnership with other organisations delivering education and training in the area to ensure the Service is complementary to and not in competition with other funded provision.  Candidates will engage with all LAs in the SEMLEP area and will be expected to identify internal LA links across different departments. The Service must be able to respond to changing local needs and opportunities, as well as policy changes.  Candidates will be required to establish linkages with and have an understanding of, local stakeholder needs and develop strong links with the key stakeholders.  ***Market intelligence and local knowledge***  The delivery of the Services must take into account the current and future social and economic indicators including labour market intelligence and in particular the specific factors affecting the area in which the Service is being delivered. A comprehensive understanding of the current employment market and the current and future social and economic indicators including labour market intelligence.  ***Management information and reporting***  Candidates will develop management information systems to enable it to submit data to the Skills Funding Agency via the Individual Learner Record (ILR) and put in place robust arrangements for ensuring that the evidence required to support payments is collected and retained.  Candidates will be required to share with LAs, LEPs and the Skills Funding Agency ongoing performance management data as well as additional intelligence to improve the effectiveness of all NEET reduction and prevention activities including details of each young person supported and update them of the young person’s progress.  **SEMLEP Specific Service Requirements**  The aim of the Services is to support disengaged young people (NEETs) to enter work or training, progress in the labour market and to reduce the number of young people aged 15-24 years who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. The Services will improve their education, employability and personal skills which will enable them to progress successfully into work or further learning and improve their chances of gaining employment/ starting an Apprenticeship.  The Services must achieve the following for young people;   * A bridge to positive outcomes such as further learning or employment * Emotional readiness to apply their learning, skills and behaviours to further learning or work * Higher self-esteem and being more optimistic about their future and opportunities * Self-motivation to remove barriers to success   The Services will align to the SEMLEP’S Strategic Economic Plan and will support progression into all sectors, to address long term youth employment, and where possible entry/ progression into the following Showcase Growth sectors:   * Manufacturing and Advanced Technology (including food and drink) * High Performance Engineering (including automotive and aerospace) * Culture and creative (arts, heritage, sports, visitor economy, cultural and creative) * Logistics and Supply Chain   An Implementation Plan must be produced at the beginning of the contract and discussed with SEMLEP (and its constituent local authorities) to ensure the Service are coherent and complementarity with existing and other planned activity across each local authority area.  The Services must include an innovative induction programme to gain early engagement with young people. This will include setting up a referral mechanism that will successfully engage with the target group and provide roll on roll off flexibility of recruitment.  The Services must focus on 15-16 year olds at risk of becoming NEET and those young people who face multiple barriers to their participation and need a different type of provision to engage and keep them in learning. Such groups could include: young carers; looked after young people; care leavers; young people with mental health difficulties; young offenders; teenage parents; young people from black and minority ethnic groups; refugees or asylum seekers; homeless people; people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; young people with poor literacy/ numeracy and/or few qualifications; out of work graduates.  The Services must deliver an initial assessment and needs analysis for all individuals undertaking learning programmes, which results in robust individualised learning and transition plans with regular progress reviews and exit interviews. The delivery of personalised provision should be flexible (in terms of content, times and location) through the involvement of young people in both the design and delivery of the programmes, including training to provide peer support taking into account local conditions and requirements.  The Services should provide tailored information advice and guidance (IAG) for each young person, with intensive personal guidance and help to develop their understanding of the post 16 opportunities available to them. The Services must help young people gain a greater understanding of their own abilities, learning needs and the range of opportunities available, supported by the effective use of intensive enhanced and impartial high quality IAG at all stages of the learner journey.  The Services must provide individual and continuous mentor or key worker support. The Services must provide a combination of personal planning, mentoring, coaching, counselling, and ongoing one-to-one sessions and support to encourage young people to return to existing learning opportunities, participate in Traineeships or Apprenticeships; or enter into jobs, as appropriate for each young person.  The Candidate must develop strong links with Jobcentre Plus; National Careers Service; National Apprenticeship Service; SEMLEP; public, private and third sector employers; apprenticeship providers and relevant local economic partners. Where the young person is aged 18 or over and is claiming benefit, the Candidate will engage with the relevant organisation, or with the relevant Jobcentre Plus (JCP) adviser if they are on Jobseekers’ Allowance (JSA).  The Services must provide stimulating and motivating activities that raise awareness of the world of work, build confidence and include summer activities to maintain interest and engagement, such as community volunteering.  There must be successful delivery of job opportunities and training outcomes for the target groups delivered in a range of settings, avoiding excessive levels of classroom-based activity.  Innovative elements should be built into learning programmes, to give young people experience of success in learning, and increase commitment and motivation to achieve. There should be innovative activities to address barriers to learning and work including the effective use of incentives.  There must be an emphasis on building independent learning skills, employability skills and potential, and resilience.  Individual programmes should develop and demonstrate young people’s employability skills through a range of opportunities such as enterprise, employer-based vocational training and tasters, employment trials, work pairing, work experience, internships and voluntary work in both Public and Private Sectors or in the Third Sector and/or part-time, evening or weekend work. Employability skills including job preparation, interviews, understanding employer requirements must be included.    Individualised wrap-around programmes of support, focusing on English and Maths and including skills that may not be funded through mainstream, should be built to meet assessed need. This programme could, for example, include specialised provision for teenage parents.  The Services must provide functional numeracy and literacy screener tools and support to be provided where required, including personal tuition that supports mainstream delivery. English/ESOL courses and functional numeracy support should be provided for young people who are already NEET.  The Services must provide longer-term support both pre-and post-progression where necessary. There should be a ‘structured ending’ where support is gradually tapered off. Young people must be supported to re-engage in training, employment and self-employment, including meaningful and quality work experience, placements, volunteering, traineeships and Apprenticeships.  The Services delivered should lead to:   * Progression into education, training and/or employment * Progression into employment in the SEMLEP’s Showcase Growth sectors * Progression into Apprenticeships   The Services must address any transport issue and include other applicable support measures to facilitate engagement of young people, for example childcare, confidence building, money management, personal issues.  The Services must deliver interventions to support all target groups and their related needs across the whole of the LEP area. The delivery of the Services will need to address any issues with regard to rurality, difficulties with accessibility/transport and the requirement for provision for small groups in some areas. The Services must be delivered so as to ensure that access to provision and the variety of activities available meet the same standards across the geographical area.  The successful Candidate will be required to share pupil level destination data to support the local authorities’ statutory requirement to track the destinations of individuals up to the age of 19 (24 for those with a Special Educational Need).  There must be a ‘Coordinator’ post, which addresses the key stakeholder interaction and relationship building required, thus ensuring provision is joined up across all LEP ESF opt-ins. The Coordinator is required to meet with the LEP on an agreed regular (ideally bimonthly) basis to update progress.  The Services should be delivered so as to meet the principles of re-engagement provision as set out in Annex 3 of the Statutory Guidance for Raising of the Participation Age:  <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/349300/Participation_of_Young_People_Statutory_Guidance.pdf> Robust and transparent performance measures, linked to clear progression routes for learners will need to be implemented.  Successful Candidates will be required to:   * Share sub-contractor performance data with the LEP. * Share information on engagement with LEP priority sectors. * Complete a full Evaluation report. |
| **ELIGIBILITY** |
| General  General eligibility requirements are set out in : the European Social Fund Programme for England 2014-2020 National Eligibility Rules which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-programme-guidance>  Please note LEP Specific requirements are subject to the National Eligibility Rules detailed above.  SEMLEP Specific  The Services will support young people who are 15-24 years, NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, including unemployed graduates. Individuals supported must be aged 15-24 years at the start date of the activity.  For 15-16 year olds either on or off school roll, the use of ESF funds is restricted to:   * those young people who are disengaged from regularly timetabled learning and are at risk of not participating post-16; * or who are on the LA’s Risk of NEET Indicator list   Pre-16 provision will support underachieving pupils in schools/academies and ensure statutory provision for those off-school-roll. It is critical to work with LAs prior to engage with this particular target group. |
| **GEOGRAPHY / AREA OF DELIVERY** |
| The Services will be delivered within SEMLEP area.  Multiple awards may be considered. |
| **FUNDING AND DELIVERABLES** |
| Currently £900,000 will be available for the period from August 16 to 31 March 2018. This may be increased if additional funding becomes available.  The table below shows the initial planned outcomes, but performance management may change the volumes and mix during the life of the contract.  From the funding available on the regulated and non-regulated lines, the provider must plan to deliver the appropriate education & training for each participant to enable them to progress.  The minimum service deliverables, values and volumes for which evidence must be provided are as follows.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Description** | **Volumes** | **Unit Cost Total Value Average per Intervention** | **£** | | ST01 Learner Assessment and Plan | 600 | £50 | £30,000 | | RQ01 Regulated Learning |  |  | £257,000 | | NR01 Non Regulated Activity |  |  | £286,000 | | PG01 Progression Paid Employment (EMP) | 150 | £400 | £60,000 | | PG03 Progression Education (EDU) | 250 | £400 | £100,000 | | PG04 Progression Apprenticeship (EDU) | 150 | £400 | £60,000 | | SU01 Sustained Employment 3 Months | 145 | £200 | £29,000 | | SU03 Sustained Education 3 Months | 245 | £200 | £49,000 | | SU01 Sustained Employment 3 Months | 145 | £200 | £29,000 | | Total |  |  | £900,000 | |