**Barking Food School – industry links and course development**

**1. Background**

**1.1 Introduction**

Barking and Dagenham is one of London’s most deprived boroughs, with higher-than-average levels of unemployment, inactivity and low pay. This situation is rooted in the legacy of de-industrialisation, but the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. The borough currently has the highest unemployment rate in the country, and one of the highest rates of Universal Credit claimants who are in work.

These issues underpin high levels of both food insecurity and obesity – issues which are interrelated, as buying and preparing healthy food often requires more time and money than cheaper, processed food with high fat and sugar content. There are nearly 20 food banks operating in the borough. At the same time over 65% of adults are overweight or obese and the child obesity rate is one of the highest in the country. Less than half of adults and 15-year-olds in the borough get their 5-a-day.

Barking and Dagenham Council is committed to building a more inclusive economy that offers more and better jobs for residents, underpinned by long term targets to reduce unemployment and low pay, alongside a preventative approach to services that seeks to increase the resilience, wellbeing and independence of local communities. The Council’s ambition is to support a shift towards a ‘cleaner’, more sustainable economy, by working to attract, invest in and facilitate the arrival of new sectors and organisations offering better paid, better skilled jobs, as well as supporting growth and improvement in the ‘everyday economy’ where most people work.

In the coming years, the development of the borough’s food sector will be a key focus – catalysed by efforts to ensure the planned relocation of the City of London’s historic wholesale meat, fish, and fruit and vegetable markets (Smithfield, Billingsgate and New Spitalfields) to Dagenham Dock lead to wider social and economic benefits. The arrival of this major new anchor institution to the borough represents an investment of £775m, bringing up to 800 jobs and a pipeline of new apprenticeships and community outreach sessions. As a distributor of fresh produce and major player in London’s wider food system, the markets also offer an opportunity to shift the borough’s relationship with food, contributing to efforts to tackle issues of food insecurity, poor nutrition and obesity.

As part of the new market build, the City of London Corporation (COLC) and the Council share a commitment to food education and the establishment of a new Food School on the new site at Dagenham Dock as well as complementary activity in Barking Town Centre. A report by Counterculture explored the education needs and best facilities and programmes required to train tomorrow’s market traders as well as develop a world-class retail market in Barking town centre. This covered: an overview of existing food skills and education landscape, a gap analysis, agreeing priorities, developing options and a final preferred option, as well as outlining a business case and identifying potential partners.

Following the research, the Council and COLC developed the concept of a 3-part food school offer:

* Dagenham Food School – a training facility that meets the current and future needs of the market traders, including fishmonger and butchery apprenticeships, as well as food skills, handling, technology, finance and business development;
* Barking Food School – a new specialist catering college that meets the needs of the wider food sector, with a focus on world cuisine and food innovation and sustainability, delivered in partnership with Barking and Dagenham College; alongside a programme of food education support for schools to inform and inspire young people around good food and careers in the industry;
* Food Hall – a street food retail and business incubation hub in Barking Town Centre that provides a retail front for the wholesale markets and celebrates the borough’s diverse food cultures.

This work seeks to support the curriculum development for the Barking Food School and develop the industry partnerships and knowledge to ensure it meets the needs of the sector – with a focus on sustainable and world cuisine, which is under-served by mainstream food colleges. Strong industry partnerships are also key to the success of the borough’s school food education programme, in order to engage and support more young people from under-represented and diverse communities to access good jobs and careers in the food sector.

**2 Objectives, deliverables and methodology**

**2.1 Objectives and research questions**

The objectives of this piece of work are to:

* Understand the food sector skills gap, particularly around world cuisine and innovative approaches to low-waste, low-carbon restaurants/catering.
* Develop links with industry that could lead to ongoing involvement with the Food School e.g. offering careers activities, work experience, apprenticeships and training placements with a clear line of sight to work, as part of our schools programmes or the FE/HE programmes of our partners, guest speakers on courses, financial or promotional support of the Food School.
* Develop a clear set of pathways into the sector, including courses and new curricula where necessary that speak to the skills gaps identified by the industry and that will help our young people access exciting, well-paid jobs in the industry.

**2.2 Deliverables and methodology**

We would like the work to provide:

1. A programme of engagement with London’s restaurant and catering industry outside Barking & Dagenham to understand and review skills needs and identify potential industry partners.
2. A programme of engagement with local businesses and City of London market traders to understand and review local business skills needs (building on work of Barking & Dagenham College) and trader skills needs (working with City of London).
3. A set of FE courses and their curriculums that would give participants the skills to fill these gaps.
4. A set of infrastructure and equipment requirements that an FE provider would need to deliver the courses.
5. Recommendations for branding and promotion of the courses to attract young people – particularly marginalised and/or racialised communities – to the new courses and careers in food.
6. A set of educational pathways from school to further education to higher education towards well-paid, rewarding jobs in hospitality and catering, with an emphasis on world cuisine and low-carbon food industry.

We would welcome proposals for the methodology as part of the tender but suggest that it includes:

* Mapping and engagement with potential industry partners – including those in the world cuisine and low carbon food industry – to identify and meet skills needs
* Desk-based research, meetings and focus groups with food industry associations to identify existing food courses and curriculum gaps
* Interviews with B&D College, Barking Adult College, CU University and other local FE/HE providers to understand their current offer.
* Curriculum design and development.

**2.3 Provider characteristics**

We are looking for a research partner or partners with:

* Demonstrable understanding of the context of Barking and Dagenham, the London-wide hospitality industry and skills gaps/inclusion issues within the industry.
* Demonstrable expertise and knowledge of developing food-based FE curriculums and skills pathways to good food jobs.
* Demonstrable hospitality industry networks and willingness to support LBBD to forge sustainable connections.
* A clear plan to work collaboratively with the Council to ensure the project delivers the desired outputs and information within the project timescale.

**3 Budget and timescales**

The budget for this project is up to £40,000 including VAT. We are looking for a quality (80%) and value for money (20%) proposal.

Please provide a method statement that clearly responds to the assessment questions below, referencing the ‘provider characteristics set out above, along with a breakdown of the budget and submit these to [joanna.wilson@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.wilson@lbbd.gov.uk) by **no later than the close of play on Monday 19th December 2022.**

From the tenders submitted, the three with the highest marks will be selected and undergo an interview process, in which the appropriate provider will be selected.

We will select the highest scoring tenderers based on the method statement and budget submission no later than 12th January 2023 and will hold presentations/interviews on the afternoons of Tuesday 17th and Thursday 19th January 2023. We aim to hold the project kick off meeting on w/b 6th February 2023 and start by w/b 20th February 2023.

We estimate the project will last around six months, starting mid-February and running till early September 2023.

**Assessment Questions**

Please provide a method statement that includes responses to the following questions, with reference to the ‘provider characteristics’ above where relevant:

1. Describe your understanding of the research context, goals, and desired outcomes – highlighting any key challenges and opportunities.
2. Describe how you will approach the work, including a detailed methodology that meets the research objectives and explains how you will engage the food industry and stakeholder groups to develop the recommended approach, priorities and activities.
3. Describe any expertise, knowledge and experience that will enable you/your organisation to engage industry and develop FE and HE food curriculums, focusing on world cuisine and innovative approaches to low-carbon food.
4. Describe how you will work with the council to ensure the project meets its objectives, including the support and information you would need from the council to best enable you to carry out this work and a proposed timescale for delivery.

The response should also include your quote for the complete provision of this work, with a breakdown of your costs, before and after VAT and the required signed declarations set out in the accompanying document ‘Evaluation criteria – food strategy research’, using the templates provided.

**Further Information, Queries and Clarification**

For further information, queries or clarifications relating to this bid, please contact [joanna.wilson@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.wilson@lbbd.gov.uk) by Tuesday 13th December 2022.