



# **Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) Ltd Revised PR and public affairs agency recruitment tender document**

**July 2020**

**Project headlines:**

<i><b>A 20-month opportunity for a retained PR and public affairs agency, to be reviewed after year one. The first year will run from 1 August 2020 to 31 March 2021 (inclusive).</b></i>
<i><b>Build high-profile, high-quality and measurable campaigns that make significant impacts at an international, national and local level.</b></i>
<i><b>Make a significant impact, promoting how Oxfordshire's key assets can drive the UK's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as supporting future net-zero ambitions.</b></i>
<i><b>Driven by impactful, targeted and content-rich information, with the ability to help OxLEP's messaging stand out from the current 'digital noise' that has been created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</b></i>

## **1. Background on this tender document**

On 10 February 2020, we launched a tender opportunity for a PR/public affairs agency to work alongside OxLEP for a two-year period. This opportunity was closed at 5pm on 6 March 2020 and a number of agencies were shortlisted for consideration on 11 March 2020.

As a direct result of the COVID-19, we took the decision on 19 March 2020 to temporarily suspend the original recruitment process and advised all shortlisted agencies of this step.

Since this suspension, it has become very apparent that some areas of support outlined in the original tender document needed to be significantly refined. Therefore, we have taken the decision to coordinate a new recruitment process, based against this updated tender document and we will reopen this opportunity to the wider market.

## **2. OxLEP background**

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) was launched in March 2011. We are one of 37 LEPs in England and we are responsible for championing and developing Oxfordshire's economy.

In recent years, we have made considerable progress in strengthening Oxfordshire's economy by establishing robust and effective relationships between businesses, academia and the public sector.

We act as an informed, independent advocate for those driving innovation and growth across the county and – through a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for Oxfordshire – we prioritise key programmes that build dynamic economic growth.

Our highlight achievements to-date includes:

- We have secured in-excess of £650 million-worth of central government and European funds benefitting the Oxfordshire economy and our communities
- Working with the private sectors, we have supported the creation of around 50,000 new jobs between 2012 and 2017, representing over 50% of a 2031 target of 85,600 new jobs
- Working alongside key partners, we now oversee a £2.2bn growth programme for the county
- We have led the development of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, which has an ambition to position the county as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems, highlighting our world-leading science and technology cluster
- We have led the development of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, which sets out an ambitious framework to enable the county to be at the forefront of energy innovation to foster clean growth
- We are a key player – working alongside Government departments, local authorities, academia, businesses and communities – in the evolution of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

**Our vision is to see:**

***‘Oxfordshire as a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence.’***

### **3. OxLEP today**

Today – we continue to build-on several years of success, championing the Oxfordshire economy and securing funding for the benefit of both our business community and wider Oxfordshire communities.

We have three distinct business units, supporting our everyday work:

- **OxLEP** (*strategy and major Government-funded projects*)
- **OxLEP Skills** (*promotion of apprenticeships, work experience, linking business with education – supported by stakeholders, including the Careers Enterprise Company and the ESF-supported Skills for Business programme*)
- **OxLEP Business** (*growth hub, the ERDF-funded programmes of eScalate and Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) and international trade and investment for Oxfordshire*)

#### **4. The Oxfordshire economy**

As a county, Oxfordshire continues to reaffirm a world-leading economic position, with many international and national bodies highlighting the success of our economy, but clearly the economic impact of COVID-19 exposes aspects of this level of success – key statistics and highlights currently include:

##### **Economy:**

- A GVA of £23bn per year, currently, one of just three net County contributors to the exchequer
- A significant player in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, which contributes over £111bn GVA per year, with the potential to do more
- A potential £180bn boost to the UK economy through our four transformative technologies, as identified in the county's 2017 Science and Innovation Audit

##### **Jobs and business survival rates:**

- Around 50,000 new jobs created in Oxfordshire between 2011/12 and 2016/17
- The UK five-year survival rate for businesses born in 2011 and still active in 2016 was 44.1%, Oxfordshire averaged 49.3% during the same period

##### **Academia and research:**

- Home to the number one 2020 Times Higher Education's globally-ranked university – the University of Oxford was also number one in 2019 and 2018. In addition, Oxford Brookes University ranks in the top 50 in the Complete University Guide 2021.
- Home to the largest fund for university spin outs in Europe, via Oxford Sciences Innovation, totalling £600m.
- Home to the number one concentration of science research facilities in Western Europe.

## 5. The opportunity

Outlined below is an overview of the required support. All of which require a form of alignment with the Government’s five ‘business focused groups’, created as a response to COVID-19:

- **The future of industry:** How to accelerate business innovation and leverage private sector investment in research and development
- **Green recovery:** How to capture economic growth opportunities from the shift to net zero carbon emissions
- **Backing new businesses:** How to make the UK the best place in the world to start and scale a business
- **Increasing opportunity:** How to level up economic performance across the UK, including through skills and apprenticeships
- **The UK open for business:** How to win and retain more high value investment for the UK

Support required:	Approximate percentage of project brief:
<p><b>The importance of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy and Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, in-light of the COVID-19 pandemic:</b></p> <p>Build a national and international profile (targeting an agreed set of stakeholders) for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</b> – specifically supporting its ambition to be a top-three global innovation ecosystem, driven by the county’s transformative technologies and their collective capabilities and as a key driver to support an effective national economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic</li> </ol> <p>And;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy</b> – specifically supporting its ambition to be at the global forefront of energy innovation to foster clean growth, as well as backing the UK’s increased ambition for zero-carbon by 2050.</li> </ol> <p><b><i>Lead-on the development of a compelling story about Oxfordshire’s economic strengths and capabilities as well as highlighting its ability to lead the UK’s economic</i></b></p>	<p>30%</p>

<p><b>recovery from COVID-19, taking this narrative to international, national and significant sector audiences, with a view to influence key decision makers.</b></p> <p><b><i>In addition, support with the development of a narrative as to how Oxfordshire can play a major role in the Government’s ‘levelling-up’ ambitions locally and nationally through, for example, skills development, commercialisation, manufacturing and supply chain opportunities.</i></b></p>	
<p><b>Supporting our businesses to recover and ‘bounce-back’ from COVID-19:</b></p> <p>Working with the in-house OxLEP communications team, support with the development and help execute an ongoing plan of tactical engagement, that supports our business community to recover and ‘bounce-back’ from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly, those communities most marginalised.</p> <p>This should be driven by impactful and content-rich information, with the ability to help OxLEP’s messaging stand out from the current ‘digital noise’ that has been created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p><b><i>We believe the likely best way of engaging our key audiences – as a direct result of the pandemic – is through our digital channels, or indeed, through digital tools we are currently not utilising, particularly those that can reach significant influencers.</i></b></p>	20%
<p><b>International Trade and Investment:</b></p> <p>Working alongside OxLEP’s Head of Innovation and Inward Investment, support the international work that promotes the unique global assets and lead Oxfordshire has in key sectors (as outlined in the LIS and <u>Internationalisation Delivery Plan</u>) to an international audience of trade and investment advisers, working for UK Government in our embassies and consulates across the world and foreign trade and investment advisers based in the UK.</p> <p>This is critical following COVID-19 outbreak and Brexit too. Oxfordshire’s key sectors – in particular, our life sciences and healthcare sectors – were braced and ready to respond to this global emergency. The pandemic has also seen Government recognise the importance of Oxfordshire’s key strengths with further high-profile investment.</p>	30%

<p>As the pandemic eases, how can Oxfordshire not only continue to lead the way in responding to the global emergency, but also, maintain its global investment attraction? And how might continued investment into Oxfordshire benefit the UK too?</p> <p><b><i>Raise awareness of trade and investment opportunities and drive trade and investment enquires and success in Oxfordshire, supporting the UK's economic recovery from COVID-19 too and the move into a post-Brexit economy.</i></b></p>	
<p><b>Secretaries of State and Oxfordshire MP engagement:</b></p> <p>Use significant stakeholder management and communications skills to build a clear narrative of Oxfordshire's economic strengths and globally-significant capabilities, targeting identified secretaries of state, ministers and Oxfordshire MPs.</p> <p>Regarding Oxfordshire MPs – this narrative should also highlight how the county's communities can benefit at first-hand from the county's globally-significant technologies (more below).</p> <p><b><i>Create opportunities for meaningful dialogue with key representatives in Westminster.</i></b></p>	10%
<p><b>Highlighting how Oxfordshire communities can benefit from the county's globally-significant technologies and its world-class response to COVID-19:</b></p> <p>Working with the in-house OxLEP Communications team, help to devise a clear approach to promoting how Oxfordshire communities – across all socioeconomic backgrounds – can benefit from Oxfordshire's ambition to be a top-three global innovation ecosystem and some of the world-leading projects being led in the county, combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p><b><i>Support the creation of measurable campaigns that can genuinely reach out to communities in Oxfordshire, promoting the benefits of the county's future ambitions.</i></b></p>	10%

**Expected approach:**

We expect the recruited agency to be both **a)** collaborative in its approach (with both OxLEP and our key partners) and **b)** possess the ability to show autonomy in developing projects and campaigns.

## **6. Project budget**

This is a 20-month opportunity, which will be reviewed at the end of the financial year 2020/21 (end of March 2021).

For year one, a maximum eight-month budget of £30,000 (not including VAT) will be available for this contract. This will run between 1 August 2020 (details of the earliest possible start date, subject to a 'standstill period', can be found in section 7) and 31 March 2021.

A provisional budget of £45,000 (not including VAT) will be allocated for 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

We would expect a contract proposal that runs up until at least 31 March 2021, but would encourage proposals for the entire 20-month period.

An additional pool of budget will be available to support the chosen agency's activity – this will be defined upon appointment. We believe this budget will allow the preferred agency to meet project expectations.

## **7. Expected experience of recruited PR agency**

Specific criteria, outlining the recruitment of the selected agency during the interview process – can be found in section 8. However, broadly-speaking we would hope to attract responses from agencies who clearly demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Those with a strong understanding of how to communicate effectively with digital influencers and tailor messages through digital means
- Those with a full-understanding of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit has had on business communities and – indeed – the ability that Oxfordshire's key assets have in being able to lead the UK's economic recovery
- Those with a significant reach into international and national influencers that are specific to this brief
- Those with experience of working with MPs, central government and other government departments
- Those with a strong experience of B2B communications
- Those with a strong understanding of the Oxfordshire, the Oxfordshire economy, Oxfordshire communities and the county's key assets
- Those with a strong understanding of the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships

- Those with a strong understanding of key Oxfordshire strategies – including the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy and Oxfordshire Plan 2050

## **8. The process**

The table below outlines key dates relating to this process. We aim to have commissioned this project to a preferred agency **by Friday 31 July 2020** with interested agencies submitting tender response documents by **Thursday 23 July 2020 (5pm)** – details of submission process can be found in section 11.

Key dates are as follows:

<b>Wednesday 8 July (5pm)</b>	Tender document launched on OxLEP website and publicised accordingly
<b>Thursday 23 July (5pm)</b>	Closing date for tender responses
<b>Monday 27 July (12noon)</b>	All agencies who responded to be notified of success/non-success of tender response – a minimum of three agencies to be shortlisted for face-to-face interviews
<b>Wednesday 29 July</b>	Shortlisted agencies interviewed by OxLEP panel. Interviews will take place on the MS Teams online platform.
<b>Friday 31 July</b>	Winning agency and unsuccessful agencies to be notified

**Please note:** After we inform the interviewed agencies of the interview result, a ‘standstill period’ of at least 10 working days will be triggered.

*This process is designed to allow time for any bidder who is dissatisfied with the bidding process to act. Following this period, a contract will be issued.*

## **9. Selection process, appraisal and scoring**

All submitted proposals and the interview process for shortlisted agencies will be scored against a pre-determined criterion, outlining OxLEP’s requirements from a partner agency.

Proposals should include information that outlines the following details:

- Demonstrable understanding of the potential scope for a retainer agreement and alignment with narrative
- A clear proposal and outline as to how the proposed brief could be met
- Full budget breakdown
- Number of hours covered by retainer fee
- Details and credentials (skills/experience) of who would work on the account

- Evidence of work in a similar field(s)
- Distinctive methods of communication to reach target audiences

The scoring criteria will be as follows:

Area of scoring	Further detail	Percentage of overall score
<b>Competency</b>	It is our aim to employ an agency that demonstrates competence against the brief and also demonstrates a clear understanding of Oxfordshire's position as a key player in a future, globally-facing UK economy. We would particularly invite you to share past experience(s) with us that relate strongly to OxLEP's work.	40% (0/40)
<b>Creativity</b>	Bringing Oxfordshire's 'world-class' narrative and key assets to life with identified stakeholders – through dynamic and integrated campaigns – will form an important part of your pitch.	30% (0/30)
<b>Personality</b>	Working with an agency, matching our team's enthusiasm and positivity is key to ensuring a strong, long-lasting relationship.	15% (0/15)
<b>Price</b>	Demonstrating good value for money benchmarked against similar agency support and outlining an expected return on an investment (though not necessarily financial) will also be considered as part of your pitch.	15% (0/15)
		<b>Total score: (out of 100)</b>

For those agencies shortlisted through to the interview stage, it is likely they will present to a panel, provisionally made-up of the following representatives (this will be confirmed prior to interview):

- OxLEP Director of Strategy and Programmes
- OxLEP Head of Innovation and Inward Investment
- OxLEP Communications Manager
- OxLEP Business European Programmes Communications and Events Assistant

## **10. Working arrangements**

The retainer will be managed by OxLEP's Communications Manager on a day-to-day basis – therefore, they will be your primary contact throughout the duration of the contract.

Other key contacts within OxLEP will include:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Strategy and Programmes
- Head of Innovation and Inward Investment
- PR and Communications Executive

Currently, the OxLEP Communications team is made-up of the following personnel:

- Communications Manager
- European Programmes Communications and Events Executive
- PR and Communications Executive
- European Programmes Communications and Events Assistant

## **11. Bidding, FAQs and further information**

### **Bidding process:**

All tender submissions must be received by OxLEP by **Thursday 23 July 2020 at 5pm** – please note, all late submissions will not be considered.

Completed tender responses should be emailed to:  
**robert.panting@oxfordshirelep.com**

Please state '***OxLEP PR agency support response***' in any email correspondence.

***Please note – given the current COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be accepting postal submissions on this occasion.***

### **FAQs:**

Agencies are welcome to contact OxLEP for a discussion regarding the project prior to the submission deadline. Please contact Rob Panting – Communications Manager at OxLEP – via: **07748 333402** or email: **robert.panting@oxfordshirelep.com**.

To ensure equal treatment – where clarification is sought on anything in relation to this tender document – we will promptly make the information available to all potential bidders too through a set of FAQs.

A set of updated FAQs will be regularly uploaded to:  
[www.oxfordshirelep.com/tenderopportunity](http://www.oxfordshirelep.com/tenderopportunity).

No further queries regarding this tender opportunity will be permitted – either via phone or email – **after Wednesday 22 July 2020 at 5pm**. A final updated set of FAQs will be updated and posted to the above link by **5pm on Wednesday 22 July 2020**.

## **12. Suggested further reading material:**

Detailed below are a number of additional reading materials we suggest you review prior to your submission:

The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy:  
[www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis](http://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis)

The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy:  
[www.oxfordshirelep.com/energystrategy](http://www.oxfordshirelep.com/energystrategy)

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: government ambition and joint declaration between government and local partners:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-oxford-cambridge-arc-government-ambition-and-joint-declaration-between-government-and-local-partners>

The Oxfordshire Internationalisation Delivery Plan 2019 to 2022:  
<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20Internationalisation%20Delivery%20Plan%202019%20FINAL%2001%2007%202019.pdf>

The OxLEP Business Plan 2019 to 2021:  
[https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/MASTER%20-%20Business%20Plan%202019-21%20FINAL\\_3.pdf](https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/MASTER%20-%20Business%20Plan%202019-21%20FINAL_3.pdf)

The Oxfordshire Science and Innovation Audit 2017:  
[https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OxTTA\\_SIAreport.pdf](https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OxTTA_SIAreport.pdf)

Oxfordshire life sciences sector (including 'Oxfordshire's response to COVID-19'):  
<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/business/invest-oxfordshire/sectors/life-sciences>

GOV.UK: 'Business Secretary launches working groups to help unleash Britain's growth potential':  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/business-secretary-launches-working-groups-to-help-unleash-britains-growth-potential>