



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) Ltd PR and marketing agency recruitment tender document May 2022

Tender headlines:

An opportunity for a retained PR/marketing agency through to March 2024. The first year will run from July 2022 to March 2023 (inclusive), after which there will be a performance review ahead of confirmation of contracting into the 2023/2024 financial year.

Build high-profile, high-quality, and measurable campaigns that make significant impacts at an international, national and local level.

Make a significant impact, promoting the interventions made by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership supporting the Oxfordshire business community across a number of key areas, as well as highlighting the continued potential and importance of the county's economy to the UK.

1. 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.

Our highlight achievements to-date includes:

- We have helped to secure £1bn-worth of funding that has benefitted the Oxfordshire economy and our communities.
- Working alongside key partners, we now oversee a £3.1bn growth programme for the county.
- Between April 2020 and August last year, we engaged with 2,670 businesses across Oxfordshire – following the emergence of Coronavirus – and provided over 12,000 hours of support during the same period.
- We led the development of Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan, responding to the pandemic.
- We 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 are a key player – working alongside Government departments, local authorities, academia, businesses and communities – in the evolution of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, a key economic region with the ability to support the UK's levelling-up ambitions.

Our vision is to see:

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

2. OxLEP today

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

Earlier this year, Government's review of the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) concluded. It set the future priorities for LEPs as:

- Embedding a strong, independent and diverse local business voice into local democratic institutions.
- Carrying out strategic, economic planning in partnership with local leaders that clearly articulates their area's economic priorities and sectoral strengths.
- Continuing to deliver a number of functions on behalf of government departments – including;
 - Growth Hubs, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
 - International trade and investment activity, provision of local business intelligence and account management on behalf of the Department for International Trade, alongside Enterprise Zone management, grant funding and levelling-up focused projects on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
 - Careers Hubs, on behalf of the Department for Education.
 - Local skills analysis via Skills Advisory Panels, on behalf of the Department for Education; and;
 - Monitoring and assurance pertaining to existing local growth programmes and funds for which LEPs are responsible.

This endorses our ongoing priorities (divided broadly into three business areas) which are focused on:

- **OxLEP** (*strategy, promotion of the Oxfordshire economy and delivery of major capital projects and programmes*)
- **OxLEP Skills** (*promotion of apprenticeships, labour market information, linking business with education and young people – supported by stakeholders, including via the Careers Enterprise Company*)
- **OxLEP Business** (*growth hub for Oxfordshire, the ERDF-funded programmes of eScalate and Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) and leading international trade and investment opportunities*)

3. **The tender opportunity**

Outlined below are the areas of delivery which the retained agreement will be expected to focus and deliver on.

Please note, this is not a conclusive list of tasks, but aims to give a broad understanding as to the type of focus anticipated.

This overview doesn't also outline the type of communication tactics expected to support this work but please expect a number outcomes and KPIs to be aligned with each of the below areas:

Area of support:	Anticipated percentage of time spent on area for duration of contract:
<p>Promotion and awareness of OxLEP business support schemes</p> <p>Over the period of this retained agreement, OxLEP will be launching a range of schemes and programmes, aimed at supporting our business community to be both productive and resilient at this critical, economic time.</p> <p>Our new programmes are particularly focused on supporting the re-emergence of our visitor economy and building a more resilient and flexible skills funnel for the county (including highlighting the importance of apprenticeships, reinvigorating the over-50s job market, supporting people who have experienced education disturbance as a result of the pandemic and improving social mobility for minority ethnic communities).</p>	<p>35%</p>

<p>Full details of these programmes will follow, however, the appointed agency will be expected to support the promotion and communications delivery of these programmes, as well as OxLEP's existing business support offer through its Growth Hub, elements of ERDF programmes and specific business intervention programmes, supporting businesses of varying sizes and sectors.</p> <p>The procured agency will be able to build campaigns to communicate these programmes effectively to targeted audiences.</p>	
<p>Highlighting the key role of OxLEP and of Local Enterprise Partnerships to our local economy and wider UK economy, aligned to local priorities and national levelling-up policy</p> <p>As the Local Enterprise Partnership for Oxfordshire, demonstrating the value to the county through our activity is key – this includes clearly communicating the impact of our interventions, capital investment programme and ability to bring together local authorities, business and academia to support the economic direction of Oxfordshire and its ability to impact the wider UK economy, particularly in relation to levelling-up and the drive towards a zero-carbon future.</p> <p>The procured agency will be able to produce highly-effective communications that will demonstrate our major impact and ongoing impact, both in Oxfordshire and nationally, e.g. through wider partnerships, supply chain and manufacturing opportunities.</p>	25%
<p>Promotion of Oxfordshire's inward investment propositions, supporting the county's key sector growth</p> <p>Through OxLEP's inward investment programme and underpinning</p>	15%

<p>internationalisation plan, Oxfordshire – outside of London – is one of the highest-performing local economies in England for attracting foreign direct investment.</p> <p>The appointed agency will be expected to further harness this delivery, promoting Oxfordshire as a globally-leading and fast-growing innovation ecosystem offering international investment opportunities and leaders of growing key sectors solving global challenges.</p>	
<p>Harnessing relationships with key stakeholders and significant decision makers</p> <p>Building and maintaining effective relationships with key stakeholders, including MPs, local decision makers, business leaders, business representative bodies and community leaders (particularly from diverse communities) is of major importance to OxLEP.</p> <p>The appointed agency will have the ability and creativity to support this and help strengthen these relationships.</p>	10%
<p>Providing counsel and guidance to support our digital communications growth and effectiveness</p> <p>Like any organisation post-Covid 19, OxLEP aim to continue to attract, nurture and retain a digital audience.</p> <p>The procured agency will recognise this importance, the value of digitally-optimised content and how this can support operational delivery.</p>	10%
<p>Other support areas to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commentary of wider key, external narrative aligned with OxLEP’s role and responsibilities 	5%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support engagement with Board members and immediate OxLEP 'family' • Understand and brief OxLEP representatives on wider Government policy that could influence OxLEP's work, or provide opportunities 	
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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.

Once appointed, a comprehensive work plan for the retained period, with associated key performance indicators (KPIs), will be produced.

4. Project budget

We intend this retained contract to span across two financial years (the remainder of 2022/23 and the entirety of 2023/24). A performance review ahead of confirmation of contracting into the 2023/2024 financial year will take place (by 31 March 2023).

For year one, a maximum budget of £55,000 (not including VAT) will be available for this contract (pro-rated from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023). This will run between 1 July 2022 (the earliest possible start date, subject to 'standstill period' – more in section six) and 31 March 2023. The same budget is also provisionally in-place, in full for 2023/24.

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.

5. Expected experience of recruited agency

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

- Those with a significant reach into local, national and international influencers that are specific to this brief.
- Those with a strong experience of B2B communications.
- Those with a strong understanding as to what creates effective and engaging digital communications, particularly when engaging a business audience.

- Those with a strong understanding of Oxfordshire, the Oxfordshire economy, Oxfordshire’s labour market, Oxfordshire communities and the county’s key assets.
- Those with experience of working with MPs, central government, other government departments and local government.
- Those with a strong understanding of the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

6. Tender process

The table below outlines key dates relating to the tendering process. We aim to have commissioned this project to a preferred agency **by Monday 20 June 2022** with interested agencies submitting tender response documents by: **Friday 3 June 2022 (5pm)**.

Key dates are as follows:

w/b 9 May	Tender document launched on OxLEP website and publicised accordingly.
Wednesday 1 June (5pm)	Last opportunity to register questions relating to the tender with OxLEP.
Friday 3 June (5pm)	Closing date for tender responses.
Wednesday 8 June	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.
Provisionally Wednesday 15 June through to Friday 17 June	Shortlisted agencies interviewed by OxLEP panel.
Monday 20 June	Winning agency and unsuccessful agencies to be notified, followed by a 10 day ‘standstill period’.

Please note:

After we inform the shortlisted agencies of the interview result, a ‘standstill period’ of at least 10 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 to the winning agency.

7. 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) where possible
- Distinctive methods of communication to reach target audiences

The scoring criteria will be as follows:

Area of scoring	Further detail	Percentage of overall score
Competency	It is our aim to employ an agency that demonstrates competence against the brief and also demonstrates a clear understanding of OxLEP's role and effectiveness, as well as understanding 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 and how OxLEP can create a positive legacy with stakeholders.	40% (0/40)
Creativity	Bringing OxLEP's positive interventions, benefit to business and support for the Oxfordshire business community to life for identified stakeholders should form an important part of your pitch.	30% (0/30)
Personality	Working with an agency, matching our team's enthusiasm and positivity is key to ensuring a strong, long-lasting relationship.	15% (0/15)
Price	Demonstrating good value for money	15% (0/15)

	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.	
		Total score: (out of 100)

For those agencies shortlisted through to the interview stage, it is likely they will present to a panel made-up of the following representatives:

- OxLEP Director of Business Development
- OxLEP Communications Manager
- OxLEP Digital Marketing Executive

8. 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. However, we anticipate this retained contract to interactive directly with multiple representatives of OxLEP.

Other key contacts within OxLEP will likely include:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Business Development
- Digital Marketing Executive
- Head of Innovation and Inward Investment
- Growth Hub Manager
- Skills Hub Manager
- Programme Manager

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

- Communications Manager
- Digital Marketing Executive (soon to see role developed into Digital Strategy Lead)

OxLEP are currently in the process of recruiting new roles to its communications team, these being:

- Marketing Campaigns Executive
- Digital Marketer

9. Bidding, FAQs and further information

Bidding process:

All tender submissions must be received by OxLEP by **Friday 3 June at 5pm** – please note, all late submissions will STRICTLY not be considered.

Completed tender responses can either be emailed to:
robert.panting@oxfordshirelep.com

Or sent via post:
OxLEP Ltd
HQ Building
Thomson Avenue
Harwell Campus
OX11 0GD

OxLEP will respond to all issued responses to confirm receipt from agencies.

Please state '**OxLEP PR agency support response**' in any email correspondence. We recommend that responses are issued via email, but are happy to receive postal responses.

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: **07919 352924** 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 though a set of FAQs.

A set of updated FAQs will be regularly uploaded to the 'News' section of the OxLEP website – please continue to review our website at **www.oxfordshirelep.com/news**.

No further queries regarding this tender opportunity will be permitted – either via phone or email – **after Wednesday 1 June at 5pm**.

A final updated set of FAQs will be updated and posted to the above link by **12noon on Thursday 2 June**.

10. Suggested further reading material:

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

The Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan:

https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20ERP%20Action%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20%2826th%20February%202021%29_0.pdf

The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy:

www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis

The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy:

www.oxfordshirelep.com/energystrategy

The Oxfordshire Internationalisation Plan to 2025:

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OxLEP%20Oxfordshire%20Internationalisation%20Plan%201220v3.pdf>

OxLEP Skills: Local Skills Report and Plan 2022:

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/8724%20Local%20Skills%20Report%20%26%20Plan%20v2%20final.pdf>

OxLEP Business Impact Report 2021:

<https://www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/2020-21-impact-report>

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