# Invitation to Tender


# Oxfordshire
# Social Contract Programme


## Work Area 2:
## Virtual Mentoring Platform

## 1. Introduction

OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) is looking to procure external provision to harness technology to build and operate an at-scale virtual mentoring platform, to provide supportive learning and mentoring to Oxfordshire residents who are wanting to move into employment or return to employment. The platform will be targeted towards those residents (mentees) who need some additional guidance, motivation or support to transition into economic activity. Mentees will be matched with an Oxfordshire based business volunteer mentor and inspirational role model.

The platform should be available following a maximum 3-month set-up window and be operational until at least 31st December 2023. It is hoped that the platform will be accessible for young people at the latest from the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year, in September 2022. OxLEP will look to fund the platform over an initial contract period of 16 months (September 2022 to December 2023) and will look to secure additional funding beyond the first contract should the platform be proving successful. Written Proposals and quotes are requested from interested Suppliers. It is anticipated that Suppliers will provide development and initial contract costings as well as extension quotes on a per annum basis for any potential further funding possibilities. A **maximum budget of £40,000 for the initial 15-to-16-month contract** is available to include maintenance. **The deadline for these responses is 12 noon on Friday 1st July 2022.**

## 2. Background

Oxfordshire has traditionally experienced high levels of economic prosperity and a 'tight labour market', with low levels of unemployment. The economy is underpinned by 99% Small Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs: less than 249 employees) of which 89% are micro businesses (less than 10 employees). Oxfordshire's economy has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic but has remained more resilient than most other regions of the UK, due to underlying economic strengths and broad sectoral mix.

Oxfordshire has 16 wards ranked in the most deprived 20% in England and 1 in the most deprived 10% (MHCLG IMD,2019). These wards tend to be especially deprived in terms of education, skills, and training, and this is where Oxfordshire's ethnic minority groups and Black ethnic groups are more likely to be living. The pandemic has reinforced that those communities already impacted by multiple indices of deprivation are more prone to poor health and wellbeing challenges as we move into economic recovery.

Young people have been impacted by the pandemic in terms of mental health and missed learning. Through the Office for National Statistics (ONS), we know that there is a strong link between poverty (free school meals) and GCSE progress and attainment in Oxfordshire's ethnic minority communities.

At the height of the pandemic Oxfordshire saw a near three-fold increase in Universal Credit claimant count - 17,495 (August 2020). It has now decreased to just under 10,500 (March 2022) – still a near doubling of pre-pandemic levels. Young people (aged 16-24) and the over 50's have been hardest hit - more so than in previous economic recessions. The Over 50s claimants are highest in the City of Oxford where the count continues to fall slowest and the rate now matches that seen nationally, where other claimant age groups have been consistently below that seen nationally.

Many of the over 50s workers were put on furlough and may have left long term employment. As a result, they could be facing significant challenges to get back in the labour market, because they lack many of the skills and competencies employers demand and may not have experienced modern recruitment practices before.

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**The COVID-19 Social Contract Programme (SCP)**

The SCP links directly to the Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan (ERP), which is the comprehensive and co-ordinated whole system economic route map response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The interventions in this proposal take forward key priorities set out in the ERP and longer-term strategic ambitions identified in the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

**Impact:** The programme will help address various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic related to unemployment or barriers to employment, education, and training and the impact these factors can have on **health and wellbeing – for individuals, for communities and for businesses**. It is based on strong partner and community-based engagement, grounded in clear evidence from both the ERP and our monthly Labour Market Intelligence and will support:

- Young people, aged 16-24 years, who have experienced education disturbance and/or unemployment, or at risk of NEET
- Improved social mobility for minority ethnic communities
- Those furthest from the labour market including employment support for those identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) and/or affected by the digital divide, food poverty or other socio-economic deprivation
- The Over 50s – aligned to the OxLIFE priority of the LIS, to support people to continue to contribute to the economy into later life through longer and flexible careers

### 3. 'Virtual Mentoring Platform' Scope of Work/Requirements:

OxLEP is looking to procure an at-scale virtual mentoring platform to provide supportive light touch learning and mentoring to Oxfordshire residents (aged 16+) who are wanting to move into employment or return to employment, but need some additional guidance, motivation or support. Mentees will receive smart-matched mentor recommendations with an Oxfordshire based business volunteer mentor and inspirational role model. Mentees will be permitted the autonomy to choose their own mentors from unlimited connections to ensure they feel comfortable with their choice and that the mentoring will provide a meaningful relationship resulting in impactful support for their individual success.

The platform should be attractive and accessible by the main focus groups and communities identified in the main Social Contract Programme. We want to empower these groups to access the many great opportunities for work and careers in our Oxfordshire businesses, helping to build a strong talent pipeline for our businesses and economy. The experience should be engaging for both mentee and mentor with consistent accessible and user-friendly onboarding, where users achieve a sense of belonging.

Mentoring options should be flexible and tailored for each mentee and should be accessed via a secure messaging system. As many of the mentees will be young people, aged 16-24 years, there would need to be options available to meet high levels of safeguarding, although the platform will be open to all who need support so should be agile to meet safeguarding requirements for all. Suppliers should highlight any plug-ins or steps taken to provide accessibility (for example Image alt text, keyboard accessibility, font and background colour swapping, sequential heading structure, accessible hyperlinks and consistent navigation), diversity and inclusion. The platform should meet UK Government Digital Services Standards or equivalent. Suppliers should also be able to demonstrate that the platform will comply with UK GDPR requirements. OxLEP should not be provided with details of individuals accessing the mentoring, which would enable identification of individuals.

The platform should provide relative professionally developed learning content which supports development and progression for mentees looking to move into employment, such as support with CV writing, cover letters and preparation for interviews as well mental health and wellbeing development such as confidence building and presentation skills. The potential to be supported to

develop and add other Oxfordshire focussed content would be an added benefit.

Other add-in options may be available as the platform develops, such as the ability for OxLEP to promote relevant events to mentees and potentially recruitment opportunities.

Online support should be available to mentors and mentees to ensure the best use of the platform. To resolve any challenges, mentors should have access to free training in best use of the platform, mentoring guidance and safeguarding. The platform should provide business volunteers with appropriate training before starting as a Mentor, in order to help them understand their role and responsibilities. They also should be signposted to a member of OxLEP should they experience difficulties.

The platform should require minimal set-up capacity from OxLEP, who will look to manage the contract, rather than the platform itself. The supplier will be responsible for developing and managing the operation of the platform including but not limited to regular monthly reporting to support OxLEPs understanding of use and success. OxLEP will be able to support with marketing the platform and recruitment of mentors and mentees from and through its existing partners and stakeholders. Materials to support marketing the opportunities would be welcomed.

The platform should preferably be accessible through a hyperlink or similar which can be accessed from the OxLEP website, the OxLEP Skills sub-site (currently in procurement) and other partner sites such as our leading authorities, Oxfordshire County Council OXME.info website focussed on support for young people of Oxfordshire. The platform should be accessible on a mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop and run smoothly on a range of browsers.

The platform should be branded with the OxLEP Skills logo and adhere to OxLEP's branding guidelines and fit seamlessly into our other online assets.

Ideally, the platform will enable mentors and mentees to gain some recognition of volunteering or development through the platform. This may be in the form of certificate or digital certification perhaps, which can be demonstrated in a CV.

The platform should also help OxLEP better understand the needs of the target audiences and offer real-time analytics on the use and impact of the platform and its content and mentoring support. We would be interested in measuring user demographics, mentor and content engagement, task ratings and diversity of mentors across business sectors, for example.

## 4. Further details of requirements

The tender has been left broadly open in terms of detail on requirements, to enable delivery partners to provide suggestions based on their areas of expertise.

OxLEP is looking for a single Supplier to deliver the entirety of the services. Maintenance costs to be quoted following development costs.

## 5. Outputs/Milestones/Suggested Payment Profile

To be defined by the bidder in response to this process, but should include as a minimum:

| Output: | Deadline | Suggested Payment Profile |
|---|---|---|
| Virtual Mentoring Platforms:<br>• 1 platform for each user type <u>or</u><br>• 1 platform combining all user types. | Online and available to Mentors by mid/late September 2022. | • 50% on delivery of pre-launch platform<br>• 25% following successful launch of platform and reporting/analytics |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Training for all volunteer mentors. | Online and available to Mentors by mid/late September 2022. | mechanism to OxLEP<br>• 15% 9 months after a successful launch of platform and operational delivery |
| Reporting/Analytics mechanism available to provide OxLEP with real-time use and user data analytics. | Online and available in line with the launch of the Virtual Mentoring Platform. | • 10% On completion of contract and final reporting. |

**A maximum budget of £40,000 for 15–16-month contract for 2022/23 is available. Suggested Funding Milestones/Payment Profile (Suppliers are invited to suggest a payment profile with payment based on defrayal evidence)**

## 6. Bid Process and next steps

**This tender will consider single Supplier bids only.**

**Queries** can be emailed to skills@oxfordshirelep.com FAO. Skills Hub Deputy Manager.
Deadline for queries related to this tender Friday 24th June 2022.

**Proposal Submissions** are to be emailed to skills@oxfordshirelep.com following the format provided in Appendix One and detailing how Section 3: Scope of work/Requirements, Section 5: Outputs Section 7: Timeline and Section 8: Budget will be carried out and achieved. Deadline for full submission is no later than **Friday 1st July 2022 12 noon.** Please state 'Social Contract Programme - Work Area 2 Proposal' in your email correspondence.

The tender response will be assessed against the criteria set out in section 10 (below), with an aim to award the work by **Friday 22nd July 2022**.

## 7. Tender Indicative Timetable:

| Date | Tender schedule |
|---|---|
| Friday 24th June 2022 | Deadline for any queries in relation to this tender. |
| Friday 1st July 2022     12 noon | Proposal to be submitted to skills@oxfordshirelep.com For the attention of Skills Hub Deputy Manager. We recommend that you set a delivery receipt to your email. |
| Dates between 4th July 2022 and 7th July 2022 | Proposals received will be reviewed, and if required further meetings with bidders will be arranged. |
| Friday 22nd July 2022 | Contract for work awarded. |

**Contractual Timeline:**
We anticipate that the programme will be contracted by **1st August 2022** and activity will commence from **August/September 2022** with operational delivery agreed on a per annum basis.

## 8. Budget available

**The maximum budget for this work is £40,000 excluding VAT for the 15/16 month contract** to include all development and maintenance charges.

### 9. Pricing

Please detail prices to deliver a working platform and maintenance costs per annum.

### 10. Tender Evaluation Weighting and Evaluation Criteria

Bids will be evaluated against the following criteria which together make up 70% of the total evaluation of the bids (as against 30% for cost). Bidders must be able to:

| Criteria | Weighting (%) | Evaluation Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Approach | 40% | • Demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements outlined in scope of works and a clear and compelling methodology for delivery and how the platform supports recruitment of mentors and mentees who are external to OxLEP<br>• Demonstrate how mentors are mentees are recruited to the platform and any associated support and training<br>• Demonstrate relevant marketing resources available to support OxLEP in widening awareness of the launch and use of the platform<br>• Demonstrate any autonomy mentees have over their choice of mentor<br>• Demonstrate how the development of the platform requires minimal additional time capacity from OxLEP and supports OxLEP to manage the contract efficiently<br>• Demonstrate how the platform will be attractive, engaging and include consistent accessible and user-friendly onboarding, where users achieve a sense of belonging, particularly for main focus groups and communities identified in the main Social Contract Programme. Demonstrate how mentoring options are flexible and tailored to for each mentee<br>• Describe any acknowledgement/recognition that mentors/mentees might receive for engaging with the platform e.g., certificate<br>• Provision of detail on the type of training volunteer mentors will receive.<br>• Provision of detail of what support/help/guidance can be offered to recruit and retain business mentors<br>• Demonstrate how OxLEP branding can be integrated into the platform<br>• Explain how the platform will be accessed e.g., hyperlink |
| Price | 20% | • Demonstrate detailed pricing research and evidence<br>• Allocate budget for developing the virtual mentoring platform to pre-launch<br>• Allocate budget for support and separately for any ongoing maintenance costs per annum<br>• Allocate budget as a per annum cost<br>• Demonstrate good value money in line with the tenet of the broader Social Contract Programme and its aspirations to support access to employment for local residents<br>• Provide examples of other add-in options which may be available as the platform develops and any indicative costs |

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| Quality | 40% | • Demonstrate experience in delivering successful programmes and due diligence and discretion for bursary fund administration, eligibility, and compliance. Detail how quality will be upheld and monitored throughout the programme<br>• Demonstrate delivery of previous, relevant programmes, to time and on budget<br>• Provide examples of relative professionally developed learning content<br>• Provide detailed information on the type of user analytics that can be achieved through the platform and how OxLEP can access these reports<br>• Commit to leading monthly reporting to the OxLEP Social Contract Programme Manager and demonstrate the ability to communicate complex information in a manner which engages senior level decision makers, such as LEP (Local Enterprise Partnerships) boards<br>• Demonstrate how the platform meets high levels of safeguarding, particularly for young people aged 16-24 years<br>• Highlight any plug-ins or steps taken to provide accessibility, diversity and inclusion.<br>• The platform should meet UK Government Digital Services Standards or equivalent. Suppliers should also be able to demonstrate that the platform is built with GDPR requirements. Demonstrate and clarify what information OxLEP would have access to in relation to individual users<br>• The platform should be accessible on a mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop and run smoothly on a range of browsers |
|---|---|---|

We expect your Invitation to Tender response to achieve high scores in each of the evaluation criteria.

**Scores for each of the criteria will be allocated as follows:**

| Score | Guidance |
|---|---|
| **9/10 – Excellent** | The Tenderer has provided a thorough response, addressing ALL requirements in extensive detail, providing confidence that the requirements can be met in full, with added value solutions. |
| **7/8 – Good** | The Tenderer has provided a strong response addressing most of the requirements in detail, providing confidence that the requirements can be met in full. |
| **5/6 – Satisfactory** | The Tenderer has provided a satisfactory response addressing most of the requirements in sufficient detail, providing confidence that most requirements can be met. |
| **3/4 - Acceptable** | The Tenderer has provided an acceptable response addressing some of the requirement with partial detail. There are a few concerns about whether the requirements can be met, which requires further clarification. |
| **1/2 - Unsatisfactory** | The Tenderer has provided a minimal response addressing some of the requirement with very little detail. The response provided does not provide full confidence that the requirements can be met. |
| **0 – Major Concerns** | The Tenderer has failed to address the question, submitted a nil response or any element of the response gives cause for major concern that requirement[s] will not be met. |

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## 11. Additional Information

**Freedom of Information**
All information provided by you in your response to this Invitation to Tender (ITT) will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to any other party except where required for official audit purposes or to the extent that OxLEP Ltd considers that disclosure is required pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or any other applicable legislation, legal requirement, or code of practice.

**Confidentiality**
By receiving this ITT, you agree to keep confidential the information contained in the ITT or made available in connection with further enquiries and questions. Such information may be made available to your employees and professional advisers for the purpose only of responding to this ITT.

**Material Changes**
At any time before the award of the contract, OxLEP Ltd reserves the right to disqualify any organisation whose circumstances change to the extent that it ceases to meet the selection criteria or makes a material change in respect of its proposal unless substantial justification can be provided to the satisfaction of OxLEP Ltd. Where a Bidder becomes aware after having submitted a Bid of a change in circumstances or information supplied, it should notify OxLEP of this as soon as possible.

**Right to withdraw the ITT**
OxLEP reserves the right to withdraw this ITT at any time during the process. We would only expect to exercise this right should there be a material change to the funding environment. OxLEP reserves the right to not select any of the supplier submissions received, should none of them be of sufficient quality.

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**12. Response to Tender**

Thank you for your interest in providing a response to our tender invitation.

**Proposal Submissions** are to be emailed to skills@oxfordshirelep.com following the format provided in Appendix One and detailing how Section 3: Scope of work/Requirements, Section 5 Outputs Section 7: Timeline and Section 8: Budget will be carried out and achieved. Deadline for full submission is no later than **Friday 1st July 2022 12 noon.** Please state 'Social Contract Programme-Work Area 2 Proposal' in your email correspondence.

The tender response will be assessed against the criteria set out in section 11 (below), with an aim to award the work by **Friday 22nd July 2022**.

You must:
- Submit a robust and costed proposal for platform development showing indicative timelines.
- Submit a robust and costed proposal for any other maintenance or support costs per annum.
- Ensure your proposal details scope and desired outcomes, particularly in terms of target communities to be supported.
- Provide evidence that you have relevant knowledge, experience, and skills in delivering successful mentoring platforms.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of impacts on vulnerable groups with regards to safeguarding and GDPR.
- Provide a detailed guide as to how the platform will be developed and managed.
- Demonstrate your approach to meeting requirements for delivery of this workstream, including measurable outputs that will be used.
- Provide evidence that demonstrates your initial understanding about Oxfordshire's economy, and the Social Contract Programme.
- Evidence how and when you will feedback progress, evaluate, and highlight any KPIs (Key performance indicators) to be used.

The completed response must be returned, along with the required commercial information in Appendix Two, together with any supporting documents no later than **Friday 1st July at 12 noon.** Proposal to be submitted to skills@oxfordshirelep.com For the attention of Skills Hub Deputy Manager. We recommend that you set a delivery receipt to your email.

Please note the successful supplier will be required to accept OxLEP's standard contract terms and conditions. – see Appendix Four.

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**Appendix One**


**Response to Tender Format**

Required: Maximum number of pages 10; including diagrams but excluding CVs. CVs should be a maximum of two pages long.

As well as the response requirements set out elsewhere in this tender invitation, please ensure your tender response captures the following:


1. Understanding of and alignment to the requirements of this tender specification
2. Experience designing and delivering similar specification platforms
3. Your Approach, including nominated prime contractor where relevant
4. Pricing
5. Commercial Information (see Appendix two)
6. Quality Assurance
7. Collaborative team working and wider partnerships

Please set out clearly in your proposal document any relevant assumptions that you have made in determining your response under each of the above sections.

Under the Approach section of your response please make clear which partner organisation(s) will be deployed to deliver individual elements of your service approach.

**Appendix Two**

COMMERCIAL INFORMATION – TO BE COMPLETED

| A1.1 Bidder details | | Answer |
|---|---|---|
| Full name of the Bidder completing the Tender | | |
| Registered company address | | |
| Registered company number | | |
| Registered charity number | | |
| Registered VAT number | | |
| Name of immediate parent company | | |
| Name of ultimate parent company | | |
| Please mark 'X' in the relevant box to indicate your trading status | i) a public limited company | ☐ Yes |
| | ii) a limited company | ☐ Yes |
| | iii) a limited liability partnership | ☐ Yes |
| | iv) other partnership | ☐ Yes |
| | v) sole trader | ☐ Yes |
| | vi) other (please specify) | ☐ Yes |
| Please mark 'X' in the relevant boxes to indicate whether any of the following classifications apply to you | i) Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE – defined as a non-governmental organisation that is value-driven and which principally reinvests its surpluses to further social, environmental, or | ☐ Yes |

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| | cultural objectives.) | |
|---|---|---|
| | ii) Small or Medium Enterprise (SME) [1] | ☐  Yes |
| | iii) Sheltered workshop | ☐  Yes |
| | iv) Public service mutual | ☐  Yes |

| A1.2 Contact details | |
|---|---|
| Bidder contact details for enquiries about this Tender | |
| Name | |
| Postal Address | |
| Country | |
| Phone | |
| Mobile | |
| Email | |

**Appendix Three – Useful supporting/underpinning data**

Information on the Social Contract Programme: https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/socialcontract

Download the OxLEP 2022 Local Skills Report and Plan, March 2022

Download the OxLEP 2022 Local Skills Report and Plan Annex A and B

Download the Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan (action plan)

Download the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy

Download OxLEP Skills, employment and enterprise of Oxfordshire's ethnic minority communities, November 2021 Key Findings report

Download OxLEP Skills, employment and enterprise of Oxfordshire's ethnic minority communities, November 2021 full report

**Appendix Four – OxLEP Standard Contract**

A draft copy of the Standard Contract is available as a separate attachment.
NB. The copy attached is a draft pdf version which will be agreed with the winning Supplier once awarded.