Request for Quotation: Oxfordshire Growth Hub Business Support

Questions and Answers.
Last updated: 20th February 2023

1) Are you able to confirm the source of funding for this service and the likely reporting requirements in respect of it over and above core Growth Hub metrics? For instance, is the funding for this service via Shared Prosperity Fund?

   A. As stated in the RFQ this contract is not dependent on Government funding award. The reporting requirements are outlined within the RFQ on pages 15-16. We expect any bidder to be sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to ad hoc reporting requirements as required.

2) What additional staffing does the Authority intend to employ to support the delivery of the Growth Hub service over the life of the contract?

   A. Please note that OxLEP is not a Local Authority, it is a limited non-profit organisation. OxLEP Business employs a small team of 5 who will work closely with the provider of this service. Outlined in the RFQ on pages 14-15 you can see the expectations regarding how the successful supplier will work with OxLEP Business.

3) Does the Authority consider whether there are any TUPE liabilities in respect of this contract as a result of there being a current supplier of the service?

   A. There are no TUPE liabilities.

4) The Authority have asked that the service go live on 1 April, however, given the timelines, how would you factor elements like recruitment of staff to support this?

   A. We expect the service to go live as per the timetable in the RFQ. The OxLEP Business staff are already on board, and it is down to the successful provider to manage their recruitment timeline to ensure they are ready for the go live date.

5) The Authority have stated 'There are over 20 advisors currently available to Oxfordshire businesses and this breadth of experience and support is critical to the delivery of a comprehensive programme of support'. Do you mean 20 Associates who provide support on the current programme but are not employed by the Growth Hub. Is there any framework or DPS arrangements in place to manage these associates?

   A. The 20 associates on the current programme are not employed by the Growth Hub and are managed by the current provider of this service.

6) We have noted that the current Growth Hub service is delivered through two ERDF funding projects (Innovation Support for Business and eScalate). However, what isn't clear is whether you are expecting these services to

continue via the new service, or if there are certain parts of this that you see being continued via the Growth Hub. In the specification it seems to be the elements the Authority require are bulleted on the first part of page 15, and any additional Growth Hub funding via BEIS would be allocated to those requirements listed under 'In Addition' on page 15 and 16.

A. The current Growth Hub service consists of the two ERDF funded projects as well as other support (see p.12) which is currently funded via BEIS. When the two ERDF projects end this year, we expect some elements of this support to continue as part of this tender but these elements are listed within our requirements for this contract, which are set out from page 14 – 15. An example of this is the investor pitching. The items covered under the 'In addition' section we expect to be covered within this tender, we are simply highlighting that should BEIS funding be allocated we expect BEIS to provide a steer on priorities and we will therefore need a supplier who can respond to this flexibly. The requirements listed in the RFQ are top-line and we expect the successful bidder to respond flexibly to client needs as they are identified.

7) Please can you provide more information on the:
   a. The current online business support tool which acts as the gateway to all future business support activity.

      A. Please see the website: Business Support Tool - OxLEP Business

   b. How this is currently used to triage businesses.

      A. As per information on the website and on p.14-15 of the RFQ, the information provided by businesses when completing the Business Support Tool is used to create individual bespoke business support plans which includes signposting to appropriate support for their business.

   c. Any current web-based interface and tools that are used in the service including webchat.

      A. Please see the website: Business Support Tool - OxLEP Business

   d. The hosting arrangements for any web-based interface and tools.

      A. As above, this sits on the OxLEP Business and is therefore managed as part of OxLEP's web hosting

   e. The Content Management System that is used for any web-based interface and marketing tools that are used.

      A. OxLEP uses Evolutive, provided by Alcium, as it's CRM

      f.   The hosting and ownership arrangements for the relevant CRM and reporting software used by the Authority.

          A.   This is OxLEP's relationship with our CRM provider and website host. However, the successful bidder will be expected to update records on Evolutive.

      g.   Who is responsible for funding any licensing and hosting arrangements for the web interface and reporting software?

          A.   As above, this is OxLEP's relationship

8) The Authority have asked the provider to 'Evaluate delivery/impact at 6 months and post end of contract period. Proving a robust impacts report'. Please can you confirm if this needs to be an externally conducted evaluation.

    A.   The requirement is to provide a robust impacts report, please explain how this will be produced as part of any response to the RFQ. It is down to suppliers to determine how this requirement will be met.

9) How have the targets been established in the light of any funding differentials from the current service?

    A.   The targets have been established based on the success of the current service and our expectations for delivery of this service.

10) What definitions/evidence requirements underpin each of the metrics in the outcome table on page 16. So, for instance, the definitions and splits of the 'number of businesses light, medium, hard triaged - evidence through Business Support Plans and email traffic' and 'economic recovery plans developed and monitored after 6 months', will determine the amount of resourcing required to deliver the service.

    A. The light triage is considered to be limited to information provided and signposting.
The medium triage is support such as 1:1 support providing them with information, diagnostic and brokerage support.
The hard triage is intensive support from the Growth Hub.

    Evidence requirements for each of these metrics will vary but for each we expect to see sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the support has been delivered. As outlined, we expect post-support evaluation with businesses to gather feedback on the support provided and to identify to what extent the support has had an impact on the business. This will then feed into the impact evaluation every 6 months and post end of contract as well.

11) I am not local to Oxfordshire; will it strengthen my response if I include local resources?

    A.   We are seeking suppliers that can demonstrate strong knowledge, skills and experience of Oxfordshire, clearly understanding the Oxfordshire ecosystem and the requirements of SME's within it. We are also keen to

see local resources engaged with a tender and the ability of any supplier to be 'on the ground' locally in order to generate new contacts amongst the Oxfordshire business community, as well as deliver activity and develop a series of in person business support surgeries.

12) In the specification it state one of the required activities is "Work with OxLEP Business team to further develop current online business support tool which acts as the gateway to all future business support activity." Can you clarify if this is related to the design and content of the tool, or is it related to technology development?

   A. This is related to design and content of the tool.

13) In supporting the triage activity, are you expecting the supplier to have direct contact with the individual/business, or just use the information provided via the completion of the online business support tool?

   A. Yes, we expect the supplier to have direct contact with individual/businesses as well as using the information provided via the completion of the tool.

14) On the expected outcomes and targets, can you provide any clarity around what you would expect for light, medium and hard triaged activity, specifically in terms of intensity of the intervention? It states evidenced through business support plans and email traffic – can we therefore assume you don't expect any actual interaction with the business other than through those channels?

   A. The light triage is considered to be limited to information provided and signposting. The medium triage is support such as 1:1 support providing them with information, diagnostic and brokerage support. The hard triage is intensive support from the Growth Hub.
   This contract is about delivering business support activities, so we expect a range of interaction with businesses, from light touch email to 1:1 support and 1 to many activities.

15) In delivery of the series of support activities for each stage of a businesses journey, are you open to delivery methodologies that are blended with one or both of "one to one" and "one to many" basis?

   A. Yes, we expect to see one to one and one to many, as well as peer groups. Please see page 15 of the RFQ.

16) What do you mean by Social Value, what is your scoring criteria and how do you expect this to be measured and evidenced (p8)?

A. By social value we mean how your business contributes to the society and community in which you operate and how this contract will contribute to the society and community in which you operate. The scoring criteria is as per the scored criteria in table 2 on pages 7-8 of the RFQ.

17) What do you mean by net zero / fighting climate change, what is your scoring criteria and how do you expect this to be measured and evidenced (p8)?

A. As above the scoring criteria is as per the scored criteria in table 2 on pages 7-8 of the RFQ. By net zero/fighting climate change we mean what measures your business has taken/is taking to achieve net zero/tackle climate change and how it will specifically do this via this contract.

18) What is the definition of a business or entrepreneur eligible for support?

   A. An SME operating in Oxfordshire

19) What would make an organisation/business/entrepreneur ineligible?

A. Not being an SME or not operating in or having an economic benefit to Oxfordshire.

20) For eligible companies, what information (datasets, evidence) needs to be collected, collated and monitored to fulfill the contract requirements?

A. Sufficient company data to input into the CRM, for example, name of company, address, main contact and their contact details

21) Can any organisations currently being supported by the Hub and transferring under this contract be counted towards the targets of this contract?

A. Yes – only if new support is being provided plus revisiting Business Support tool

22) What is the Oxfordshire Economic Renewal Plan (referenced on p14)?

A. It is; [Developing the Oxfordshire COVID-19 Economic Renewal Plan (ERP) | Steer Economic Development (steer-ed.com)](https://steer-ed.com)

23) "Target of Economic recovery plans developed and monitored after 6 months" - does this mean businesses need to create them and if so, do these need to be in a specific or standard format?

A. Yes, no specific format but guidance is likely to be needed

24) Jobs created/safeguarded and businesses surviving - when is the cut off point? Support provided towards the end of the programme may create jobs and enable businesses to survive post-programme.

A. The cut off point for monitoring this is the end of the contract period.

25) Number of businesses surviving for at least 6 months as a result of receiving support - how can it be proven they survived as a result of receiving support? And how is this evidenced after the end of contract?

A. As part of any bid response we have asked potential suppliers outlining a quarterly profile of targets and explaining how these will be achieved. This will include how they can be proven/evidenced.

26) Referrals to other programmes/activities - do these need to be OxLEP programmes?

A. No

27) What is the definition of a new job (p16)?

A. A job that didn't exist before the organisation received the support

28) What is the definition of business survival (p16)?

A. A business surviving as a result of the support.

29) What is the definition of business safeguarded (p16)?

A. Jobs safeguarded in supported businesses means jobs safeguarded as a result of the support.

30) P16 states "Evaluate delivery/impact at 6 months and post end of contract period" which implies 2 evaluations in total. However, your answer to Q10 states "This will then feed into the impact evaluation every 6 months and post end of contract as well" which implies an evaluation every 6 months, so 4 in total. Please can you clarify which it is?

A. It is every 6 months but additional ad hoc reporting may also be required.

31) WRT 'Expected outcomes and targets', what is the difference between light triaging (part of outcome 1) and referrals (outcome 4)?

A. Light triage consists of information provided as well as referrals and signposting.

32) What does 'within IR35 legislation' mean when this is a contract for service delivery by "an organisation" not an individual?

A. This contract could be delivered by an individual.

33) Can the CRM be accessed remotely without the use of specialist additional software eg VPN, downloaded applications, firewall tunnels etc. If so, what is the minimum specification of browser and software for running this?

A. The CRM can be accessed remotely via a link.

34) Please clarify whether the expected outcomes and targets on p16 are for each year of the contract or for the whole contract?

A. For the contract as a whole.

35) How many support activities (p15) has the Growth Hub delivered in the last two years? Please can these events be split by remote / in person.

A. The support activities delivered as part of an existing contract are not relevant to any future delivery. Growth Hub funding for those years has been several orders of magnitude higher and driven by alignment with longstanding projects which are coming to an end.