
Invitation to Tender for skills and employer responsiveness Development Projects: individual associates and lead providers.

Please note that this tender is being sent to selected people from our register of associates but is open to **any** provider to put in a proposal to be a lead provider (i.e. we are not using the framework for lead providers which LSIS is currently establishing. Providers who have already applied to join the framework for lead providers may wish to refer to relevant parts of their framework submission and attach it or relevant extracts as an Annex to their application for this opportunity, in order to save duplication of effort.)

Introduction

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) aims to accelerate the drive for excellence in the FE and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change. This will help realise our vision that every learner acquires the skills, knowledge and appetite for learning, living and working and that every provider is valued by their community and employers for their contribution to sustainable social and economic priorities. LSIS is committed to facilitating the sectors' self improvement and development through peer to peer activity and collaboration, using the sectors' own expertise to achieve quality improvement.

Please visit www.lsis.org.uk for more information.

The proposed work in the area of skills and employer responsiveness has been informed by consultation with key stakeholders, including providers. This area of work remains a high priority for sector providers funded by the Skills Funding Agency and for government. Building on the Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme and the former World Class Skills – developing responsive provision (WCS) programme, LSIS will directly support a number of provider-led development projects which will run from November 2011 through to July 2012. Funding for the period April 2012 to July 2012 cannot be finalised at this stage but planned delivery should assume a continuation from the end of March 2012 to the end of July 2012 for completion of the projects.

Development project approach

These will be provider led projects on a selected topic within one of three strands of work

- Apprenticeships

- Getting people into work
- Specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks

The concept is that through exploring aspects of an individual topic within their own institutions providers can learn from each other and work collaboratively to develop their provision within a chosen topic. The lead provider will select the topic from a strand either from the menu of topics at annex A or propose their own area of interest related to the strand. Providers who are part of the development project will either develop an aspect of this topic within their own institution or work with the whole group on one particular aspect. The group will meet three times during the project's lifetime (two meetings before March 2012) and between workshop meetings will be free to allocate the project funding to a range of activities that best meet the group's needs. This might be for peer to peer individual support, study visits, expert speakers, webinars etc. Each provider will develop a project plan and the lead provider will have an overall project plan. Plans will detail aims, activity, outputs/outcomes and expected impact. Reports will be produced following each workshop and plans updated. A final report will pull the work of the project overall together to highlight key aspects for dissemination to a wider audience in the autumn of 2012.

The lead provider will be responsible for delivering the agreed project outputs and receive the funding which can be distributed as the group agrees. They will recruit a minimum of 6 other providers to work together on the project. An LSIS associate will be allocated to provide advice and support for each project.

It is expected that the development projects will commence in November/December, and two workshops will have been held by end March 2012. Subject to LSIS funding being available it is envisaged that the projects will continue through to completion by July 2012, and LSIS will be considering subsequent dissemination for autumn 2012. Projects should be planned on the basis of a July 2012 completion date.

LSIS is able to fund up to 9 projects in each of the Apprenticeship and getting people into work strands and up to 6 in the specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks strand.

This ITT seeks tenders from associates and lead providers who wish to be involved. Please see note above. Associates should already be on our framework register and have been sent this information by LSIS. Any providers delivering Skills Funding Agency funded provision, whether or not they are on the lead provider framework which LSIS is compiling, are invited to submit a proposal. For your information the link to the lead provider register is

<http://www.lsis.org.uk/WorkingWithLSIS/Opportunities/Tenders/Pages/LeadProviderRegister.aspx>

Context and background

LSIS will provide project funding in the following three strands;

1. Apprenticeships
2. Getting people into work
3. Specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks

Suggestions of topics for project groups are included at annex A; providers are also free to suggest their own development need within each strand.

Apprenticeships

The Government has announced that Apprenticeships are central to the skills strategy. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and others have identified the UK's weakness as being in intermediate and advanced level 2/3 technical skills. Launching the Skills Strategy, John Hayes, Minister of State for *Further Education, Skills and Lifelong learning* commented, *"Our overriding intention is to boost the supply of genuine, high quality employer owned Apprenticeship places at Level 3 and above."*

There are significant targets to increase the number of apprentices with an announcement in the March budget of an additional 50,000 Apprenticeship places over the next four years. 40,000 will be targeted at young people not in work. There will also be clear targeting of 19-24 year olds who are out of work with a transparent link to Jobcentre Plus.

The number of Adult Apprenticeships available will expand as announced in "Skills for Sustainable Growth" Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2010. Numbers will increase by up to 75,000 by 2014-15, leading to more than 200,000 people starting an Apprenticeship each year. To fund this increase £250 million will be allocated over the spending review period. There will be investment of £605 million in 2011-12 and an indicative budget of £648 million in 2012-13.

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has launched the prospectus for a Higher Apprenticeship Fund. This will be used to generate new Higher Apprenticeship programmes leading to at least 10,000 additional Higher Apprenticeship places by 2014. New frameworks at Advanced level will be introduced to facilitate further growth with a particular focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) that create greatest value for the economy.

Getting people into work - skills provision for the unemployed

The Coalition Government has set out a number of major welfare to work reforms, including a core integrated welfare to work programme (the Work Programme) plus a number of additional measures, designed to support people in finding employment.

From 2011/12 the Skills Funding Agency will expect colleges and training providers to use part of their adult skills budget to respond to the needs of the unemployed. Colleges and training

providers will be expected to engage with Jobcentre Plus locally to meet the needs of those on active benefits. As well as enabling the job seeker to achieve units/qualifications, there will be increasing consideration given to how training leads to success in finding and sustaining employment or progression onto further education and training.

2.5% of the adult skills budget allocation for 2011/12 will be used to enhance services to deliver job outcomes for the unemployed on active benefits. A local plan with Jobcentre Plus will be developed to anticipate the volume of Jobcentre Plus referrals and include the number of job outcomes expected. Providers are expected to deliver job outcomes from the start of the academic year and to be developing their capacity.

Supporting this agenda through Apprenticeships, in May the Government announced a new pathway within the Apprenticeship programme, to widen access to young people with the potential to benefit from an Apprenticeship. "Access to Apprenticeships" will provide help and support to young people aged 16-24 who require some extra support to move into employment as an apprentice. The majority of the time on the pathway will be spent in the workplace where young people can demonstrate to prospective employers their aptitude and employability potential.

Specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks

LSIS wishes to support improvement activity of learning and skills providers in relation to specific industry sectors and framework areas, by commissioning up to six projects.

LSIS would like some of these projects to focus on improvement of the quality of green skills provision, or the greening of existing skills. For example, projects may be in relation to sustainable construction, renewable energy and other low carbon priority areas.

As well as quality improvement of Apprenticeships in relation to particular frameworks and sector subject areas, a few projects may be associated with improvement of innovation and knowledge transfer activity by FE and skills sector colleges and independent training providers.

Further information on Apprenticeships and getting people into work can be found at

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

<http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/>

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/about-dwp/customer-delivery/jobcentre-plus/>

LSIS has a number of resources relating to these areas of work: these can be found at

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser>

Further suggested topics for all strands can be found at annex A

Requirement - Lead providers

We are seeking lead providers with the capability of working successfully against the requirements described below. The lead provider will work with an LSIS associate on one of the

strands listed; Apprenticeships, getting people into work or specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks

The lead provider will

- recruit members of the development group
- hold an initial, mid project and a final group meeting
- ensure that each participant has produced a development plan which outlines the aims, activity, outputs and outcomes and identifies the anticipated resulting impact
- develop and maintain an overall project plan in addition to their own development plan
- produce a brief report after each workshop meeting and ensure participant providers update their development and project plans
- provide confirmation and evidence of agreed milestones to support invoices to trigger LSIS payments
- Produce a final project report by July 2012, which will be used to pull the good practice of each strand topic together.

Once the agreed milestones are met lead providers will be able to claim the LSIS project funding. They will be responsible for its use and any disbursement within the provider group, which will be able to determine how that money is distributed among themselves; it is expected that the funding will support inter-workshop activity. For example peer to peer support, study visits, webinars, expert speakers etc. The lead provider will be supported by an LSIS associate and is expected to liaise with them to ensure that the associate's time and expertise in process facilitation and improvement methodology is deployed effectively to support the group's work.

Up to £17,500 will be paid for each project to the end of March 2012. This is VAT inclusive if applicable and is to cover all project costs, including staff involvement, travel and subsistence, venue use etc. No further payments will be made for activity undertaken to March 2012. The lead provider will invoice and be paid in two equal payments; the first after submission of an agreed overall project plan accompanied by the individual development plans for the provider group, which must include a minimum of 6 other providers. The second will be paid for submission of a project progress report during March 2012.

Lead providers and project participants should be willing to continue with projects to completion by July 2012 if necessary, and be willing to engage in possible dissemination events later in 2012 to be organised by LSIS to share learning with the wider FE and skills sector.

Successful lead providers will demonstrate in their application

- evidence of strengths in and experience of delivery in their selected strand
- ideas for project topics within their strand, with associated outputs and outcomes
- experience of leading and working on collaborative development work with their provider peers and partner organisations
- the ability to recruit other FE and skills sector providers funded by the Skills Funding Agency to work on the chosen strand and topic

- the ability to manage projects and demonstrate impact from the investment and the collaborative working
- the ability to write clear, concise and informative project reports suitable for publication on the Excellence Gateway
- how they could utilise their own expertise, that of the LSIS associate and those of partners to create a programme of relevant supported learning activities needed to achieve the project aim and intended outcomes; for example, including workshops, masterclasses, study visits, consultancy, coaching and facilitated peer activity.

Providers may submit a proposal for more than one strand but will need to demonstrate their experience, knowledge and skills, in relation to each strand as outlined above.

In your application **in addition to addressing the requirements above you should**

- state which strand(s) you are applying for (you can apply for more than one strand but would need to demonstrate your knowledge and expertise of each separately)
- state which part of the country you would want to recruit your group from
- include details of any other LSIS funding you are in receipt of or have been in receipt of in the past year; This is to ensure that LSIS distributes funds fairly and does not “double fund” projects. Being in receipt of LSIS funding currently or in the recent past will not necessarily exclude you from this development project funding but if the funding applied for is in a similar area of work you should explain how the development project funding will add value.

Confirm that if successful

- you have the capacity to undertake this work within the timescales outlined above

Requirement – LSIS associates

We are seeking individual associates with the capability of working successfully against the requirements described below.

The associate will work with other associates on one or more of the strands listed above: Apprenticeships, getting people into work or specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks. It is anticipated that each associate will be responsible for supporting a number of provider led development projects, up to a maximum of three. Please state in your application form which regions in England you are prepared to work in, which strands and how many projects you would wish to support.

To minimise travel costs we are ideally looking for three associates per strand who are geographically dispersed and can cover different areas: the north (North West, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber), central (West Midlands, East Midlands and East of England) and the south (South West, London and the South East).

The associate's role is to support the methodology of improvement through development project work. The associate will also monitor progress and report to LSIS. Each project will have a designated lead provider, who will work with a group of at least six other providers. The lead provider will be expected to have the detailed expertise in their strand and in their chosen topic, but the associate will be expected to have a good up to date understanding of the policy and delivery arrangements associated with their strand. In their application associates should indicate their experience of development project work as well as their knowledge of the selected strand(s).

The Associate will

- attend an initial briefing meeting for associates with LSIS
- for each assigned development project, work with the lead provider to clarify the development project specification and support the recruitment of suitable providers to take part; however, it will be the lead provider's responsibility to recruit the group
- advise and support the lead provider in preparation of effective workshop content and delivery which meets the development project provider group needs
- attend workshops and facilitate the delivery of sessions as agreed with the lead provider (two workshops from November 2011 to March 2012)
- assist the lead provider in reviewing and agreeing individual provider development plans to be submitted to LSIS
- provide support and advice to the lead provider and participant providers between workshops, particularly in sharing effective practice and development work elsewhere
- write reports on progress to LSIS at agreed intervals in a prescribed format.

Associates should be willing to continue with projects to completion by July 2012 if necessary, and be willing to engage in possible dissemination events later in 2012, (to be organised by LSIS to share learning with the wider FE and skills sector).

Successful associates will demonstrate in their application

- an understanding of and experience of their selected strand (you can apply for more than one strand but would need to demonstrate your knowledge and expertise of each separately)
- experience of supporting provider group development projects or similar improvement work
- skills in workshop design and facilitation evidenced by previous experience
- skills in coaching, advising and supporting providers evidenced by previous experience
- the ability to support providers in making their own diagnosis of areas for development
- the ability to develop manageable plans to bring about the desired change and measurable impact
- the ability to analyse, collate and report on work in a format that is accessible for providers
- excellent interpersonal and communication skills including the ability to work through others to bring about change

- the ability to write reports and case studies to publication standard
- the ability to work as part of an associate team
- a flexible approach to their work

Associates will receive up to £7,125 per project to the end of March 2012 plus necessary travel and subsistence expenses which will be reimbursed in accordance with the LSIS policy.

In your application **in addition to addressing the requirements above you should**

- State which strand(s) you are applying for
- State which part of the country you would want to work in taking account of LSIS desire to minimise travel costs.

Confirm that if successful

- you have the capacity to undertake this work within the timescales outlined above
- you can attend an associate briefing day to be held in Coventry on Thursday 20th October 10.00 – 16.00

Please advise us if at this stage you know that this date is difficult for you.

Applications should be no longer than 4 sides of A4 minimum font size Arial 11

Assessment of proposals and associate applications

Your proposal or application will be assessed against the criteria outlined above. LSIS will be looking to fund a range of development projects with a geographical spread across the country.

You should return an electronic copy of your proposal or application attached to an email addressed to ser@lsis.org.uk by 10.00 am on Thursday 22 September. Please include within the subject title of your email whether you are submitting as an associate or lead provider and for which strand(s) of work. For example, *SER Development Project - Lead Provider Proposal - Apprenticeships* or *SER Development Project - Associate Application - Specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks*.

You also need to provide 4 hard copies of your proposal or application by 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 22 September and clearly note on the envelope SER Development Project Proposal or SER Development Project Associate Application. Hard copies should be addressed to:

Nicola Carey
Senior Programme Support Officer
LSIS
Friars House, Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE

We hope to let successful providers and associates know the outcome of their proposals and applications within 3 weeks of the closing date.

If you have any queries about this tender please send them to Contracts.Team@lsis.org.uk

ANNEX A – topic suggestions

Please note these are suggestions only; providers are free to submit alternatives within the three strands

Apprenticeships

- implementing SASE requirements
- facilitating progression; Access to Apprenticeships pathway, intermediate, advanced and to higher Apprenticeships
- improving efficiency and flexibility in delivery – some providers may want to use or continue with the Apprenticeship Improvement and Development tool (AID)
- gaining employer contributions
- delivering new Apprenticeship frameworks
- developing the capacity to deliver Apprenticeships
- enriching Apprenticeships, for example using the expansive Apprenticeships model
- designing curriculum for Apprenticeships

NOTE – LSIS is not expecting to fund projects relating to functional skills within this tender as this will be covered within the Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) activity supported by LSIS.

Getting people into work

- understanding and achieving job outcome incentive payments
- using the adult skills budget to best effect
- working in partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- working with Work Programme lead contractors
- collaboration with other providers, and/or JCP/DWP Work Programme contractors
- curriculum development for different groups of unemployed people, e.g. Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

Specific sector subject area/Apprenticeship frameworks

- using labour market information and intelligence to develop and update provision
- developing provision supporting the low carbon economy/"green" skills development
- designing and delivering strategies for teaching and learning in advanced workplace technologies
- providing services to business other than training, for example innovation and knowledge transfer
- improving access to teaching and learning and flexible delivery to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in sector subject areas