

## Reference Number - RQNV 031

### Specification - Delivery of Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Peer Networks Programme 2021/2022

#### Overview

The Peer Networks Programme is funded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in response to a commitment made in the 2019 Business Productivity Review and is a national initiative delivered locally through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) network and their respective Growth Hubs. The programme's longer-term aims are focused on reducing the UK productivity gap by helping business leaders find practical solutions to strategic and operational challenges. It also forms part of the UK Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent EU transition, seeking to improve the resilience of SMEs<sup>1</sup>, their capability to adapt their business models to the 'new normal' and position themselves for future success, driving longer-term productivity gains.

Following successful delivery of the programme in FY20/21, BEIS have granted funding to continue this support in FY21/22. This will see the creation of a further series of peer network cohorts through the Growth Hub network, with each group consisting of a minimum of 11 owners or managers from the SME business community participating in each network. Led by an experienced facilitator, these peer networks will typically meet fortnightly as part of delivering 18 hours of action learning through 2-3-hour sessions. Individual one-to-one support (coaching, mentoring or advice) will also be provided either directly by the programme, or from other existing schemes to help to implement and manage change. Active involvement in the peer network will enhance the leadership capabilities, knowledge and confidence of business owners and entrepreneurs within a local region. It will help build regional connectivity and strength within the SME business community.

The Marches LEP (and its Accountable Body Shropshire Council), working with its Marches Growth Hub partners, will be responsible for the continuing delivery of this programme across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

The Marches LEP is seeking to procure a provider to deliver the Peer Networks programme to support a maximum of 3 cohorts, with participants drawn from eligible businesses across the Marches geography. The provider will be expected to cover marketing, recruitment of participants, project management, the provision of facilitators, the delivery of group sessions and one to one support, account management, record keeping and liaison with Marches Growth Hub teams.

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<sup>1</sup> To qualify as an SME, a company should satisfy two or more of the following requirements: not more than 250 employees, not more than £36 million turnover or not more than £18 million balance sheet total (as defined by sections 382 and 465 of the Companies Act 2006).

## The Required Services

The provider will need to clearly demonstrate in their tender response how they will meet the required deliverables within the available budget and timescales.

The programme is supported by a playbook and metrics pack - user handbooks to aid the successful roll-out and implementation of the programme. This aims to provide common resources to support local delivery partners and will help ensure there is a suitable level of national consistency in how the programme is delivered, whilst allowing for a degree of local flexibility as appropriate. These will be provided to the successful provider.

The provider will be required to:

- detail how they will deliver the programme virtually using video conference technologies
- detail how they would deliver the programme face-to-face once COVID-19 restrictions permit
- set out how eligible SMEs will be identified and individuals recruited and enrolled in line with playbook requirements
- set out how they will ensure optimal cohort mix and balance within a group
- explain how the peer networks will be successfully managed, delivered and facilitated
- detail how the KPIs will be met, how evidence and record keeping requirements will be undertaken, and how the external evaluation process will be supported
- provide detailed costings associated with the service delivery to ensure that the budget is utilised effectively, provides good value for money and a strong economic return
- demonstrate the added value that their proposal will deliver above the core activities listed above, including any specific economic and social benefits for the Marches area

Critical to the success of this programme is the use of experienced facilitators deploying an action learning style to drive the peer network and deliver high-impact outcomes. The facilitator(s) should have the skills, experience and qualifications needed to successfully facilitate sessions with small business owners. The provider must be able to clearly demonstrate, and evidence, a track record in facilitation and show how the facilitator(s) they plan to deploy meet the facilitator specification provided as part of the tender documentation.

In addition, the provider must be also able to demonstrate the successful delivery of similar support to SME business owners, entrepreneurs and managers. The provider should be able to demonstrate an excellent understanding of the specific needs, characteristics and issues faced by SMEs within the Marches area and a detailed understanding of the range of business issues associated with growth, productivity, innovation, strategy, people and skills, driving change, resilience, technology adoption and how to address these.

Complementing the delivery of facilitated action learning sessions will be targeted one-to-one support for individual participants. This will add value to the professional and personal growth achieved through the group sessions. This is therefore part of the programme. The Marches LEP/Growth Hub requires this element to be delivered as part of the contract on the understanding that the participant will be referred back to the Marches Growth Hub on completion of this programme.

This one-to-one support, which can come in the form of coaching, mentoring or advice, will need to be delivered by suitably qualified and experienced individuals to SME business owners or senior leaders. It will be specific to the individual needs of each participant, so the provision may need to address a wide range of areas across the one-to-one support spectrum. The provider must be able to clearly demonstrate and evidence a track record in one-to-one support and show how the individuals they plan to deploy meet the specification provided as part of the tender documentation.

The provider should provide an overview of the experience and skills of those providing one-to-one support, detailing the coaching, mentoring, or advice approaches deployed, what a typical one-to-one session resembles and how the impact and outcome for the individual and the organisation would be measured in line with KPI and evaluation requirements.

The provider will need to understand the current business support landscape within the Marches to ensure that the service provided will complement and add value to the support currently available within the region to help SMEs.

Providers are expected to provide all platforms, equipment and materials required for the delivery of the programme.

The sessions will run virtually, although this will be reviewed in line with prevailing Government advice on Covid-19 restrictions, with due consideration to the overall budget available for each cohort. The wider use of digital technologies to support the efficient, effective and timely administration and delivery of activities is encouraged, and providers are recommended to demonstrate how they can meet this requirement.

## Delivery Model

Peer Networks is a national initiative delivered locally through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) network and local Growth Hubs.

The programme invites leaders and senior managers from the SME business community who meet the eligibility criteria below to participate in a local peer network that will meet regularly over several months.

Target SMEs profile:

Essential criteria:

- In operation for 1 year+
- At least 5 employees
- An aspiration to improve
- A turnover of at least £100,000
- Compliance with current regulations on Subsidy Control<sup>2</sup>

Desirable:

- Scale ups
- Exporters and potential exporters
- BEIS is keen to see more larger SMEs involved in the programme in this second programme, wherever possible.

The provider will need to carefully consider who is recruited to ensure eligibility and minimise participant drop out. SMEs who have previously participated in the Peer Networks programme should not normally be permitted to join subsequent cohorts for support.

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<sup>2</sup> Support through the programme is granted on the basis that it is outside the scope of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement by virtue of Article 3.2(4) of Title XI of that Agreement and is subject to the conditions set out in the delivery contract and will be conditional upon an appropriate declaration by the participating business that they comply with current Subsidy Control regulations.

The provider will be expected to deliver against the playbook. In summary, the delivery model is:

<b>Target cohort size:</b>	A minimum of 11 business owners or senior decision makers per cohort. BEIS reserves the right to withhold funding if any cohort commences without onboarding 11 participants (except with their prior written agreement).
<b>Number of sessions:</b>	Led by an experienced facilitator using the action learning methodology, the number of sessions will be determined by local needs. Each cohort must meet for a total of 18 hours.
<b>Frequency of sessions:</b>	Typically, fortnightly (determined by local needs). All sessions must be completed by 28 February 2022.
<b>Location:</b>	Given current social distancing restrictions and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the sessions will be delivered virtually. As restrictions and guidance are changed LEPs should consider face-to-face delivery where there is a demand for this style.
<b>Topic selection:</b>	Topics could include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Finance</li><li>▪ HR and employment issues</li><li>▪ Sales and marketing</li><li>▪ Adjusting to social distancing</li><li>▪ Business model innovation</li><li>▪ Change management</li><li>▪ Embedding formal management processes and systems</li><li>▪ Management of remote teams</li><li>▪ Digital (including adoption and implementation of technology, cyber security)</li><li>▪ Use of data to drive value in the business</li><li>▪ EU transition</li><li>▪ Net zero</li></ul>
<b>Methodology:</b>	Each session must be facilitated according to action learning principles.
<b>Added support:</b>	Individual one-to-one support relevant to identified businesses' needs must also be provided. There is an optimum delivery of 3.5 hours allocated for each individual. While participants cannot be required to accept this support, it should be made clear at the onboarding stage that this is an important part of the programme and has been included based on evidence that coupling this with the Action Learning <sup>3</sup> approach can further enhance the benefits. Therefore, every effort should be made to encourage all participants to take up the full level of one-to-one support available. This requirement can be met from within the programme, or through other existing local activities. This support must also be completed by 28 February 2022.

Each of the sessions will be led by an experienced facilitator utilising action learning methodology. This is a highly effective way of running peer networks and provides a common framework to ensure national consistency across all the local groups. The facilitator will lead and host the sessions (using secure video conference platforms such as MS Teams, WebEx, Zoom, where appropriate), and use principles of action learning to successfully facilitate each one.

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<sup>3</sup> Action Learning is an approach to problem solving and learning in groups to bring about change in individuals, teams, organisations and systems. It is based on the principle that the most effective learning takes place in the context in which people are working

## Deliverables

### Programme Mobilisation and Programme Management

The key deliverable is to support the continued development and delivery of Peer Networks within the Marches LEP/Growth Hub area during the contract period using the defined facilitated peer network model and against the specified criteria if the provider is undertaking the recruitment of businesses.

Key regional deliverables for the Peer Networks Programme include:

#### Management:

- A robust application process for recruiting appropriate businesses/participants and ensuring a rigorous onboarding procedure to ensure all eligibility criteria are met.
- A robust model for undertaking the 'change in attitudes' survey of businesses supported on the programme
- Meeting programme quality assurance requirements to be set out in a quality assurance framework
- Commitment to undertake monthly reporting, including using a programme microsite (the BEIS Dashboard) for network KPI capture
- Financial management

#### Engagement:

- Number of participants entering the programme
- Number of cohorts built
- Number of participants receiving a minimum of 6 hours facilitation
- Number of participants receiving a minimum of 12 hours facilitation
- Number of participants receiving a minimum of 18 hours facilitation

#### Results:

- Number of cohorts completing 18 hours of action learning
- Number of individuals completing 18 hours of action learning
- Number of participants who have received a minimum of 3.5 hours one-to-one support through the programme
- Number of participants who have received a minimum of 3.5 hours one-to-one support outside the programme
- Number of participants who have received both – 18 hours of action learning sessions and a minimum of 3.5 hours one-to-one support
- Commitment to report a summary of participant support received, and signposting and referral details to enable effective longer-term follow-up by the Marches Growth Hub.

### Provision of Facilitators

Key regional deliverables for the Peer Network Programme include:

- Provision of experienced facilitators with the necessary levels of flexibility and availability that can deliver a minimum of 18 hours action learning facilitation per cohort, pre-cohort participant familiarisation, in-cohort insight gathering and reporting, and post-cohort review and handover activities
- Undertake programme orientation
- Meeting programme quality assurance requirements to be set out in a quality assurance framework
- Percentage of participants remaining on programme
- Completion of the facilitator notes post session

## Provision of One-to-One Support

Key regional deliverables for the Peer Network Programme include:

- Provision of experienced coaches, mentors, or business advisors with the necessary levels of flexibility and availability that can deliver a minimum of 3.5 hours one-to-one support per participant, and provide post support handover
- Undertake programme orientation
- Meeting programme quality assurance requirements to be set out in a quality assurance framework
- Completion of the session/handover documentation demonstrating handover to Marches Growth Hub teams.

## Duration and Budget

The contract period will be from the award date until 28 February 2022.

**A budget of up to £12,400 is available per cohort - this must include any VAT to be charged by the provider to the Marches LEP.**

## Additional Considerations

The provider should align their proposals to the Marches LEP's Strategic Economic Plan [https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic\\_plans/strategic-economic-plan-update-2019/The-Marches-LEP-Strategic-Economic-Plan-2019.pdf](https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/download/economic_plans/strategic-economic-plan-update-2019/The-Marches-LEP-Strategic-Economic-Plan-2019.pdf) and demonstrate how their proposal will maximise local economic and social benefits.

## GDPR

For the Peer Networks Programme BEIS will be the data controller and the Marches LEP/Growth Hub will be data processors, or sub processors depending on local contracting arrangements. Providers will be expected to comply with all necessary legislation and enable effective data sharing to allow client handover to the Marches Growth Hub.

## Evaluating Tender Responses

### Word Limits

Each tender question has a maximum word count and the answer to these questions should be limited to the maximum number of words indicated. Bidders should be aware that any content which exceeds the word limit in respect of each question will not be scored and will be disregarded when evaluating the tender response. Charts, diagrams or screenshots may be included and do not count towards the total word limit. Please structure your response directly to the questions below.

## Tender Questions

### General Capability, Understanding and Experience

#### **Question 1**

Please provide details on your capability, knowledge and resource capacity to demonstrate how you meet all requirements of the tender brief, your understanding and experience of the local Marches SME business environment and your experience of working collaboratively with organisations such as the Marches LEP/Growth Hub. *(300 words)*

### Programme Mobilisation and Programme Management

#### **Question 2**

Please provide an overview of your approach to the overall management of the contract, should you be successful, including participant recruitment, project management, reporting and details of your track record of supporting the development of SME business owners in providing small group facilitation, and how you will manage the participant learning journey adopting Action Learning practices. Please provide information on key personnel and their role in your team (whether employed or associates) in relation to marketing, recruitment, project management, workshop facilitation, one to one support, their relevant skills, qualifications and experience and how these are kept current. CVs for key personnel, detailing relevant qualifications and/or accreditations should be provided. *(300 words)*

#### **Question 3**

Please give specific details about your track record in the overall design and delivery of leadership and business growth programmes for the SME audience, what innovative approaches you may use in the design and delivery of this programme and how you will engage with, brief and quality assure suppliers/associates involved in the delivery of the programme. *(300 words)*

#### **Question 4**

Provide details of any quality assurance certification that your company holds (eg ISO 9001 or equivalent standard). If no accreditation is held, please provide documentary evidence and a brief description of your quality assurance capabilities (eg your internal quality policy or manual, GDPR, data security and protection policies). *(100 words)*

#### **Question 5**

Please give specific details of your track record in recruiting and selecting participants onto a programme of this nature, ensuring that they meet eligibility criteria, and your process to ensure a good mix and balance within each cohort. *(200 words)*

#### **Question 6**

Please detail any additional value that you would derive for the participating SMEs and/or the Marches LEP/Growth Hub area. This should focus on any additional benefits that your proposals will deliver above and beyond the core outputs and outcomes and should include any specific economic and social benefits for the Marches. *(100 words)*

## Provision of Workshop Facilitation

### Question 7

Please provide details of how you will develop and deliver the workshop element of this contract, including how you will enable a collaborative and supportive culture to encourage ongoing participation by all individuals. Please also provide information on the technical platform that you will use for virtual delivery. (200 words)

## Provision of One-to-One Support

### Question 8

Please give specific details about your track record in providing one-to-one coaching, mentoring or advice, especially at small/medium business owner levels, the methods adopted, how these meet individual immediate needs, styles and expertise and help independent development over the longer term. (200 words)

**Total Maximum Word Count - 1700**

## Insurance

Please provide details and evidence of your current indemnity insurance.

## References

Please provide details of up to three contracts/projects/assignments you have delivered within the last two years where you have provided similar services to those required by the Marches LEP/Growth Hub. These can be drawn from the public or private sector, or voluntary, charity or social enterprise (VCSE) that are relevant to our requirement. VCSEs may include examples of grant-funded work.

At final award stage, the Marches LEP/Growth Hub may elect to contact any of the organisations for a reference and any references received (or declined) will be considered during the final evaluation. Your permission for the Marches LEP/Growth Hub to seek a reference from the contacts provided above at any stage during the tender process is assumed.

Please provide the following information for each reference:

- Name
- Address
- Contact Name
- Direct Telephone Number
- Email Address
- Contract Award Date
- Contract Duration
- Contract Valuation
- Brief Description of Contract (Project)
- Key aims, outcomes and successes



## Budget

Please provide a detailed budget for all costs involved in your proposal for the delivery of the project.

- The budget should give an indication of the cost incurred for the delivery of each individual element per cohort delivered.
- Please state your proposed stages of payment for delivery of the project.
- Costs quoted should clearly state where VAT will be charged to the Marches LEP.

## Submission of Bids

Bids should be received by no later than noon on **Wednesday 26 May 2021** and be sent to [Gary.Blackburn@marcheslep.org.uk](mailto:Gary.Blackburn@marcheslep.org.uk).

Please note that late responses will not be considered.

## Evaluation Criteria

Following the receipt of the proposed responses, the evaluation panel will score the proposals against the criteria below. This evaluation process will enable the Marches LEP/Careers Hub to identify the proposal which provides the best value for money. However, the Marches LEP/Careers Hub will not be bound to accept the lowest of any cost proposal. The proposals will be scored as follows:

Scored Criteria		
Mandatory Information		Weighting
<b>Total Cost of the Service</b>	Including VAT	30%
<b>Quality</b> split between:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience of similar activities (40%)</li><li>• Added value that your proposal will deliver above the core activities listed above, including any specific economic and social benefits for the Marches area (10%)</li><li>• Your approach to undertaking the work (20%)</li></ul>	70%

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of evaluation by **Wednesday 9 June 2021**.