

Somerset Work Hubs Scheme

Providing Business Planning Support To Potential Operators

Project Brief



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1. Introduction

As part of the Heart of the South West Rural Growth Network (HotSW RGN) Pilot, Somerset County Council (SCC) is requesting proposals from potential operators to establish Work Hubs. £75,000 is available to fund approximately 3 work hubs in Somerset market towns and villages outside of Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil and Frome. (These four towns are exempt in order to comply with the established HotSW RGN population thresholds.)

The HotSW RGN Pilot is funded by the Dept. for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and is being delivered under the auspices of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP).

Work hubs funding can be split between capital and revenue spend and must be equally matched by the successful operator(s). The amount of funding available dictates that proposals will need to focus on the conversion of space in an existing building. Importantly, proposals will need to demonstrate: market demand through the conduct of primary market research; economic sustainability; and display an innovative approach.

2. Business Planning Support Service

In order to assist potential operators in developing and presenting attractive and commercially viable proposals, SCC wishes to offer a defined amount of business planning support. This may be offered in the form of 1 to 2 days mentoring support to individual applicants. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to deliver the support via an open to all workshop. Therefore, a range of support scenarios will be expected to allow for flexibility.

This support must be provided fairly and equally across interested registered work hubs applicants. In this context, responses to this invitation to tender are expected to outline a range of support scenarios based on potential applicant numbers ranging from 5 to 10.

3. Requirements of the Business Planning Support Service

The business planning support provider shall have experience of developing business plans for the development and launch of work hubs or similar. Furthermore, the contractor shall have the ability to provide the following business support, backed by experience of advising Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) on business start-up and developing and implementing growth strategies:

<p><i>Business Start Up</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-start preparation • Forming and naming a business • Choosing a location • Employing people • Protecting a business 	<p><i>Marketing & Sales</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market research and survey interpretation • Marketing a small business • Maximising sales • Exploiting social media • Viral marketing
<p><i>Premises & Property</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing and protecting property • Adapting premises 	<p><i>Finance & Grants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising and managing finance • Grant sourcing and application
<p><i>IT & E-Commerce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software and business applications • Creating and managing websites • IT security and risks 	<p><i>Environmental Aspects</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance and responsibility • Improving environmental performance • Public health and safety

4. Timescale

The Somerset Work Hubs Scheme will open to applications in mid October 2013. Potential operators will then need to submit a registration of intent by 4 November 2013 and to submit a full application by 6 December 2013.

This work is, therefore, being contracted over a corresponding timeframe. Specifically, the timings for this contract are:

- Proposals received – 30 October 2013
- Contract award – 4 November 2013
- Commencement of contract – 4 November 2013
- Period over which contract will run – 4 November 2013 to 6 December 2013
- Claim from contractor for payment – by mid December 2013

5. Proposal Requirements

All proposals must be submitted in the following format:

- Microsoft Word 2007 or later
- Font – Arial or Calibri, Font Size – 12
- One electronic copy to be sent via email to somerseteconomicdevelopment@somerset.gov.uk to arrive no later than **17.00 on October 30 2013**. Receipt of submissions will be confirmed by return of e-mail.
- Proposals should be no more than 5 pages long, including any appendices, letters of support, evidence of qualification/expertise in this area of work, CVs, charts, pictures and covering pages.

6. Process

This is a single stage process, which will involve prospective contractors submitting their detailed proposals by the due dates outlined above. Questions of clarification will be answered by email.

No phone enquiries will be answered by the Council or its management team – all queries must be submitted via email to: somerseteconomicdevelopment@somerset.gov.uk and will be answered within 3 working days.

All proposals must be submitted in electronic format by 17.00 on October 30. Any proposals received after this time will not be included in the appraisal process.

Appraisals of the proposals will be undertaken by a suitably qualified appraisal team. This will be according to the detailed guidelines outlined below in Section 8 – Appraisal Guidelines.

We hope to be able to conclude the process without a formal presentation, but if there are a number of proposals that are of similar high quality and a clear winner is not determined via the appraisal process, we will invite representatives of the organisations involved to undertake a face-to-face interview with members of the appraisal team during the week of November 4 2013.

We will endeavour to provide detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants if requested, once the process has been completed. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the procurement process within 24 hours of our decision, via email initially followed by formal letter.

The successful contractor will be expected to enter into a formal delivery contract with Somerset County Council, with their proposal and any subsequent agreed amendments forming part of the terms and conditions of delivery. The Council's Standard Terms & Conditions are attached to this tender document.

7. Budget and Payment

The maximum budget for the work to be carried out over the contract period (Nov 13 - Dec 13) is up to **£5,000** and will be paid at the end of the contract following submission of detailed claim form and invoice.

8. Appraisal Guidelines

The appraisal panel will use the following template to assess the suitability and quality of each proposal. The weightings indicate the relative importance attached to each corresponding element. Please note that the key considerations listed here mean that we will be looking to evaluate based on cost **and** quality, and award to the most economically advantageous applicant.

Criteria	Weighting	Score out of 5	Score
<i>Demonstrated Value for Money in terms of staff time and expertise</i>	20%		
<i>Quality of submission, relevant service portfolio and understanding of brief</i>	25%		
<i>Experience of supporting business start up and growth including Work Hubs</i>	45%		
<i>Innovative approach to brief</i>	10%		
TOTAL	100%		

9. Conflict of Interest

In order to avoid any potential conflict of interest, individuals and organisations may not apply for both this opportunity and the associated work hubs call for proposals. Please include the follow declaration in your response to this invitation to tender.

Declaration:

'In tendering for this activity, I confirm that neither I nor any organisation for which I work will directly or indirectly (e.g. through involvement in a bid by another organisation) apply for support under the associated work hubs call for proposals.'

Signed.....

Date.....

Economy & Planning Commissioning Service
Somerset County Council
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Taunton
TA1 4DY