

INVITATION TO TENDER

Pathways to Enterprise Evaluation: Social Return on Investment

Date: 25th August 2011

Responses from potential providers: 14th September 5pm

Project completion date: Project must be completed by 16th December 2011

The Pathways to Enterprise Project [P2e] is delivered by Network Consortium. Network Consortium would like to understand the social return on investment to the State of activity carried out by this project and wishes to appoint an external organisation to undertake this work.

This research is required in order to meet conditions of European Regional Development Funding [ERDF].

1 Introduction to Pathways to Enterprise

The Black Country currently suffers from very low levels of entrepreneurial activity and new business start ups which mean it is not able to compete with the rest of the UK. The region produces 855 less new business start ups each year in comparison with the UK average. This, along with high unemployment rates, contributes towards the regions increasing Gross Value Added gap with the rest of UK.

To address this situation, the P2e project was developed. P2e is an ERDF project and promotes self employment as an option for individuals to consider and explore. It is delivered and managed by Network Consortium and activity takes place across the Black Country. Wolverhampton City Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Council, Walsall Housing Group and Network Consortium are funders of the project.

The project is currently live and runs until December 2012. Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible for support across the Black Country, particularly those most at disadvantage. The support offered to individuals is free at the point of access.

The project works with individuals interested in self employment and helps develop their business idea and tackle any barriers that prevent them from becoming self employed [for example, low self esteem, low self confidence, low basic skills, fear of statutory organisations, lack of understanding on business start up]. The objective of the project

is to help individuals feel confident and that they have the necessary skills and understanding to access mainstream business set up support. The project also helps individuals increase their employability.

P2e employs 6 coaches who work across the Black Country. Individuals interested in self employment are assigned a Coach who will work with the individual to help them develop and explore their business idea and provide softer skill support to allow them to progress. Support to individuals is offered through 1-2-1 work, small group session work and 1 day workshops. The package of support is tailored to meet the needs of the individual and a minimum of 15hours support is provided.

Individuals can expect to receive the following:

- Support to explore and develop a business idea
- Activities and workshops to help improve confidence, self esteem and basic skills
- Activities and workshops to help improve business start up understanding
- Support and guidance from self employed individuals
- Signposting to further support and specialised training
- Help with research
- Opportunities to network with other entrepreneurs
- Help and guidance to improve employment opportunities.

No background data has been collected to inform the Social Return on Investment calculation. In order to meet ERDF requirements, the P2e has a bespoke database that captures information, for example, employment status, about clients supported by the project. The project Steering Group contains representatives from Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall and Dudley Local Authorities that will help in accessing any necessary background information or data to support this evidence based work.

2 Expected Outcomes

This evidence based research will help increase understanding and awareness of the project's approach. This will improve operational management of the project and ensure optimisation of resources. Findings will also be used to help communicate the effectiveness, value and impact of the project to current stakeholders and help develop a business case to attract to future funders in order to sustain activity beyond December 2012. It is hoped that the research will be used to inform thinking and planning for future projects supporting individuals into self-employment.

3 Expected Outputs

The outputs for this project will be:

- Data and evidence that will help inform the calculation of the Social Return on Investment to the State of project activity.

- A calculation of the Social Return on Investment to the State of activity delivered to date by the P2e project.
- A narrative report outlining
 - the Social Return on Investment to the State of activity delivered to date by the P2e project
 - any other “headline” benefits of the project
 - approach, calculations and methodology
- Where possible, a formula or approach to allow Pathways to Enterprise project management staff to calculate ongoing Social Return on Investment in future
- A short presentation to Network Consortium’s Board and the Pathways to Enterprise Steering Group
- Contribution, through form of quotes, to a press release.

4 Expected Project Approach

It is anticipated that the chosen contractor will:

- Calculate the Social Return on Investment of activity delivered to date by the project
- Identify any other “headline” benefits of the project
- Work with partners to access information where necessary
- Analyse this information, draw conclusions and present the information in an authoritative and accessible manor.
- Report the findings in detail to Network Consortium
- Produce a report in line with the requirements of the project.

While it is not our practice to specify a maximum figure for the expected cost of the project, the project budget for this work will be £10,000 including VAT. Cost will be a factor in our decision, but our principle concern will be to appoint a partner who provides best value in delivering the required outcomes and outputs.

5 Expected Skills Required

Network Consortium envisages the applicant will have the following skills/experiences:

- An understanding of Social Return on Investment and its application to a project of this nature
- Demonstrable track record/ experience of conducting Social Return on Investment research
- Robust approach to calculating Social Return on Investment
- Ability to produce high quality work
- Ability to present information in an authoritative yet accessible way
- Ability to complete work to deadline.

6 Timescales

Network Consortium has estimated that the research should take **no longer** than 3 months. The research and report should be completed by December 16th 2011.

7 Key Contact

Richard Williams, P2e Project Manager will be the key contact for this work.

8 How responses will be evaluated

Network Consortium awards work on the basis of value for money – work will not necessarily be awarded to the lowest cost bidder, but will be evaluated against a range of factors to achieve Value for Money. These are:

- Understanding the objectives of the work
- Knowledge and experience of conducting Social Return on Investment work
- Meeting the objectives and delivering the outcomes set out in this specification
- Proposed approach to delivering high quality work to deadline
- Justification of costs.

The decision to award the contract will be made by the project management team at Network Consortium. You may be asked to provide further information in order to support your bid.

9 Submission of tenders

Interested parties should submit full tenders by email and/or hard copy to the contact details in the section below by the 5pm on Wednesday 14^h September 2011. All proposals will be acknowledged.

Each proposal should run to **no more than 10 A4 pages in Arial 11-point font**. This should include a project plan and 2 referees for previous work.

The successful contractor should aim to start the project promptly after this date.

10 How to respond

Please send your proposal to: rwilliams@w-n-c.org

OR Please send hard copies to:

Richard Williams
Project Manager, Pathways to Enterprise, Network Consortium, Whiteheads Building,
26a Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, WV2 4AF

11 Enquires

The main contact for enquiries will be: rwilliams@w-n-c.org

Richard Williams
Project Manager, Pathways to Enterprise, Network Consortium, Whiteheads Building,
26a Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, WV2 4AF

01902 572020 / 07432 668661

12 Confidentiality and Data Protection

The contractor will be expected to comply with relevant Network Consortium policies on Data protection, confidentiality and Equal Opportunities. The commissioning body will own the data and findings collected as part of the study.