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Planning

CO0418 Business Support Services Future Growth Programme 2

Essex County Council

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2024/S 000-005281

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-043ae5

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Essex County Council

County Hall, Market Road

Chelmsford

CM1 1QH

Contact

Ms Sam Hadi

Email

sam.hadi@essex.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UKH3 - Essex

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/>

Buyer's address

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Regional or local authority

I.5) Main activity

General public services

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

CO0418 Business Support Services Future Growth Programme 2

Reference number

DN709850

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 79000000 - Business services: law, marketing, consulting, recruitment, printing and security

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

Essex County Council (ECC) are seeking to commence procurement in March 2024 to procure an integrated Business Support, Financial Support, Skills Consultancy & Brokerage service. The service, working closely with the Government funded Growth Hub, will help provide the front door for businesses seeking advice and support in the County, enabling them to have the knowledge necessary to achieve growth and prosperity as well as access to business finance. The area covered by the service will be the Ceremonial County of Essex, excluding Southend and Thurrock Unitary Authority areas.

This procurement will be subject to internal governance.

The existing contract for Business Support Services expires on 30th June 2024. The Skills Consultancy and Brokerage service is a new requirement.

The proposed term of the contract will be 21 months. Bids can be from a single organisation, a consortium or a lead entity with sub-contracting; this will be at the supplier's discretion but is subject to agreement from Essex County Council.

We are proposing tendering as a single lot with 3 main areas of focus:

Focus Area 1 : Business Support Service

Focus Area 2: Financial Support Service

Focus Area 3: Skills Consultancy and Brokerage Service

This Prior Information Notice (PIN) has been issued to the open market to obtain expressions of interest as well as details of indicative bidding model (single supplier, part of a group or consortium or subcontractor).

We are requesting that interested suppliers respond via emailing sam.hadi@essex.gov.uk to confirm their interest, as well as their indicative bidding model.

Responses should be submitted by EOP Friday 23rd February 2024.

Please note this PIN/Early Engagement/Request for Information is not intended as a call for competition and as such you will need to express your interest in any future tender opportunity once the contract notice is published in Find a Tender and on Contracts Finder.

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 66000000 - Financial and insurance services
- 72221000 - Business analysis consultancy services
- 79340000 - Advertising and marketing services
- 79400000 - Business and management consultancy and related services

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UKH - East of England

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

Essex County Council (ECC) are seeking to commence procurement in March 2024 to procure an integrated Business Support, Financial Support, Skills Consultancy & Brokerage service. The service, working closely with the Government funded Growth Hub, will help provide the front door for businesses seeking advice and support in the County, enabling them to have the knowledge necessary to achieve growth and prosperity as well as access to business finance. The area covered by the service will be the Ceremonial

County of Essex, excluding Southend and Thurrock Unitary Authority areas.

We are proposing tendering as a single lot with 3 main areas of focus:

Focus Area 1 : Business Support Service

The business support service will support the creation of high-quality jobs by providing best in class support to enable businesses to start, grow, diversify, transition to Net Zero carbon and stay resilient from economic shocks. The goal is to boost business performance, create jobs and help businesses seize opportunities, with a strong focus on supporting Essex's growth sectors as identified in the ECC Sector Development Strategy. The primary purpose of the service is to deliver business support that will create and safeguard jobs and support business growth and productivity.

The supplier is expected to provide 1-2-1 advice, partnering and collaboration opportunities between SME's and major industries and educational institutions, assisting businesses to pivot and innovate, supporting product development, supporting the development of new skills and enabling businesses to implement, adopt, deliver and develop green technologies.

Focus Area 2: Financial Support Service

The business support service will also support businesses to access business finance. This includes finance provided by Essex County Council.

The finance support service will provide 1-2-1 financial and debt management support and advice to businesses, alongside navigation services which signpost businesses to other financial support programmes, to create and safeguard jobs and support business growth and survival across Essex. The supplier will be regulated and approved by the Financial Conduct Authority and will be expected to deliver free financial and debt management support, with the ability to provide business loans where applicable. The advice and support should allow businesses to help plan, manage and access finance that suits their needs in order to safeguard against any future disruption and enable businesses to maximise opportunities to not only survive but thrive.

Focus Area 3: Skills Consultancy and Brokerage Service

The skills consultancy and brokerage service will provide an independent business people and skill needs diagnosis and brokerage service to businesses across the contract area. Through this service businesses will develop an understanding of the skills and training needs of their organisation and its people with the provider delivering a People and Skills Needs Assessment and targeted Training Needs Assessment (TNA) as appropriate if they are faced with multiple challenges in the business.

The service will assist businesses to understand the skills landscape in Essex, the provision available that responds to their deficits (accredited and non-accredited learning) and information on the funding for courses. The supplier will drive cultural change as well as provide introductions that connect employers, providers and learners as well as take the lead in developing placement and educational engagement opportunities locally with Businesses to facilitate access to courses. The supplier of this service will be expected to promote and introduce businesses to existing local and national services and initiatives with a specific focus on providing feed to the Essex County Council offer without duplicating any services.

We are requesting that interested suppliers respond via emailing sam.hadi@essex.gov.uk to confirm their interest, as well as their indicative bidding model.

Responses should be submitted by EOP Friday 23rd February 2024.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

11 March 2024

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

Please note the invitation to tender (ITT) for this project will be carried out via Essex County Council's eSourcing portal, Proactis ProContract. If you have not already registered, it is recommended that you do so in good time ahead of the planned procurement publication date in March 2024 as suppliers will require a registered account to participate in the tender once published. Registration is free of charge and gives bidders access to opportunities from several other Local Authority and Public Sector organisations. To register, visit: Supplier registration ([due-north.com](https://www.due-north.com))

The Proactis supplier helpdesk (<https://www.proactis.com/uk/support-login/support/>) can help with registration queries.

Please note this PIN/Early Engagement/Request for Information (RFI) is not intended as a call for competition and as such you will need to express your interest in any future tender opportunity once the contract notice is published in Find a Tender and on Contracts Finder.

It should be noted that this PIN/RFI invites individuals and organisations to express an interest in this RFI exercise only, and it is NOT a pre-qualification questionnaire, and is NOT part of any pre-qualification or selection process.

This PIN/RFI is intended as an awareness, communication, and information gathering exercise. An expression of interest in this RFI exercise is no indication of a commitment to participate in the RFI process nor does it infer any preferential or special status on those individuals and organisations who express an interest in the RFI exercise