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Award

Strategic Digital Partner

The Education and Training Foundation

UK6: Contract award notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-038798

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-050b01 ([view related notices](#))

Published 10 July 2025, 9:13am

Scope

Reference

25-26.DDT-63

Description

Following an unsuccessful tender in 2024, The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) have followed a process for a direct award contract as a follow-on to the original tender.

The move to a process for direct award through negotiated procedure was as a direct result of the reasons from the unsuccessful procurement in 2024.

Essential requirement detailed in the original tender that were not able to be fulfilled included:

- Digital partners should have an extensive portfolio of clients that are professional membership bodies

- Compliance with Department for Education (DfE) authority to operate
- CRM 'MUST' requirements listed in Part 2 TRD excel spreadsheet

Of the 112 suppliers who registered their interest in the bid, several withdrew for the following reasons:

- There was concern that there was an existing UX agency partner
- They had limited experience in the membership organisation space
- They felt the functional requirements lent themselves more to an off the shelf product rather than bespoke
- They felt they weren't the right technical fit

Note, ETF felt that Umbraco was an essential requirement to avoid security breaches.

Following the failed tender a temporary arrangement was put in place with the incumbent supplier, and a review of the market was then undertaken taking into consideration the particular requirements that led to the unsuccessful tender, and the extremely limited potential market.

Extensive market research was conducted to identify potential suppliers that could meet the requirements, and then short-listing was carried out based on the necessary capabilities, knowledge and experience, switching the procurement process to a direct award. 21 Umbraco partners recommended on the Umbraco website (<https://umbraco.com/partners/?skill=§or=&country=&level=>) were considered for suitability. Suppliers were assessed on their ratings, whether they had membership experience (using dynamics) and whether they have worked in education. Out-of-the-box membership solutions suitable for the education sector were also considered. The list was shortlisted to 7 following this assessment. Digital agencies who could not provide end-to-end solutions with Microsoft Dynamics off the shelf products were excluded.

In April (2025), ETF held a series of demonstrations in which suppliers were asked to showcase their membership functionality. Membership requirements were shared with all suppliers. Some suppliers offered both Umbraco services and membership functionality, while in other cases, suppliers were brought together to meet ETF's needs.

It is important to note that these sessions were not sales pitches but rather an opportunity for suppliers to demonstrate how their solution would meet ETF's specific requirements. No financial discussions were held during these sessions. Focus was primarily on scoring the solution against ETF's requirements.

The short-listed suppliers were approached as it was deemed that they were best placed to meet ETF's requirement to build a new website as single open front door with updated branding, consolidating the ETF and SET websites. In line with the agreed technology strategy, the website will be developed using Umbraco technology. While ETF will continue to use Microsoft Dynamics CRM, alternative membership solutions were also explored.

A transparency notice was published to reflect the process undertaken.

Following the demonstrations, top scoring suppliers were short-listed to submit a proposal. Proposals highlighted the development costs would be higher than originally planned; therefore, the contract value has been increased to reflect this. This risk was identified in the transparency notice.

The successfully appointed supplier will:

- Support ETF's digital transformation programme to achieve our desired target state by implementing and supporting a CMS solution, inheriting our existing membership portal, and building any necessary integrations into CRM for off-the-shelf membership solution, events and CPD with Dynamics CRM.
- Enhance a Single Sign On (SSO) solution, Azure B2C, across our digital estate.
- Be a strategic digital partner for the ETF who shares a vision and a roadmap for the future.
- Launch a CMS solution with strong digital architecture, navigation, useability, governance, and content management features.
- Ensure the CMS is integrated with Google Analytics ready for launch to align with ETF's reporting and insight needs.
- Meet relevant security, compliance, and accessibility standards.

It is anticipated that the development work will be completed by 1 February 2026. An option for further development work is included in the transparency notice and in this contract award notice.

In addition, ETF will also be awarding the successful supplier a support contract, as expressed in the transparency notice. The provision of the support has increased the value of the contract value published in the transparency notice and has extended the length of the contract detailed previously. ETF include the option to extend the support contract until 31 March 2030 in this award notice.

In summary, this contract award notice clarifies the reasonable approach taken to move to a direct award through negotiation following a failed procurement, taking into account the

specific reasons for the previous unsuccessful tender, and the following thorough identification, and process for final selection of a suitable supplier.

Contract 1. Strategic Digital Partner

Supplier

- [BlueLight CRM Ltd](#)

Contract value

- £582,653 excluding VAT
- £728,316 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Award decision date

9 July 2025

Standstill period

- End: 22 July 2025

- 8 working days

Earliest date the contract will be signed

24 July 2025

Contract dates (estimated)

- 25 July 2025 to 24 July 2028
- Possible extension to 24 July 2030
- 5 years

Description of possible extension:

The contract includes the optional extension period of 2 years, on a 1-year plus 1-year basis.

The extension period will include any additional development work plus support costs.

Main procurement category

Services

Options

The right to additional purchases while the contract is valid.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) reserve the right to award a support contract to the successful supplier as advised in the transparency notice.

CPV classifications

- 72421000 - Internet or intranet client application development services
- 72413000 - World wide web (www) site design services
- 72416000 - Application service providers
- 72253200 - Systems support services
- 72211000 - Programming services of systems and user software
- 72212220 - Internet and intranet software development services
- 72212445 - Customer Relation Management software development services

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Procedure

Procedure type

Direct award

Supplier

BlueLight CRM Ltd

- Companies House: 09740281

Suite 01 60 Churchill Business Square

Kings Hill, West Malling

ME19 4YU

United Kingdom

Email: marios@teambuelight.com

Region: UKJ46 - West Kent

Small or medium-sized enterprise (SME): Yes

Voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE): No

Supported employment provider: No

Public service mutual: No

Connected people/organisations:

Name: BlueLight Trustees Limited

Address: Suite 01 60 Churchill Business Square, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4YU

Notified: 13/12/2024

Nature of control:

- The relevant legal entity has the right to exercise, or actually exercises, significant influence or control over the activities of a trust, and the trustees of that trust (in their capacity as such), hold, directly or indirectly, 75% or more of the shares in the company.

- The relevant legal entity has the right, directly or indirectly, to appoint or remove a majority of the board of directors of the company.

- The relevant legal entity has the right to exercise, or actually exercises, a significant influence or control over the activities of a trust, and the trustees of that trust (in their capacity as such) hold, directly or indirectly, 75% or more of the voting rights in the company.

Associated people/organisations:

Name: Bluelight Trustees Limited

Address: Suite 01 60 Churchill Business Square, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4YU

Notified: 13/12/2024

Nature of control:

- The relevant legal entity has the right to exercise, or actually exercises, significant influence or control over the activities of a trust, and the trustees of that trust (in their capacity as such), hold, directly or indirectly, 75% or more of the shares in the company.

- The relevant legal entity has the right, directly or indirectly, to appoint or remove a majority of the board of directors of the company.

- The relevant legal entity has the right to exercise, or actually exercises, a significant influence or control over the activities of a trust, and the trustees of that trust (in their capacity as such) hold, directly or indirectly, 75% or more of the voting rights in the company.

Contract 1. Strategic Digital Partner

Contracting authority

The Education and Training Foundation

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PTPV-9936-RPRN

157 - 197 Buckingham Palace Road

London

SW1W 9SP

United Kingdom

Contact name: Commissioning and Procurement team

Telephone: +442037408280

Email: tenderqueries@etfoundation.co.uk

Website: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk>

Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government