



**GUIDANCE DOCUMENT and SPECIFICATION for
THE PROVISION OF SUB-CONTRACT DELIVERY OF**

- 1. ADULT SKILLS FUND (ASF) PROGRAMMES**
- 2. ADULT SKILLS FUND (ASF) TAILORED LEARNING**
- 3. APPRENTICESHIPS**
- 4. 16-18 PROVISION**
- 5. HIGHER EDUCATION**

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|---------------------|------------------------|
| Ref: SUBC_25 | Dated: MAY 2025 |
|---------------------|------------------------|

These Guidance notes are provided to help support the applicant in their submission and should be fully adhered to. Please ensure that you read these documents thoroughly and have appropriate resource to meet all requirements detailed. Failure to do so may disadvantage your bid.

NEW COLLEGE SWINDON OVERVIEW

New College Swindon herein after referred to as “NCS” is an independent Corporation with exempt charity status formed under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

NCS is the major provider of post-16 further and higher education and training in Swindon and surrounding areas. The current college was formed through a merger between NCS and Swindon College (SC) in August 2020.

NCS was established in 1983 as the main sixth form for Swindon. Over the years, it grew and diversified its offer and student-base. Although sometimes perceived as having a more ‘academic’ focus, the college had a wide range of ‘clean’, vocational provision.

SC was first established in 1896 but with roots going back to the 1840s, the industrial revolution railway boom, and the arrival of GWR in the town. It was a general FE college, with a stronger vocational focus, a higher proportion of adults, and covering a wider range of sectors (including engineering, automotive, catering) than NCS.

Merger communications focused on building on the colleges’ combined strengths and specialisms to create a vibrant, high-performing and sustainable institution: a beacon of academic and technical excellence for the region. It would also offer a ‘Swindon curriculum’, closely aligned to learners’ aspirations, and open up more employment opportunities. It also secured the opening of the Swindon and Wiltshire IoT (SAWIOT), focused on L4-6 technical provision. Teaching started in October 2021 and newly refurbished premises opened for the 2022-23 academic year.

Today, the college operates across two main campuses, Queens Drive (SN3 1AH) and North Star (SN2 1DY), and a centrally-located Adult learning centre in Swindon town centre. With an income in excess of £40M, NCS employs approximately 650 staff, and delivers provision to more than 16,000 students. Delivery encompasses a broad range of qualifications from Entry Level to Level 6, including (GCSEs, A Levels), vocational and technical qualifications, higher education and degree-level courses, Apprenticeships, professional and business training and leisure courses.

Further information about NCS can be found at

- <https://www.newcollege.ac.uk>
- <https://he.newcollege.ac.uk>
- <https://www.sawiot.ac.uk>

Latest information can also be found on our social media accounts, the main ones being:

- <https://www.facebook.com/newcollegeswindon>
- <https://twitter.com/newcollswindon>
- <https://www.instagram.com/newcollegeswindon/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/newcollegeswindon1>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/school/new-college-swindon/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/swindonandwiltshireiot>
- https://twitter.com/sw_iot
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/swindon-and-wiltshire-iot>

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS TO TENDER

In order to minimise risk and to support NCS delivery and learning outcome objectives tendering organisations must be able to evidence the following.

For the avoidance of doubt the ESFA has been replaced by DfE so all reference to DfE replaces ESFA - changes are pending for 25/26 delivery and are expected to be in force by 01.08.25.

Organisations must

- Demonstrate a proven track record of or be able to demonstrate to NCS's satisfaction that they are capable of delivering positive outcomes for learners and deliver that learning experience in a safe, healthy and equal environment (assessed via due diligence and ongoing contract management if successful).
- Be able to evidence the capacity to track spend at approximately 8.3% per month
- Pass a credit check (Experian or suitable equivalent) with a Green status. Note: In accordance with DfE guidance NCS will not be permitted to enter into a contract with organisations with a below average credit check and or inadequate financial health.

Delivery offers must

- Compliment existing NCS courses – any courses offered that compete with (or NCS reasonably perceive compete with) NCS delivery will be rejected. For a full list of available courses see <https://www.newcollege.ac.uk/study-with-us/>
- Ensure feeder progression to higher qualifications at NCS or the S&WIOT <https://www.sawiot.ac.uk/> and /or
- target hard to reach / unemployed learners with offers that provide opportunities to gain recognised qualifications that provide quantifiable links / support to gaining employment
- Support learners to improve digital skills and aid with career progression opportunities
- Demonstrate capacity to deliver to learners living within a 60-mile radius of the Swindon area (for the avoidance of doubt NCS will consider all face-to-face and distance learning offers)

Organisations will be asked to self certify compliance with organisation and delivery offer requirements. In the spirit of partnership and fostering relationships of trust NCS expects tendering organisations to act with integrity when specifying capability and NCS reserves the right to seek evidence of fit (via previous experience and success / progression rates) at any stage of the procurement process and/or subsequent contract.

Evidence of the following qualifications / policies and procedures will be required at tender for ongoing inclusion in the process

- A Matrix Quality Mark or confirmation that the organisation will obtain this within 6 months of the start of the contract
- A track record of meeting ESFA Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP)
- A track record in the qualifications proposed to be delivered with high achievement rates of 90%+
- Where an organisation is in scope for Ofsted the organisation must evidence the most recent Ofsted inspection report as graded 'good' or higher, or for new providers an Ofsted monitoring report demonstrating progress is at least 'reasonable' in all aspects. Please note organisations out of scope for Ofsted, operating as a subcontractor to a Prime will be considered – evidence of who the Prime was will be required so the published report can be sourced.
- Evidence that robust Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and procedures are in place in line with NCS expectations and all Government Guidance as published and updated

throughout the year i.e. including but not limited to KCSiE updated each September

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-duty-training>
- <https://www.newcollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Safeguarding-and-Child-Protection-Policy-Dec-24.pdf>
- <https://www.newcollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Preventing-Radicalisation-and-Terrorism-Policy-February-2024.pdf>

Please note: while not mandatory, previous experience with contracting with any part of NCS previously would be an advantage, please ensure that you do not assume knowledge of your organisation and evidence all relevant experience via the tender process.

Please note for guidance in relation to above

- The 60 mile home address radius is required to ensure delivery will address, develop and impact local skills gaps. Funding will only be allocated to learners within the 60-mile radius
- ASF funding is predominantly at Level 2 and below however approaches which includes higher levels addressing local skills gaps are encouraged.
- Anyone wishing to submit must either have the Matrix standard or be in the process of obtaining the accreditation within the first six months of the contract in accordance with the Governments matrix guidance below
 - “1.1. Any contract where one of the main objectives of the service to be provided is to deliver information and advice, the organisation must achieve the matrix Standard accreditation within 6 months of the contract being awarded and maintain for the duration of the contract.*
 - 1.2 If the information and advice is embedded as part of the delivery of the services, the organisation is required to work towards achieving the matrix Standard Accreditation within 6 months of the start of the contract.*
 - 1.3 Where the services are delivered by a subcontractor on behalf of the organisation, the requirements set out in clauses 1.1 and 1.2 must also be applied to the subcontractor. The requirement does not apply to the subcontractor where the organisation retains responsibility for the delivery of information and advice. However, should they choose to do so, sub-contractors can be encouraged to also achieve the accreditation.*
 - 1.4 It is the responsibility of the organisation to ensure any sub-contractor delivering the service on their behalf is matrix accredited”.*

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-matrix-standard/the-matrix-standard-guidance-notes>

Organisations who become aware of a change to their circumstances (Ofsted rating, financial standing, legislative requirements) at any stage of the tender process or subsequent contract should escalate this to NCS immediately to ensure the integrity of the process and ensure compliance with DfE funding rules. Any organisation failing to adhere to this (whether by error or deliberate omission) where the change is subsequently found by NCS may have their tender submission rejected and any award / contract nullified. NCS will accept no liability for any losses incurred by the organisation in this event.

Please see the NCS 2024-25 Subcontract Policy for reference.

<https://www.newcollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Subcontracting-Fees-and-Charges-Policy-2024-25.pdf> Please note NCS will release their 2025/26 policy around June 2025, tendering organisations will need to confirm acceptance of this for ongoing inclusion in the process.

Only tendering organisations able to meet the criteria detailed are invited to review the remainder of this Guidance to determine their capacity to provide the services.

REQUIREMENT OVERVIEW

Scope of delivery and funding

The tender requirement is for a range of subcontract provisions within the radius of Swindon itself for the 2025/2026 academic year set out in Lots as outlined below.

1. Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Programmes (Level 2 and upwards)
2. Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Tailored Learning (any level)
3. Apprenticeships (Level 2 and upwards)
4. 16-18 Provision (Level 3 and upwards – consideration will be given to Level 2)
5. Higher Education (Level 3 and upwards)

Please note all ASF provision must be within non devolved areas.

Tendering organisations are invited to apply for one or all Lots in accordance with their own technical capability and capacity.

Contracts will be a fixed term contract starting 01 August 2025 with a completion of all teaching and learning by 31 July 2026. Please note qualifications for lots which are traditionally undertaken over a 2-year period are considered re-enrolments for data purposes on the second academic year. New College Swindon commits to working with any successful providers who find themselves one year through a 2-year qualification with learners, to ensure all learners can finish their teaching and learning, solutions will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

For lots 3, 4 and 5 where qualifications are traditionally undertaken over a longer than 1 year period, or across two or more academic years, are considered re-enrolments for data purposes for the subsequent academic year(s). New College Swindon commits to working with any successful providers who find themselves exiting an agreement one year through a 2-year, or longer qualification with learners, to ensure all New College Swindon learners can finish their teaching and learning, solutions and exit processes will be discussed on a case by case basis should this happen with the learners best interests at the forefront of the solution. Our fixed one-year offer should not discourage bids from organisations offering a longer programme.

To balance the burden of contract management with the requirement to minimise risk make multiple awards per Lot as outlined at Table 1. Note: the number of subcontract relationships required is indicative only. NCS reserves the right to vary this number in line with performance at tender. This means the number of subcontract providers awarded to may increase or decrease in line with scoring.

Funding will be allocated according to delivery proposals, availability of funding and NCS strategy. Current estimates on funding availability can be seen at Table 1. Please note, figures provided below are for indicative purposes only.

Final learner numbers allocated by NCS will be dependent on available funding, performance at tender; provider capacity (as determined by NCS assessment and the providers own proposed caps on spend within the Profile Matrix); delivery performance; achievement data; NCS enrolment for 25/26 and DfE funding guidance. Over the life of the contract NCS reserve the right to vary funding allocations (up or down) as a consequence of subcontract performance, availability of funding and NCS strategy. NCS will accept no liability for amendments to these figures resulting from reductions in funding allocation, enrolment shortfalls or changes to NCS delivery strategy. All organisations will have accepted this condition by virtue of a tender response.

Table 1

| Lot | Course delivery | Estimated funding available | Learner numbers estimated minimum | Learner numbers estimated maximum | No of anticipated subcontract relationships |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Adult Skills Fund (ASF) | £1,153,781 | 1,220 | 1,685 | 6 |
| 2 | Adult Skills Fund (ASF) – Tailored Learning | £71,670 | 28 | 28 | 2 |
| 3 | Apprenticeships | £800,000 | 0 | 100 | 2 |
| 4 | 16-18 Provision | £5,500,000 | 0 | 820 | 2 |
| 5 | Higher Education | £400,000 | 0 | 120 | 2 |
| | | £7,925,451 | 1,248 | 2,753 | |

For Lots 3,4 and 5 NCS are interested in proposals for delivery however reserve the right to reject all submissions and make alternative arrangements where the right partnerships cannot be forged.

In accordance with DfE funding for ASF, lot 1 and 2, learner numbers awarded will not exceed 25% of the NCS total provision. Any subsequent contract will therefore be awarded based on learner numbers.

In accordance with DfE apprenticeship rules New College Swindon will not enter any agreement under lot 3 whereby the vast majority of teaching, learning and assessment is undertaken by the subcontract partner.

In accordance with DfE subcontracting standards for lots 4 and 5, learner numbers awarded will remain the minority of learners on New College Swindon's database ensuring ratio of New College Swindon taught learners and subcontract learners remain in line within guidance

The DfE will fund the ASF, Tailored Learning, 16-18 provisions for young people and apprenticeship programmes in line with their funding requirements.

Tendering organisations should note that payments of funding for education and training will be made in line with the current ESFA/DfE Funding models.

[ESFA: funding rules, rates and formula - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Apprenticeship funding rules - GOV.UK](#)

[Funding and finance for students - GOV.UK](#)

[16 to 19 education and skills funding - GOV.UK](#)

[The regulatory framework for higher education in England - Office for Students](#)

For the avoidance of doubt that the total 100% referred to below is considered the total finance the subcontractor receives not 100% that the prime earns. For each provision NCS will retain a percentage of the total funding for a management fee (usually circa 20%).

In detail ASF, lot 1 and 2, 80% of the fee payable to the subcontractor is paid in instalments monthly in arrears over the expected length of time that a learner is engaged in learning with the final installment (20%) paid on completion of the framework. Please note that this payment process is subject to changes in funding. NCS will not be liable for any Government policy changes made. A full list of funding rates is also included in the Learner Aims Database that is available on the DfE's website at [Find a learning aim \(submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk\)](https://submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk)

For apprenticeships provision, lot 3, 80% paid in installments monthly in arrears over the expected length of time that a learner is engaged in teaching, learning or assessment. The final 20% paid on completion or successful assessment. Where the length of time is short

successful subcontractors may generate 100% of funding all in the same calendar month. Please note that this payment process is subject to changes in funding. NCS will not be liable for any Government policy changes made.

For 16-18 young person's provision, lot 4, 90% paid in instalments monthly in arrears over the expected length of time that a learner is engaged in learning, traditionally September to - May with the final 10% paid on completion of the framework for that academic year usually August however maybe earlier depending on evidence submission. Please note that this payment process is subject to changes in funding. NCS will not be liable for any Government policy changes made.

For our Higher Education provision, lot 5, 33% paid in instalments termly one month in arrears over the expected length of time that a learner is engaged in learning, traditionally October, February and May. Please note that this payment process is subject to changes in funding. NCS will not be liable for any Government policy changes made.

If an appropriate solution for NCS cannot be reached following this tender process NCS reserves the right to withdraw from the tender process and seek alternative procurement options.

Amendments to available funding

In the current economic climate funding cuts are to be expected. NCS cannot accept any liability in respect of any financial or contractual consequences (including but not limited to loss of profits) incurred by the provider(s) as a result of the reduction in funding or other educational cutbacks.

Consortia and Sub-contracting

Tenders may not be submitted by consortia and tenderers must not sub-contract any of the work within their tender submission. Any tenderers found to be in breach of this condition will be withdrawn from the process and, in the instance of an award being made the contract may be terminated.

Terms and Conditions

A draft of the proposed Subcontract Agreement Terms and Conditions that will apply are included in this Tender pack. Please note that these are dated 24/25 and, as a result there may be several amendments made to these terms and funding calculations. The latest updates are not expected until Summer 2025 and NCS will advise contractors of these as soon as they become available.

An opportunity for tendering organisations to submit desired variations to the draft terms and conditions is provided within the tender questionnaire.

Please be advised, however, that submission of any variations does not in any way guarantee acceptance by NCS. NCS reserves the right to vary or reject proposals entirely and revert to NCS standard terms. In the event that terms cannot be agreed and the right partnership cannot be forged, NCS may terminate this procurement procedure and seek alternative procurement routes. For the avoidance of doubt NCS will only consider terms that are written in accordance with and subject to English Law.

NCS Contract Team

The primary NCS authority in respect of the provision of Subcontract ASF is the Head of Partnerships and the Head of Partnerships reports into the Vice Principal for Commercial, Skills and Partnerships.

The Head of Partnerships is supported by the Partnership Team Leader, Partnership Co-Ordinator and apprentice Administrators – the partnership team. The partnership team will be responsible for the day to day operations.

Both the Principal Chief Executive Officer and the Vice Principal for Commercial, Skills and Partnerships are authorised to sign contracts on behalf of New College Swindon.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

Education provision falls within the Light Touch Regime of the Procurement Act Regulations 2023 for reserved social services. This tender process has therefore been designed to comply with the Light Touch Regulations and all NCS Financial Regulations.

This competitive tender process is being supported by AGM Procurement <https://www.agmprocurement.com/> on behalf of NCS to ensure compliance.

The procurement process has been structured as a competitive flexible procedure as follows:

Stage 1: Tender Questionnaire

NCS invites all interested parties to complete an Open Tender Questionnaire.

The Tender is split into two parts;

- **Part 1: Selection Questionnaire / Due diligence process** will assess a series of due diligence checks including but not limited to procedural compliance, financial standing and experience. In accordance with DfE guidance NCS will not be permitted to enter into a contract with organisations with a below average credit check and or inadequate financial health. Please see the evaluation methodology for more information.
- **Part 2: Tender** subject to meeting minimum standards outlined above this section will be scored 0-4 in accordance with the Evaluation Methodology detailed to make an award decision, note top ranking organisations may be shortlisted to Interview if further detail is required.

Within **Part 2** of the Tender there is an opportunity to summarise how an organisation would deliver beyond the requirements of the Contract to add value to NCS and support the Social Value Act 2012. Marks for this section will be allocated where organisations can clearly outline how they have historically performed against Social Value, and can specify further targets that would be implemented to support Social Value objectives should a contract be awarded.

NCS reserves the right to verify any responses to Part 1: Selection Questionnaire / Due Diligence process before award and at any stage of the project. Organisations who become aware of a change to their circumstances (Ofsted rating, financial standing, legislative requirements) should escalate this to NCS immediately to ensure the integrity of the process and ensure compliance with ESFA funding rules. Any organisation failing to adhere to this (whether by error or deliberate omission) where the change is subsequently found by NCS may have their tender submission rejected and any award / contract nullified. NCS will accept no liability for any losses incurred by the organisation in this event.

Questionnaire and Profile Matrix Completion

In responding to this procurement process please complete / respond to all questions fully. Do not assume that NCS evaluation team has *ANY* prior knowledge of your organisation as *ONLY* information presented can be assessed. Consider the NCS objectives for delivery and specification requirements and tailor your responses to ensure you demonstrate understanding, capability and fit. Please do not amend the format of the documents. Please submit Excel documents in MS Excel (not PDF) to support evaluation. Any errors in documents should be flagged to NCS via the Multiquote system on discovery.

Tender Tips

- **Address all aspects of the question** – this is where most organisations fall down, providing generic or partial responses
- **Assume nothing** – sell your performance, tenders can only be assessed at face value of what is presented, so if you assume knowledge on the part of NCS, whether you have worked with NCS previously or not, you will score lower automatically.
- **Ensure responses are succinct** – huge paragraphs don't help you and data may be lost, you can use bullets if this helps
- **Apply previous experience** – to show your specific capability / understanding of key issues. Describe what mitigation you will implement at NCS because of lessons learned / successes from the past with NCS or other clients to support robust performance.
- **Quantify results achieved** – numbers speak a thousand words, if you have achieved 98% achievement rate state it and what you will bring to the NCS contract to achieve the same or better. If you improved retention by 10% through innovative support systems, state the improvements / lessons learned you will apply to NCS and timescales for the achievement of this.
- Unless otherwise stipulated please limit all due diligence / selection questionnaire responses a **200-word count** – attachments (like certificates) will not be subject to word counts. Agency responses attached will also be subject to the 200-word count.
- Unless otherwise stipulated please limit all tender questionnaire responses to a **500-word count** - this includes attachments. Please note Agencies are encouraged to be innovative in their response and visuals to support a response are permitted.
- Please ensure all **attachments reference the tender question number** to which they relate. Make it easy for the tendering team to identify responses and score your tender.
- Please **do not send unrequired documentation or generic sales material** as this may damage your submission.

Failure to provide satisfactory responses or inability to adhere to requirements may result in your organisation being discounted from further consideration.

If you have any queries or concerns related to any question please seek clarification via Multiquote so as not to disadvantage your submission, the Team want to support you in this process.

All tenders will be scored in accordance with the Evaluation Methodology detailed.

IMPORTANT Submitting tenders under the Procurement Act

In order to submit a tender on the Multiquote site you need to register on the Central Digital Platform - this has been brought about by the new Procurement Act 2023 implemented on 24/02/2025. Please ensure you do this in advance of trying to upload responses to ensure that you have no issues when uploading

The link providing guidance as to how to do this is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/suppliers-how-to-register-your-organisation-and-first-administrator-on-find-a-tender-in-three-easy-steps-html>

Additional information regarding the Procurement Act 2023 can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transforming-public-procurement>

Stage 2: Interview

Following tender evaluation NCS reserves the right to shortlist any top scoring tendering organisations to interview. This is an optional stage and interviews may not be required. This **Stage 2** will be used to clarify salient points of the proposal and/or to refine specific elements of the proposal before an award decision based on the award criteria listed can be made.

Interviews will be held face to face or remotely (on prior agreement) via Microsoft Teams. The interview will be to a group including the Partnership Team and other key stakeholders.

Where an interview process is deemed necessary scores at **Stage 1** will be ratified at **Stage 2** before a final decision is reached.

Please see the Evaluation Methodology for the award criteria and scoring matrix used.

It is imperative that the person(s) responsible for the delivery of ASF provision are in attendance at this meeting (if invited). Please refer to the timetable to ensure availability of your team in this event.

Please see the Evaluation Methodology for the award criteria and scoring matrix used.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Tender responses shall be evaluated in accordance with the selection criteria detailed overleaf by the Contract Team and (where appropriate) other key NCS stakeholders.

Part 1: Selection Questionnaire / Due Diligence process

| Section / questions | Criteria |
|--|---|
| 1. Organisation details | Current active trading, relevant business and properly registered with the tax authorities shall only be considered. Includes subcontract and statements sections |
| 2. Bidding model and subcontract arrangements | Confirmation of bidding model and subcontract arrangements. Note: subcontracting is not permitted and will result in a FAIL) |
| 3. Statements | Confirmation of compliance and conflicts of interest |
| 4. Tender specific qualifications | Confirmation of minimum qualifications / accreditations required |
| Sustainability 5. Environment 6. Social 7. Governance | Complete responses shall only be considered. Confirmation that robust procedures are in place or minimum standards have been considered. |
| 8. Safeguarding policy requirements | Confirmation that required procedures are in place or minimum standards have been considered |
| 9. Insurance and Finance | Confirmation that minimum insurances are in place or can be obtained. Confirmation the organisation passes a credit check (Experian or suitable equivalent) with a Green status. Note: In accordance with ESFA guidance NCS will not be permitted to enter into a contract with organisations with a below average credit check and or inadequate financial health. Three years accounts and latest management accounts will be required. NCS reserves the right to complete additional reviews where financial health is deemed weak to clarify this position. |
| 10. Track record and success rates | Demonstration of understanding of key issues via previous contracts – used as references. |
| 11. Track record and success rates | Demonstration of a successful track record of working in the Swindon area, results achieved, and volumes delivered Note: NCS reserve the right to request additional references where deemed necessary by the Contract team. NCS may be used as a reference where an organisation has previous experience of working with the College. |

Scores for this section will be allocated Pass, Review or Fail in accordance with the scoring methodology below. Where an organisation receives a 'Review' score NCS will endeavor to clarify this section with the tendering organisation and or agree appropriate mitigation to minimise risk to NCS delivery. If such a clarification exposes undue risk (as perceived by NCS) or appropriate mitigation cannot be agreed NCS reserve the right to amend the score to a Fail and reject the tender submission. The decision of NCS will be final.

Part 2: Tender offer

Subject to meeting all minimum criteria above tendering organisations will be assessed as follows.

Responses to questions will be scored 0-4 as per the table overleaf (unless otherwise stated) and the attached weighting applied. Where there are multiple questions per section these will

be scored equally unless otherwise stipulated.

| Tender question | Detail | Criteria | Weighting (%) |
|-----------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| 1-3 | Defining target groups, engagement and recruitment | Demonstration of clear understanding of how to access learners, engage and recruit | 25% |
| 4-6 | Learner support | Demonstration of appropriate strategies in place to support learners | 20% |
| 7-9 | Resourcing | Demonstration of appropriate resources in place to support learners | 10% |
| 10-13 | Contract Management scheme of works and safeguarding | Demonstration that the organisation delivering this activity has a successful track record of Contract Management through Management Information, communication processes and qualified/experienced personnel. | 25% |
| 14 | Profile matrix | Provision of clear offer to fit NCS provision and pricing structures evaluated in terms of value for money DCS evidence | 10% Pass or fail |
| 15 | Social Value | Demonstration of commitment to Social Value / Sustainability improvements | 10% |
| 16 | Contract terms | Acceptance of terms and conditions | Pass or fail |
| 17 | Exclusions | Exclusions /clarifications for consideration | Pass or fail |
| 18-19 | Checklist | Confirmation of submission | Information only |
| 20 | FoIA | Exclusions from this Act listed | Information only |
| 21-22 | Declarations | Confirmation of submission | Information only |
| N/A | Tender interview | NCS reserve the right to vary scores +/- at Tender based on performance at interview and as a result of subsequent clarifications / references | N/A |

Each question will be scored in accordance with the matrix overleaf (unless otherwise specified) and the total score used to determine the award decision.

| Scoring Methodology | Scoring (Marks) |
|---|-----------------|
| Excellent: An excellent, comprehensive response submitted in terms of detail and relevance which demonstrates NCS needs will be met, with no negative indications or inconsistencies; response shows elements of added value to NCS. | 4 |
| Good: A good response submitted in terms of detail and relevance, which demonstrates NCS requirements will be met, with no substantial negative indications or inconsistencies. | 3 |
| Acceptable: An acceptable response submitted in terms of the level of detail, accuracy and relevance. The response is acceptable but there are either some omissions of important factors or negative indications that reduce the extent to which NCS requirements will be met | 2 |
| Poor: Limited response provided; response is inadequate, substantially irrelevant, inaccurate or misleading; response only partially addresses the question; response demonstrates majority of NCS requirements will not be met | 1 |
| Fail: No response to the question; the response is highly inaccurate, lacks detail and/or is irrelevant; the response does not address the question; the response demonstrates NCS requirements will not be met | 0 |

For the avoidance of doubt any score of 1 or less or will result in a FAIL. Where appropriate NCS will endeavor to clarify this section and/or agree appropriate mitigation to minimise risk to NCS. If such a clarification exposes undue risk (as perceived by NCS) or appropriate mitigation cannot be agreed NCS reserves the right to amend the score to a Fail and reject the Tender submission in full. Where multiple required attachments are missing from the submission NCS reserves the right to reject the response in full.

Clarifications will be obtained subject to the number tender responses received and where clarifications can, in the reasonable opinion of NCS, be completed fairly in line with tender timeframes.

Performance against the published award criteria listed above will be used to determine interview shortlists (if necessary) and the award decision.

The decision of NCS will be final.

TIMETABLE

Please ensure you can comply with timetable requirements as failure to do so may disadvantage your submission and/or result in the automatic rejection of your application.

| ref | stages | date |
|-----|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Publication of Tender Documents | 14.05.25 |
| 2 | Deadline for clarifications – NCS accepts no liability for failure to respond after this date | Midday 30.05.25 |
| 3 | Ensure CDP code is ready for tender submission (this is a reminder for suppliers only) | 03.06.25 |
| 4 | Closing date and time for returns | Midday 12.06.25 |
| 5 | Short list to interview (if required) Ensure availability for these dates as no further dates will be made available | 20.06.25 |
| 6 | Interviews (if required) approx. 30 mins Times TBC, please hold this date in your diary. Interviews may be onsite at Queens Drive Campus (SN3 1AH) or via Teams subject to NCS confirmation. Please ensure availability for this if required. | 25.06.25 – 27.06.25 inclusive |
| 7 | Exec approval (internal process) | 04.07.25 |
| 8 | Intention to Award announced | 04.07.25 |
| 9 | Standstill starts | 07.07.25 |
| 10 | Standstill ends | 16.07.25 |
| 11 | Finalise and sign terms | 31.07.25 |
| 12 | Teams induction meetings to confirm set up | w/c 28.07.25 |
| 13 | Go live | 01.08.25 |
| 14 | Completion of on programme learning | 31.07.26 |

NCS reserves the right to amend dates with notification. NCS is looking to improve on dates for line items 5 to 12 inclusive wherever possible.

Please ensure that you leave sufficient time to upload documents onto Multiquote as late submissions, even by 1 second, will be rejected by the system irrespective of whether the delay was caused by Multiquote system delays or downtime.

Holiday closures / Notable dates

While the College remains open delays to queries may be encountered during the following periods

- May half term 26-30 May inclusive

NCS will be completely closed for the following dates with no responses to tender queries on the following dates

- 26 May 2025

PROCUREMENT DOCUMENTS

Submissions should be based on all information presented as part of this pack of information. All information is indicative and subject to change in line with NCS Strategy. A full list of documents is detailed below:

For information only

- This guidance document.
- Draft NCS Subcontract terms and conditions 23/24 (to be updated).

For completion and return

- MS Excel Selection / due diligence questionnaire
- Tender Questionnaire in MS word
- 2025/26 Safeguarding Audit Tool
- DBS record
- Industry Mandatory Training Log
- Profile and Forecast Matrix in MS Excel
- Social Value Matrix
- Checklist in MS Excel

Tender Clarifications

The NCS team wish to support tendering organisations with their understanding of requirements support quality of responses. Should you have any questions related to this procurement process please raise a clarification through the Multiquote system in accordance with the deadline provided in the timetable.

Clarifications must be raised in writing, using the Multiquote system.

Please note all questions received will be anonymised and responses posted via a Clarification Log via Multiquote.

While the College will always endeavour to respond to organisations queries raised via Multiquote the College accepts no liability for failure to respond to clarifications raised during stated periods of absence or after the deadlines provided.

Multiquote support

Any problems with the Multiquote Portal including system access and password resets should be escalated direct to Multiquote at 020 3920 8054 or support@elcom.com

In the unlikely event of an unresolved system issue that may prevent access to tender documents or submission tendering organisations may email anna@agmprocurement.com or in an extreme emergency (related to submission) call 07538 463234.

Communications outside of Multiquote

The process has been designed to comply with all public procurement regulations and best practice. To ensure consistency, fairness and auditability NCS will not engage in tender discussions with any organisation. Any attempts to directly approach or canvass NCS personnel outside of the Multiquote system via telephone calls, social media or any other means (other than access arrangements outlined above) will result in a formal warning and may damage your submission.

Tender updates and Post Tender clarifications

At any stage of the procurement process NCS reserve the right to vary or otherwise update tender documents and or timeframes. When updates are issued by NCS Multiquote should provide notification to the tendering organisations registered email. It is however, the responsibility of the tendering organisation to ensure that the Multiquote system is checked regularly throughout the tender process and during the evaluation period when NCS may seek post tender clarifications. The College will accept no liability for a tendering organisations failure to monitor the Multiquote system.

Unsuccessful applicants

Subcontract Educational Provision falls under the Light Touch Regime of the Procurement Act 2023. Proposed expenditure is above the £663k threshold for these services so the Light Touch Regime Regulations will apply and a standstill period conducted.

This means NCS will provide a Reg 50 feedback form at publication of intention to award which will set out the rationale for the award recommendation.

Over standstill tendering organisations are invited review feedback to determine whether the process has been followed in accordance with published Guidance. Any claims for breach related to the process only should be raised via Multiquote in the first instance.

Following standstill subject to no claims being raised the College will formally award and arrange for contract signature. Only on completion of this action will the College publish an Award notification this shall conclude the procurement process.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

The tendering organisation warrants by return of a submission that it has made its own investigations and research, and has satisfied itself in respect of all matters relating to the requirement; and will not have entered into the process in reliance upon any information provided by NCS.

Tendering organisations warrant that tenders shall only be submitted on the basis that they are bona fide competitive tenders free from price fixing, inducement and/or bribery.

Prior to award of contract a final due diligence exercise and references may be sought to ensure that information provided is true and accurate.

Any organisation providing information to NCS at any stage of the tender process that is found to be inaccurate, false, seriously misleading will be disqualified from the process. If such improper information is discovered the NCS will remove the tendering organisation's name from the process. Furthermore, if such improper information is withheld from a response (regardless of whether this is in error or is a deliberate omission) and is discovered NCS will remove the tendering organisation's name from the process, will nullify any subsequent contract and may pursue legal proceedings.

Tendering organisations must provide responses using the Tender documentation provided. NCS reserves the right to disqualify you if you do not submit your tender in a manner consistent with the provisions set out in this Tender Documentation.

By responding to this tender process, you agree that in the event that your tender is successful and leads to a contract, any staff currently supplied by you or any of your associated companies to any Client under this framework will not be subject to any transfer fees.

Under no circumstances will NCS accept any claim for additional payment that has not been specified within a tendering organisation's tender submission and accepted by NCS within the Framework Terms and Conditions.

Any tender not complying fully with any of the instructions in this Guidance document may be rejected by NCS and NCS's decision in the matter shall be final.

All documents requiring a signature must be signed by the tendering organisation's duly designated authority and by virtue of a response the organisation confirms that it has the required capacity to fulfil the requirement.

NCS reserves the right to cancel the tender process at any point. NCS will not be liable for any costs resulting from any cancellation of this tender process nor for any other costs incurred by those tendering for inclusion on the framework agreement. Note: inclusion on the framework is no guarantee of expenditure.

Please note: While NCS reasonably endeavours to maintain tender confidentiality as a public authority NCS is subject to legal responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and is therefore unable to accept any confidentiality terms which could potentially fetter its ability to respond freely to requests under that Act.

Tendering organisations will be deemed to have accepted the rules outlined in this Guidance document and the Conditions of Participation by virtue of their tender response.

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