NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE DECARBONISATION BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME 2025/26

REQUEST FOR QUOTATION – CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

Q. Just a quick one about the Decarbonisation support programme tender you have open - are we able to apply with a consortium which includes a charity?

A. Yes

Q. Is there any expectation to conduct the sessions / support in person? If so, how much?

A. This is a decision for the Supplier. We would look for the Supplier to maximise attendance.

Q. If, after completing all the agreed steps to promote the support programme, insufficient businesses are willing to engage, or work to produce a plan, would the contractor be required to continue to undertake further work until the target number of engagements and plans is achieved?

A. The pipeline of potential businesses is strong so we do not envisage a problem engaging with sufficient businesses. The supplier will be expected to continue to promote the offer to engage with sufficient businesses.

Q. Are clarifications being centrally published anywhere?

A. Yes, they will be published on the procurement portal (Find a Tender) by 22nd May 2025 (as set out in the RFQ)

Q. Could you please confirm if it is acceptable for us to use our own format when responding to the quality questions for this tender exercise?

A. We would request that you complete and submit the template as set out in the RFQ. Please do insert your responses into the relevant sections of the document.

Q. The NN2NZ website (https://nn2nz.co.uk/home/) hasn't got lots on (and some bits seem glitched or not finished see the homepage contact form under the Got an idea section, or the description of the projects under "Project Example" which is made up words) - as we'd be building on it, is there any up to date information about the progress made available? Perhaps a summary report or something to that effect?

a.   For example were the goals achieved in the announcement here: https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/news/nn2nz-boost-business-nn2nz-b4b-programme-launches-empower-

local-smes-towards-sustainable, eg 300 SME businesses engaged and 10% of businesses benefiting from free data gathering toolkits and expert guidance.

b.   We also reviewed one related tender document here: https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/62ba4513-417f-4dee-88ce-59e5074f2b7b

And there's a few things mentioned, Invest NN2NZ Prospectus, NN2NZ for Growth Website, and the Invest NN2NZ and Grow Business Network - were these things completed and outputs achieved (50 businesses supported)? I wasn't able to find these things so it would be helpful to understand the lay of the land.

A. An evaluation report of the NN2NZ project has been completed and can be shared with the successful supplier. The Invest Prospectus and website is due to be launched later this month

Q. Are the links for the grants mentioned "NNDecarb grants, the Rural Business grants, and the Business Growth grants" available?

Mainly we'd like to understand the size of the grant applications so we can understand what support would be best to provide to businesses and community groups we'd be supporting. Also understanding if the grants are 100% funding or match funding from businesses/community groups as this

A. The Business Growth Grant scheme (which now incorporates the Rural Business Grant scheme) was launched w/c 12th May. It is offering capital grants of between £5,000 and £25,000 to micro and small businesses to support growth, innovation and diversification. 50% match requirement, with details available at *https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/grants-and-support/business-growth-grant-scheme*

The NNDecarb business grant scheme will be launched later (June/July) and will also be a capital pot, requiring a minimum of 50% match funding.

The Community grant scheme will also be launched later but will not have a minimum match requirement.

Further details on these schemes will be published on our website when available.

Q. Will the Carbon Reduction Plans be fully funded by the grants? Will businesses need to contribute at all? Just as this will change the offer for businesses and mean getting people to apply may be more difficult (especially thinking about this for community groups who may be limited on resources)

A. Businesses and Community groups will not be required to contribute towards the cost of developing a Carbon Reduction Plan.

Q. What is the format of the carbon reduction plans required to be created - is it the governments standard template attached and following the guidance here?

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60ba4d208fa8f57ce980b5b7/PPN_0621_Technical_standard_for_the_Completion_of_Carbon_Reduction_Plans__2_.pdf

Is there anything else which should be included specifically for the NN councils information? Maybe drawing on aspects from the Climate Change Strategy (https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s27949/Appendix%20A%20-%20NN%20Climate%20Change%20Strategy_Final.pdf) or possibly wider sustainability reporting based on ISSB, or even aligned with the recently launched Nature Recovery Strategy (which looks fab by the way!) and

considering how nature would be involved, for example integrating treatment wetlands to decarbonise cooling or wastewater treatment.

A. We do not have set requirements for the Carbon Reduction Plans. Suppliers will be required to deliver a Plan which meets the needs of the business or community group. Use of a standard template (such as the government standard) would be welcomed. We would hope that the ambitions of each Carbon Reduction Plan would align with the aims of the Councils Climate Change Strategy.

Q. How would we work with the creator of the LAEP selected through this tender https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/014660-2025? Will we work in partnership and provide feedback to help them develop the plan? Will we be an extension of their team etc

A. The Council will be able to facilitate connections with the supplier delivering the LAEP to ensure that both pieces of work are aligned. It is not expected that the successful supplier for this commission will help to develop the LAEP or be part of their team.

Q. In terms of the marketing - do you already have a list of businesses signed up to receive support? What volume of referrals should we anticipate, based on point 4.2 in the RFQ? Just trying to understand the expected demand through that route to plan out our marketing activities.

A. We have a list of businesses that have enquired about support which we will be able to share.

Q. There wasn't any mention of making the workshops or bits of content accessible online - is this a requirement? Would online viewers or , if we had user accounts, users count towards the outcomes we need to achieve?

A. We would hope that a range of delivery formats will be used to maximise reach. Online viewers would not count towards – see definition OP10 - UKSPF_Indicators_25-26_.xlsx

Q. The specification indicates that the programme is intended to support both businesses and community groups. However, it does not appear to define the size of the target businesses.

Section 4.5.1 notes that "the audience will comprise businesses of different sizes and from a spectrum of sectors, including manufacturing and services." Could you please confirm whether this means the programme can include larger businesses, or if support is intended to be limited to SMEs?

A. The programme can include large businesses – the definition of an enterprise 'means a sole trader, micro business, small and medium-sized enterprise, or large business'

Q. We wanted to confirm whether the price at 20% of the marks was correct. Having worked on similar projects in receipt of similar funding previously, we understand that normally the funding provided needs to be spent in its entirety. Is this the case, or are you expecting to receive bids for lower than £80k?

A. Yes, the 20% price score is correct. As stated in the RFQ, the programme has a budget of £80,000 so we will not accept bids which exceed this threshold.

Q. In theme 2 of both programmes, it states that we will provide support a select group (20 businesses / 15 community groups) to develop carbon reduction plans. It then goes on to say that we should offer support to develop funding applications and, for the businesses, to offer support to those that receive the funding to develop a carbon reduction plan. Can you confirm that the support in developing funding applications and subsequent plans is only required for the select group (20 businesses / 15 community groups) and not all businesses / groups who participate?

A. Yes, the requirement is for more in-depth support to be delivered to the select group.

Q. Can a supplier submit more than one bid, for example, one as a sole provider and another as part of a consortium or partnership?

A. Yes

2. Could you please provide examples of the types of operations typically undertaken by "Community Groups" as referenced in the tender?

A. Please find a list of previous community grant recipients which will give you a flavour of our community groups - [Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations | North Northamptonshire Council](#)

3. Regarding the one-to-one support, is there an expectation or requirement as to the proportion that should be delivered in person versus online?

A. No expectations or requirements, rather we would like the supplier to maximise the impact of the support for each business / community group.

Q. Eligibility Criteria for SMEs: Could you confirm whether the SME eligibility criteria for this programme are consistent with those used in the NN2NZ Boost 4 Business initiative? Specifically:

•   Fewer than 250 employees; and

•   Either a turnover below EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet total below EUR 43 million;

•   Must be a trading enterprise;

•   Registered in the UK with a base in either North Northamptonshire or West Northamptonshire;

•   Must be ready to invest in new products, services, processes, or carbon reduction measures;

•   Must not have been classified as a 'business in difficulty' as of 31 December 2019.

A. As above, the definition of an enterprise 'means a sole trader, micro business, small and medium-sized enterprise, or large business'. The business must be located in North Northamptonshire (not West Northamptonshire)

Q. Supplier Role in Business Recruitment: Could you clarify the expectations regarding the supplier's responsibility in recruiting businesses to participate in the programme? Will it be the Council who leads the recruitment and the supplier will support with collateral and resources?

A. The supplier will be responsible for recruiting the businesses, with the support of the council.

Q. Web-based Resources Hosting: Regarding the development of web-based resources for the campaign, should these be hosted on the supplier's website, the Council's website, or both?

A. This can be agreed at the inception meeting

Q. Carbon Audit Software: Is it acceptable for suppliers to provide access to proprietary carbon accounting software as part of the complimentary audit offering? Or is it a requirement that the audit must be conducted using offline tools (e.g., Excel)?

A. There are no explicit requirements, it is up to the individual supplier to provide the most beneficial option to businesses and community groups.

Q. Grant Timeline Could you outline the anticipated timeline between a business submitting a grant application and receiving a decision? This is particularly relevant for planning the support required post-award to develop Carbon Reduction Plans.

A. The council will normally make decisions within 4 weeks from the closing date for submissions of applications.

Q. Clarification on Grant Availability and Targets Section 5.3.3 of the specification indicates that the target is to support 50 businesses overall, while Section 4.5.2 specifies that a minimum of 20 businesses must receive support in developing Carbon Reduction Plans. As the Carbon Reduction Plan development is tied to grant funding, can you confirm whether this implies that only 20 grants will be awarded, or is there potential flexibility to support additional businesses with grant funding? Similarly for community groups. Clarificaiton on this would be highly appreciated.

A. There will be the potential flexibility to support additional businesses and community groups with grant funding, within the available budget

Q. Will the businesses and community groups already have completed their carbon footprint assessments, or is this included as part of the CRP production?

A. Businesses and Community groups will be at various stages, it is unlikely that they will all have already completed such assessments.

Q. Are these the first CRP's that the businesses/community groups will be publishing?

A. See previous answer. It is likely that for many, this will be the first CRP that they have produced.

Q. Guidance states that the CRPs must align with key carbon-saving objectives and address the gaps identified within the NN2NZ project. Please could you confirm what these are? The link is not working https://nn2nz.co.uk/

A. NN2NZ project details are available at https://nn2nz.co.uk/home/

Q. Will the businesses and community groups be expected to create science-based targets?

A. Businesses and community groups should be given support to develop measurable, relevant targets

Q. Regarding the outputs as listed in paragraph 5.4, for the wide cohort of businesses, are there pre-requisites that much be achieved via the workshop support? For example, are the business required to cover a geographical spread, have a required (total) number of employees, have a minimum annual revenue requirement or minimum number of years in business?

A. See previous definition of enterprise- 'means a sole trader, micro business, small and medium-sized enterprise, or large business'. The business must be located in North Northamptonshie (not West Northamptonshire). There are no requirements for employees, revenue or number of years in business.

Q. Regarding the outputs as listed in paragraph 5.4, for the community groups, are there pre-requisites that much be achieved in the workshop support? For example, are the business required to cover a geographical spread, have a required number of employees, or have been operational for minimum number of years?

A. Community groups must be based in North Northamptonshire. There are no requirements relating to employees or operational requirements.

Q. In the event that the target number of businesses and community groups do not engage despite thorough engagement and marketing efforts, will NNC be content to continue the programme?

A. Funding is available for 2025/26 only.

Q. Are we able to agree reasonable changes to the contract to add more clarification?

A. No changes will be made to the contract

Q. In consideration of the total contract value and risk, are you able to reduce the minimum public and product insurance limits to £5m?

A. No changes will be made to the contract

Q. Will the Authority appoint a single point of contact for each business/community group?

A. The successful supplier will be required to maintain contact with the businesses and community groups that they are supporting.

Q. Travel Requirements. Could you please confirm whether any travel is expected of the Supplier's team as part of the project delivery?

A. Project meetings can be done remotely

Q. Project Duration (8 Months). The notice indicates an 8-month contract, yet the dates (end of June to January, including Christmas) seem shorter than a full eight calendar months. Are the precise start and end dates the ones in the document?, Could you advise how the contractual "8 months" should be interpreted in relation to those dates?

A. The contract end date will be 30 January 2026. The start date will be as soon as we are able to contract with the successful supplier.

Q. Local Staffing & Networks Requirement

The specification states that "the Supplier must ensure, as much as possible, that the programme employs local staff and seeks to grow and strengthen local networks whether existing business networks, or the creation of new networks and groups."

•   Is there any flexibility around start-up staffing if local candidates are not immediately available?

•   Would the Authority be able to facilitate introductions to existing networks or provide guidance on local business associations to aid this aim?

•   Would any deviation from full local staffing (for example, bringing in specialist roles temporarily) present a material concern in evaluation?

A. The Council is keen to support local staff, whilst recognising the need to mobilise quickly. The Council will support introductions to existing networks.

Q. Theme 1 Web-Based Resources

Under Theme 1 outputs you reference "web-based resources." Could you please clarify whether these resources are to be built into an existing Authority website, or whether a brand-new web-based platform (or sub-site) is required? If an existing site is to be used, please share any relevant technical guidelines or CMS constraints; if a new platform is preferred, any guidance on hosting, branding, and integration would be appreciated.

A. This can be agreed at the inception meeting

Q. We would appreciate some clarity on the carbon reduction plans mentioned in the request: is the expectation to conduct onsite building energy audits for all businesses and community groups or to complete desktop-based carbon reduction plans based on energy consumption data?

A. There are no explicit requirements, it is up to the individual supplier to provide the most beneficial option to businesses and community groups. As above, we do not have set requirements for the Carbon Reduction Plans. Suppliers will be required to deliver a Plan which meets the needs of the business or community group. Use of a standard template (such as the government standard) would be welcomed. We would hope that the ambitions of each Carbon Reduction Plan would align with the aims of the Councils Climate Change Strategy.