

TALENT MATCH NORTH EAST JOBS FUND INVITATION TO TENDER

INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

INTRODUCTION

1. Talent Match North East is an innovative Big Lottery Funded programme, delivered by the Wise Group that targets 18 to 24 year olds that are furthest from the jobs market. It operates across the North East LEP area, which is Northumberland, County Durham, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.
2. Talent Match North East started in 2013. Since then we have commissioned two rounds of projects (Phase 1 and Phase 2) designed to support young people to acquire the skills, qualifications and experience they need to get into work.
3. Phase 3 of the Talent Match North East programme delivered five different projects providing targeted employer-focused support for young people.
4. One project within Phase 3 of the Talent Match North East is Jobs Fund, an employer-facing service which sources and secures subsidised jobs lasting at least 6 months, or apprenticeships, for young people on the programme.
5. We now need to re-commission the provision of the Jobs Fund service, to enable it to be extended from March 2018 until September 2018.
6. This document provides background information on the Talent Match North East programme, an overview of what we are looking to commission and a description of the commissioning process.

BACKGROUND TO TALENT MATCH NORTH EAST

7. Talent Match North East has been designed to provide support for individuals who have been NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), not receiving any form of support, or receiving a form of support but not progressing for 12 months or more and have specific barriers to progression.
8. Talent Match North East is a 5 year programme to December 2018, working with 2,500 young people. In Talent Match North East phases 1 and 2 the partnership started delivering and commissioning activity to engage young people, refer them to a youth coach and support them through the identification of their barriers, personal development planning, volunteering opportunities, skills development activity and into work, and during their sustained employment.
9. The Talent Match approach is to adopt a 'test and learn' attitude, empowering creative ways of supporting young people through encouraging the use of progressive and innovative thinking to help tackle issues these young people face. The programme is learning about their barriers through testing ideas and can provide an informed and evidence-based legacy for future youth employability programmes. Talent Match will constantly evolve as we test, learn and improve ideas.

10. Talent Match North East is one of the highest performing Talent Match programmes nationally. More information on Talent Match and Talent Match North East can be found on the Big Lottery Fund website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/talentmatch

SERVICE TO BE COMMISSIONED

11. We are seeking a provider to deliver a project to secure vacancies for Talent Match subsidised six-month jobs, or apprenticeships, for young people on the programme. The project will create job opportunities and match young people with the right opportunity.
12. Jobs Fund has been operating since December 2015 and the current contract is due to finish 31 March 2018. This project is to extend delivery for a further 6 months, with an option to extend further to December 2018.
13. The processing and handling of job subsidy payments will be undertaken by the Wise Group. The offer to employers is either a) up to a maximum of £3,500 subsidy to the employer, paid in instalments over 6 months or b) a 'top-up' for the young person from the apprenticeship wage to the national minimum wage for their age, for 12 months.
14. There is a national Talent Match evaluation partner and the Wise Group is also conducting evaluation research for Talent Match North East. Jobs Fund providers will need to collect monitoring data and will be involved in these existing evaluations, but *will not* need to deliver or commission project evaluations themselves.
15. The provider will have existing relationships with appropriate employers in the NELEP area and a good understanding of barriers faced by the Talent Match young people. The successful bidder must be ready to mobilise the service on 1 April 2018.

THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

16. A Talent Match North East Jobs Fund independent decision making panel has been convened to agree the criteria on which applicants will be assessed. The panel chair is not an employee of the Wise Group and the panel includes representatives of the Talent Match young people steering group. There are also external stakeholder representatives on the independent decision making panel.
17. The commissioning process, including the application materials, specifications and assessment criteria, has been agreed by both the Wise Group and the Talent Match Programme Board, on behalf of the panel.
18. Guidance regarding the development and submission of proposals is detailed below.

SUBMITTING CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

19. Clarification questions may be submitted by email to Stephen.Telford@thewisegroup.co.uk with subject Talent Match Phase 3 Questions. All questions and all responses will be published at <http://www.thewisegroup.co.uk>. **The closing date for clarification** questions is noon on **23 February 2018**. No questions submitted after this time will be responded to.

Submission of Proposals

20. Proposals should be submitted by email to Stephen.Telford@thewisegroup.co.uk
21. An application form is available as the template for a proposal submission. Please contact Stephen.Telford@thewisegroup.co.uk to request a copy of the application form.
22. Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) are the only acceptable formats. No proposals submitted in other formats will be considered.
23. Please submit your application form using Verdana font size 11. You should not adjust the margins within the application form.
24. Where a page limit has been set any words beyond the limit will be disregarded in the assessment process. Tables and diagrams may be included in your submission. All words and figures included in diagrams or tables and in any headings are included in the word count.
25. The **closing date for submissions** of proposals is noon on **02 March 2018**. No proposals submitted after this time will be considered. We advise that you should submit your proposal leaving enough time for difficulties arising with the submission process.

Bidding As Part of a Consortia and Subcontracting Arrangements

26. Consortia are able to bid, but must name a lead bidder organisation with responsibility for the entire project and with whom the Wise Group will sign a contract.
27. Any project subcontractors who are to undertake services costing more than £3,000 must be named in the proposal or a commissioning strategy including a process requiring the agreement of Talent Match North East and the Wise Group must be submitted. We may require further information during due diligence on your subcontractors which will affect the eligibility of your proposal.

The Assessment Process

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28. A series of gateway questions will be used to determine eligibility of a proposal. Please do not submit any additional papers such as accounts or policies with your proposal. Successful bidders will be required to submit evidence to support their responses to these questions during a due diligence stage, prior to contract award. Where proposals are found to be ineligible this decision will be made by the independent decision making panel and the reasons for this will be reported to the applicant and will not be made public although this decision may not be challenged.
29. If the application is found to be eligible after an assessment of the gateway questions, an assessment will be made based on both a technical section score and price section score. For the technical section assessments a score will be given on a scale of 0-5 for each question (see guidance within the application form). The final score for each question will be agreed by the independent decision making panel. The total technical section score will be calculated based on the aggregate, weighted scores for each of the questions. This will be added to the score for the price section score to give the total score.
30. The independent decision making panel will then agree to name the highest scoring bidder as the preferred bidder. The decision making panel reserves the right to withdraw the opportunity at any time until the contract has been signed by all parties. The decision making panel reserves the right to reassess the eligibility of proposals at any time until the contract has been signed by all parties.
31. The details of the preferred bidder and the assessment score for each submitted proposal will be made publically available.

TALENT MATCH NORTH EAST JOBS FUND SPECIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS

SPECIFICATION

Project Overview

1. We are seeking a provider to manage an employment incentive fund that provides relevant, high quality job opportunities for young people from Talent Match who are out of work. The processing and handling of job subsidy payments will be out of the scope of the provider and will be managed by the Wise Group.
2. At least **40** young people will be referred to the Talent Match North East Jobs Fund project. The Talent Match North East Jobs Fund will support at least **30** young people from Talent Match North East who are out of work, into employment. To be eligible for the project the young person and their youth coach will agree that they are ready for work. There are currently over 2,500 young people on Talent Match.

Minimum Service Requirements

3. Bidders must set out within the methodology section of the application form how they will provide the following service requirements.

Sourcing Suitable Subsidised Job Opportunities

4. Good quality, eligible jobs will be sourced by the provider through employer engagement, marketing the project to local employers in an appropriate way. The provider should seek to source the widest range of subsidised job opportunities, in different sectors and occupations to maximise the breadth and depth of the opportunity for young people on Talent Match.
5. These jobs should be over 16 hours per week but under 40 hours per week, suitable for a young person, not require specific professional qualifications, and be demonstrated to be additional in one of two ways:
 - i. The jobs are on a rotation basis to free up existing staff for training or new business development activity.
 - ii. New jobs with specific tasks and an associated job description.
6. These jobs should be a minimum six months in duration with around a £3,500 average subsidy.
7. The jobs can also be apprenticeships. The subsidy will allow a top-up from apprenticeship wage to a national minimum wage for the young person's age.
8. The provider should detail within its proposal how it will support employers to create these job opportunities, e.g. the pre-sifting of candidates or other types of business support.

Promoting Subsidised Jobs to Young People on Talent Match

9. The provider will have access to details of all young people on Talent Match North East from the Wise Group, detailing their job aspirations. The provider will send

young people (via their youth coaches) details of suitable jobs. The provider will then provide a job matching service between the employers' job requirements and the skills/aspirations of the young person. This may include pre-sifting for particular employers/jobs.

Supporting Young People in Subsidised Jobs

10. Providers will be responsible for working with the young person's Youth Coach to provide in-work support.

Monitoring and Recording Information

11. The provider will be responsible for:
 - Monitoring and recording young people's progress within the subsidised job/apprenticeship, working with the employer and young person to ensure the placement meets their needs and is sustained for as long as possible
 - The provider will be required to share relevant management information with the Talent Match North East programme
 - Recording all employer engagement contact on the Talent Match North East CRM (a database system). This includes names of employer organisations, name and contact details of individuals contacted, date of contact, subject of contact, and outcome of contact.

Geographic Coverage

12. Successful bids will be required to source placements in each NELEP local authority area. Bids which do not include activity across the entire NELEP area will be scored accordingly.

Added Value

13. Bidders able to provide high levels of added value will receive a higher score within the assessment of proposals. Jobs Fund added value areas include but are not limited to:
 - Providing substantial business advice support to help businesses create or accelerate job opportunities
 - More complex but evidenced-based approaches to sifting candidates
 - A strong emphasis on microbusiness engagement as well as SME and large enterprise engagement
 - Geographical outline of jobs identified is designed to align proportionately with Talent Match North East young peoples' home addresses
 - Innovative approaches to delivery or other added value.

Budget and Payment Profile

14. The budget for the management, marketing, administration, employer support, employer engagement, in-work support, and all other activity is **£25,500** made up of a service fee element and a payment-by-results element.

15. The Service Fee of **£12,150** will be paid in advance at the beginning of each quarter.
16. The Payment by Results element is **£12,150**. This equates to 30 young people starting a job or an apprenticeship.
17. There is scope to exceed the target of 30. There will be no additional service fee for this but the Payment by Results fee would be extended to a maximum of 50 young people starting a job or apprenticeship.
18. Up to an additional **£1,200** will be available through a small incentive payment of £100 paid to the provider where the provider's employer engagement activity results in a non-subsidised job for a Talent Match young person. To receive this the job must be:
 - Not on Universal Jobsearch.
 - Identified on the Talent Match NE ADX by the provider
 - Applied for successfully through the ADX link by a young person on Talent Match with the support of their youth coach.
19. The timescale for this project will be 1 April 2018 until 30 September 2018.
20. Subject to sufficient demand, performance and the agreement of all providers and the Talent Match Programme Board, the Jobs Fund project could be extended for a further 3 months to 31 December 2018.

Additional Requirements

21. Where the provider is different to the provider of the Talent Match North East Workplace Mentoring project and Talent Match North East Work Placements project they must allow for:
 - Checking a bespoke Talent Match NE ADX every time they visit an employer to review any notes about previous engagement of that employer. The provider will be trained in how to do this and it will not be a time-consuming exercise
 - Record their engagement with an employer on the Talent Match NE ADX indicating that they have contacted them and what the result was. The provider will be trained in how to do this and it will not be a time-consuming exercise.
22. Marketing materials, branding and a communication plan are in place and will be communicated to the successful bidder.
23. Where employers make enquiries related to other aspects of Talent Match North East a 'no wrong door' approach should be taken in which the contact is seamlessly transferred to the correct source either by call forwarding or making a formal, well-structured referral between providers of Workplace Mentoring, Work Placement and Job Fund and other Talent Match North East activity.
24. Bidders should be aware that this service is currently live and TUPE may apply to this contract. Bidders should make themselves aware of any TUPE implications

that may arise and seek their own legal advice. The Wise Group cannot advise on any TUPE legislation.

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