

Invitation to Tender Specification: Understanding the Impact of the Aimhigher West Midlands National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)

Summary of services required

1. Aimhigher West Midlands wish to engage a principal investigator (PI) to undertake a qualitative evaluation leading to the production of a suite of case studies and a summative report exploring the impact of its National Collaborative Outreach Programme on young people, parents/carers and collaborative relationships between the universities, schools and colleges.
2. The project we seek to commission is for:
 - phase one (June 2018): the development and agreement of an evaluation methodology that generates original qualitative data and draws upon and incorporates existing quantitative data held by Aimhigher West Midlands
 - phase 2 (June / July 2018): field work / original data gathering and analysis. Synthesis with existing data
 - phase 3 (August 2018 / January 2019): Analysis, additional research and further synthesis leading to final reporting / publication.
3. The primary goal of the project is to gather and assess qualitative evidence of the impact of the programme on the higher education aspirations, attitudes, educational outcomes and progression of the young people it engages in a sample of the schools and colleges in which it operates. The project should also explore the views and perspectives of parent / carer and school and college staff.
4. The outputs of the project will include the production of:
 - Case studies exploring the perceptions and experiences of 10 individual young people, the educational progression barriers they experience and the extent to which the programme has benefitted them
 - Case studies exploring the impact of the programme on young people and partnership working in 5 schools / colleges
 - 1 report summarising the overall evaluation, synthesising outcomes and exploring the impact the programme more generally.

About Aimhigher West Midlands and the NCOP

5. [Aimhigher West Midlands](#) is a partnership of 6 of the region's universities (Aston University, Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, Newman University, University of Birmingham and the University of Worcester) and a number of FE Colleges. Aimhigher works primarily with 11-18 year olds from disadvantaged and / or under-represented backgrounds, and aims to:
 - Increase the participation of disadvantaged young people in all forms of higher education
 - Increased aspiration to higher education

- Increased awareness of higher education
 - Improved participation in Key Stage 4 and 5 learning and attainment.
6. Aimhigher West Midlands delivers and commissions a range of outreach interventions including:
- Mentoring
 - University summer schools
 - Subject enrichment events
 - University Masterclasses
 - Campus visits
 - Careers information and advice events/ resources.
7. Aimhigher West Midlands is one of 29 consortia contracted by HEFCE to deliver the [National Collaborative Outreach Programme \(NCOP\)](#), which aims to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education by 2020 by supporting young people in school years 9 to 13 who live in wards where the HE participation of young people is both low and much lower than expected based on GCSE-level attainment. The current Aimhigher West Midlands NCOP contract provides funding of circa £4.5 million for 2 years (January 2017 to December 2018) in 25 wards located in Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire.

Research background

8. The project to be commissioned via this invitation to quote should employ a robust, mix methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative measures, and be informed by [The Kirkpatrick Model](#), current best practice as outlined by [HEFCE](#), [OFFA](#) and the [OfS](#) (temporary website) and existing research on access to higher education and widening participation.

The project

9. The principal investigator will lead and coordinate work with partner universities, schools and colleges to meet the following objectives:

10 learner case studies

- develop a qualitative methodology for assessing the impact of the programme on learners with the outcome of 10 case studies. These case studies will explore learners' aspirations and attitudes to higher education and the barriers they face in progressing to HE.

5 school/college case studies

- develop a qualitative methodology for assessing the impact of the programme on five school/colleges. These case studies will explore practitioner's perceptions and incorporate outcomes from the case studies outlined above. These case students will also explore the impact of partnership working on school/colleges and HEIs, including the benefits and challenges.

10. In order to gain a granular understanding of the impact of the programme on access to higher education we anticipate that the PI will use a mixed methods approach including:
 - desk research to review, collate and interrogate existing data and information available from Aimhigher West Midlands¹ about the outreach activities delivered through the programme, its participants and their responses to attitudinal surveys already undertaken, their engagement in the programme, educational performance and progression-related behaviours
 - original research, using a range of qualitative methods such as to include interviews with young people, practitioners and parents / carers, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the programme, the barriers learners face and the benefits and challenges of partnership working.
 - Synthesise the above in order to consider the benefits and challenges of the programme and draw conclusions about its effectiveness and impact.
11. The PI, with the support of Aimhigher West Midlands and with access to existing data / evaluation evidence and new evidence generated via the project, will:
 - Work with Aimhigher West Midlands and the project steering group to refine key questions and develop and agree an evaluation methodology
 - Undertake all necessary desk and original research
 - Produce the suite of case studies as outlined in section 4
 - Write a summative report illustrating the extent to which the programme has supported collaborative working and generated positive outcomes, including key findings, recommendations and learning points.
12. When developing their quotation and project proposal the PI should consider:
 - The aims and objectives of the NCOP nationally
 - The local design and structure of the Aimhigher West Midlands NCOP programme
 - The practical, methodological and ethical dimensions of the project, including the various educational / social contexts within which the programme operates (e.g. rural v urban factors, delivery in schools or FE environments etc.)
13. Aimhigher West Midlands will provide resource to support the PI, including agreed project funding, staff time, contact details / introductions and initial support for liaison. Where available and subject to consent the PI will also have access to existing data on participant selected for case studies including their responses to baseline / follow up attitudinal surveys, programme engagement and educational attainment. Similar data will also be available for the school / college level case studies including contextual data (attainment, aspirations and key Stage 4 and 5 destinations data.
14. In addition to meetings of the project steering group, Aimhigher West Midlands expects to have frequent contact with the PI or a nominated member of the research team. Please indicate in your response how you would meet these requirements

¹ Includes responses to CfE baseline participant survey, Aimhigher West Midlands participant pre-post intervention questionnaires, individual participant and cohort-level programme engagement data and individualised participant data

15. An indicative timetable for the project is as follows:

Invitation to quote opens	2 nd May 2018
Supply query / clarification period	
Invitation to quote closes	25 th May 2018
Notification of results	30 th May 2018
Phase one starts / inception: 1 st steering group	6 th , 7 th or 8 th June 2018
Phase one completes	15 th June 2018
Phase two starts	15 th June 2018
Phase two completes: 2 nd steering group	31 st July 2018
Phase three starts	1 st August 2018
3 rd Steering Group	Mid December 2018
Case studies published no later than	End December 2018*
Summative phase three report published	18 th January 2019

**Case studies may be published sooner and on a rolling basis as they are finalised.*

Other requirements

16. Aimhigher West Midlands seek a principal investigator to undertake and complete the project as outlined above, to be commissioned by the University of Birmingham as lead institution for the project. The PI will report to a steering group comprising Aimhigher West Midlands evaluation staff and other representatives of the consortium at the start and end of each phase to. The case studies and reports produced by the project may be published by Aimhigher West Midlands.

Procedure for commissioning

17. We will accept costed proposals from an individual or a group. However, one named principle investigator to lead the project must be included in the response

18. Costed proposals should be no longer than 10 pages and include the following information:

- A description of your proposed approach and the methodology to be employed, including what information you would need to gather
- A project plan with a timescale to complete the project, including key milestones
- Costs for the project (see “Pricing structure”, below)
- Your previous experience of conducting similar work with young people, parents / carers and practitioners, outlining your capabilities / experience in relevant research and evaluation, including the nature of your organisation and its size, previous publications / citations etc.
- A breakdown of any others in your project team, giving details of each individual and a summary of their relevant skills, knowledge and experience that will enable successful delivery of this project
- Any other details about your organisation you feel may be relevant.

19. The successful supplier must confirm agreement with the University of Birmingham’s terms and conditions for approved suppliers, available here:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/procurement/supplier-zone/index.aspx>

Pricing structure

20. We wish to agree a fixed price for the work. Respondents should quote their price for each phase and indicate how they propose to charge for expenses if these are to be presented as an additional item.

21. If payment by instalment is required, these should relate to the achievement of clearly defined project milestones.
22. The budget parameters for the delivery of the project are in the range £20,000 to £22,000 excluding VAT where applicable.

Selection criteria

23. Suppliers will be assessed against the following criteria:

Selection Criteria	Weighting
Expertise and experience in conducting relevant qualitative evaluation in educational	3
Understanding of widening participation, outreach and access to higher education at a	3
Ability to collaborate with multiple stakeholders and partners	3
Expertise in producing publications for different audiences (including but not limited to: policy-makers, academics, and practitioners)	2
Capacity and ability to complete the work required within the specified timescale	2
Price	1

Proposals will be scored on a scale of 0-5:

0	Requirements not met or response completely unacceptable.
1	Very poor response and not wholly acceptable. Requires major revision to make it acceptable. Only partially answers the requirements, with major deficiencies and little relevant detail proposed.
2	Poor response only partially satisfying the project requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations.
3	Response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded upon. Response is sufficient but does not inspire.
4	Good response which describes capabilities in detail and provides high levels of assurance consistent with a quality provider. The response includes a full description of techniques and measurements currently employed.
5	Response is exceptional and clearly demonstrates capability of meeting the requirements. No significant weaknesses noted. The response is compelling in its description of techniques and measurements to be employed, providing full assurance consistent with a quality provider.

References

24. Please specify the names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of two current or recent customers, preferably within the public sector, for whom you have conducted a similar service and to whom reference may be made.

Queries

Queries about this invitation should be directed to Matthew Horton, Research and Evaluation Officer, Aimhigher West Midlands

Tel: 0121 414 2510

E: M.S.Horton@bham.ac.uk

Ends.