

# **Adult Skills Fund (formerly known as Adult Education Budget) 2024-25 Procurement FAQs**

## **Why was the Adult Skills Fund 24-25 procurement terminated?**

- In May, the decision was taken to pause and re-run the evaluation part of the procurement, to correct any perceived or potential errors with the scoring methodology used.
- While the Combined Authority believes its decision to re-evaluate the bidders was the fairest course of action, it led to a difference in the scoring. As a result, some bidders who had been successful in the first evaluation were unsuccessful in the second.
- It is clear from the communication received from these bidders that the re-scoring process undermined confidence in the procurement. The risk of receiving a legal challenge that would delay the release of funding was deemed to be high, and the Combined Authority, therefore, did not believe that continuing with the awards would be expedient or in the public interest.
- As such, a decision was taken to abandon and re-run the procurement from the beginning. This allowed any issues with the previous procurement to be addressed and any loopholes closed.

## **When will the procurement take place instead?**

The Combined Authority expects to tender in January. We expect the opportunities to be advertised for 30 days, and the contracts awarded in the first part of the new year. This is subject to change.

## **Will anything change?**

Yes. We will issue contracts that span both 24/25 and 25/26 Academic years, rather than the remainder of 24/25 AY, so the potential value of contracts will increase.

We will also be focusing on key educational areas, by using Lots. The Lots are:

- Lot 1 – Essential Skills for Life and Work
- Lot 2 – SWAPs and Targeted Employment Programmes

The following filters will apply to both Lots:

- Policies in place: Safeguarding; Prevent; Learner Health and Wellbeing; Learner Discipline & plagiarism; RARPA; and Continuous Professional Development.
- Matrix standard
- Awarding Organisation centre approval
- Ability to submit on the ILR
- UKPRN

## **Dynamic Purchase System: General FAQ**

### **Am I Eligible to Tender?**

The new procurement will be advertised via the Adult Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (“DPS”), YORtender ref 79437, and Suppliers wishing to tender for these opportunities need to be registered and accepted onto the Dynamic Purchasing System before this opportunity is published. Any organisation accepted onto the Dynamic Purchasing System after the date the opportunity is released will not be able to bid for this opportunity.

### **How do I apply to join the Adult Skills DPS?**

In order to access the full details of the DPS and submit an application, you must first be registered on YORtender. The YORtender portal can be found using the following link:

[YORtender](#)

*Suppliers must click on the link that says “Supplier Registration” on the homepage to set up an account if they do not already have one.*

Once registered, to access the Adult Skills DPS, 79437, and submit an application to join, suppliers can search for the opportunity under “Current tender opportunities” or use the following link:

[Public quote/tender - Adult Skills DPS](#)

Please note, all suppliers that are not current participants of the Dynamic Purchasing System, even if they have applied previously or any who have been rejected or removed for any reason, will need to re-register to be considered for any future opportunities. Suppliers who are already members should not re-apply.

### **What are the Contractor Model restrictions for the DPS?**

Each Supplier may submit a **maximum of one** Request to Participate (e.g. join the DPS). This may be as a prime contractor, **or** as a prime contractor as part of a consortia group, **but not both**. Variant or multiple requests are not invited and will not be considered.

### **What are the Contractor Model restrictions for this and other opportunities?**

We have reviewed the operation of the system and are moving some restrictions that applied previously when joining the DPS, to the Invitation to Tender stage. This means that in future, all organisations irrespective of their affiliations with other companies may, should they be successful in meeting the selection criteria, be appointed to the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

However, when issuing a Tender opportunity (Call Off) under the DPS we may be placing a restriction on the organisations entitled to bid. In future, we will only accept one Tender submission per Lot from:

- a Group of Companies (this means any direct or indirect subsidiary or any direct or indirect holding company or any such subsidiary of any such holding company or any such holding company of such subsidiary; “subsidiary” and “holding company” having the meanings defined in Section 736 of the Companies Act 1985 as amended by the Companies Act 1989). We would expect one bid irrespective of the number of connected legal entities within that “Group Company”. If we receive more than one bid, we may disqualify all bids from the tender process or alternatively communicate with the relevant organisations and ask them to liaise with each other and remove any excess bids from the tender opportunity. Where agreement cannot be reached, the Combined Authority reserves the right to disqualify all organisations without any liability or responsibility whatsoever for taking this action;
- any arrangement in which suppliers are working together; this may include but not be limited to Joint Ventures, Consortia bids or bids where the principal contractor is relying on the capacities of other entities to be able to meet the tender criteria, or where members of the same arrangement are also contractors in another Joint Venture/Consortia/arrangement that have bid for the same opportunity;
- organisations that submit similar or identical bids that are not entirely and wholly separate and independent of each other. If organisations use the same bid writer then it may be beneficial to ensure that an ethical wall is in place and, instead, a different bid writer is used per each organisation.

It should be noted that the Combined Authority does not object to Principal Contractor and sub-contracting arrangements or Consortia/Joint Venture proposals.

### **What are the Future Opportunities?**

After the new Adult Skills Fund procurements have been issued, the Combined Authority will be looking for contracts for:

1. Wave 6 Skills Bootcamps – January 2025
2. Free Courses for Jobs – Winter/Spring 2025
3. Wave 6 mid-year provision – Spring 2025