Request for Proposals **-** Partner to Tailor and Deliver Apprenticeships to Children's Services Data Analysts

RFP Due: 12:00 on Monday 23rd November
Send To: celine.gross@socialfinance.org.uk

Pitches for 1-3 shortlisted bidders: please hold Thursday 26th November 9am -12pm
Negotiation with preferred bidder: intending to complete by 11th Dec

Delivery – curriculum development and learner recruitment expected to take place Jan-Mar 2021, with delivery potential from end-Mar 2021.

Value: Est. £300k to £3m over three years

Introduction

This document aims to provide sufficient information to bidders to:

1) Understand the proposed approach to partnership including:

- what the partner is expected to do

- what NPIMG is expected to do

- the level of referral fees the partner will pay to NPIMG, and how those will be used

- how the partner and NPIMG will make decisions about the service together

- the approach to contracting with LAs

- the role of Social Finance

2) Understand our procurement approach, and assess their own likelihood of bidding successfully

1. The Proposed Partnership

Essentially, NPIMG and Social Finance will use their convening power to support tailoring – ensuring that the course is differentiated by being by and for the sector - and use their brand and reach in the sector to drive uptake amongst existing staff. The provider will develop the tailored curriculum, contract with LAs, and deliver the course. We hope that together we can reach 200 analysts over three years.

Context

Children's Services are delivered by 151 local authorities in England. They provide services which support families who might otherwise struggle to bring up their children, and where that fails they

provide 'safeguarding' services which intervene to protect children at risk of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding services are provided to about 400,000 children at any one time, and range from a family voluntarily receiving support from a social worker, to a child being removed from the family by court order.

NPIMG and Social Finance wish to improve the use of data in Children's Services, and to that end we want to improve the in-house capability of LAs to collect, manage, analyse and present data. We see upskilling the sector's c. 600 data analysts as a key component of that, and the use of apprenticeships as the best way to fund the necessary training.

NPIMG is the network through which the managers of Children's Services data teams collaborate. With funding from the Department for Education, its chair has chosen Social Finance to catalyse greater use of apprenticeships in the sector.

We have conducted research on the current use of apprenticeships: – a survey of the managers of Children's Services data teams, and interviews with 14 of them, found that:

- 46% were already using apprenticeships for at least some of their team (often those recruited as apprentices) but many of these were dissatisfied – typically stressing the need for more remote learning, and for better tailoring of the content to Children's Services if they were to expand usage.

- 51% were interested in apprenticeships, but not yet using them for their teams. The most common blocker to progress was 'decision paralysis' – not knowing what course from which provider would be best, and not having the time to work through the decision.

We concluded that a compelling offer to these managers and their staff would be a course which is:

a. **Tailored** to the challenges, datasets, and preferred technologies of Children's Services – to the point of being clearly 'by the sector, for the sector'.

b. **Endorsed** by individuals and organisations they trust – NPIMG (representing managers of data teams) and ADCS (representing the Directors of Children's Services).

c. **Embedded** in the networks through which these analysts already cooperate on benchmarking and the development of common tools – with those networks being used to crowdsource projects, and to inform ongoing curriculum development**.**

We have tested this proposition by announcing that we intend to develop such a course, and seeking expressions of interest from would-be learners and their managers. The response has been striking – over 65 expressions of interest in six weeks. We believe that that we can reasonably expect to hit 100 by Christmas.

Proposed Roles of the Partners

In Curriculum Development

Social Finance have conducted research on the content of analysts' roles, the technologies they are already comfortable with, and the technologies they would most like to learn.

We have blended this with an understanding of that can be (and what must be) delivered in a level 4 data analyst standard, and developed a high-level specification for the course. This has been done in conjunction with a design panel comprised of managers and data scientists from the more mature Children's Services data teams, and with representatives of the analysts internal clients and the local government CIO function.

We propose that the apprenticeship provider take over curriculum development from here – getting from our high-level specification to a teachable course. We will support by helping the provider find datasets and projects which are specific to the sector.

In Learner Recruitment

NPIMG, with support from Social Finance, will use a mailing list of c. 600 email addresses, its well-attended regional groups for data team managers, and its brand to drive further expressions of interest in the course, and to keep those who have expressed an interest keen to take part.

The provider will be introduced to the prospective learners' managers, with a letter of support and personal introduction from NPIMG. The provider will contract directly with each LA.

NPIMG and Social Finance will use their influence, most likely through the sponsorship of ADCS and the DfE, to request the councils with frameworks and DPS arrangements allow an exception for this programme.

In Delivery

The provider will deliver the course.

NPIMG, possibly with support from Social Finance, will maintain contact with learners and their managers to learn how the course can continue to be improved, and to ensure that the course is being delivered in line with the partnership agreement.

Commercials

Contracts for the delivery of apprenticeships will be between the provider and the local authorities who employ the data analysts.

Separately, a partnership agreement will be agreed between the provider and Social Finance – acting on behalf of NPIMG due to the latter being currently unincorporated – governing how we will work together. This will set out:

- Roles and responsibilities as above

- Expectations as to the level of tailoring of the curriculum and how this will be resourced (to be developed with the provider through the procurement process)

- Agreed level of referral fees (expected to be c. 10%) and the precise mechanism for calculating and paying them

- Arrangements for making decisions together about how to adapt the partnership and its programme of joint work as circumstances evolve

- Branding – with the course marketed as being 'by NPIMG, in partnership with [the delivery partner]'

- Intellectual Property – with the provider retaining ownership of its curriculum, and NPIMG retaining ownership of the high level specification (including any evolution of it over the life of the programme) and the right to re-use, or licence re-use of,

This agreement will be negotiated with the preferred bidder following the pitches. If we cannot agree a mutually satisfactorily with the preferred bidder we will negotiate with the next highest scored bidder,

Social Finance will be the counter-party in the partnership agreement for the first twelve months, and will collect the referral fees. After that we expect to novate the agreement to a newly

incorporated NPIMG or, if NPIMG has chosen to remain unincorporated, to a host LA or the ADCS.

Our working assumption is that for a tailored curriculum to be viable, we need to recruit a cohort of at least 20, preferably 30 learners. To reduce the level of risk our partner has to take, we are open to initiatives such as:

- Developing a detailed curriculum for the first few months before teaching starts, but then developing curriculum for the rest of the course whilst it is being delivered

- Waiving referral fees on the first 20 learners

How NPIMG uses its referral fees is important. We propose to ringfence 100% of the funds (net of any administration costs and taxes) for investment in:

- Recruiting more learners

- Refining the curriculum

- Developing an expanded offer (e.g. higher-level apprenticeships for course completers, a leadership programme for data team managers)

- Strengthening the community infrastructure which enables all of the above (e.g. the regional networks, the projects to develop common tools)

Exactly how the funds are used will be reported on transparently and shared with through NPIMG's network.

Beyond this Project

Social Finance have had interest in other sectors from replicating this project – aggregating demand and preparing a tailored course in niche areas important to public service and VCS delivery. If the process of appointing a partner, contracting 20+ learners, and tailoring the course is a success, then we will look to launch those additional programmes during 2021. Likely candidates include Adult Social Care, Public Health, and Housing.

We also have a strong interested in leadership development in Children's Social Care, including the ability of social work managers (c. 6,500) to use data analysis as part of an adaptive management process.

We would be interested to develop these ideas into funded projects, potentially working with the same delivery partner.

2. Procurement

We have advertised this partnership online, and run a provider event which five organisations attended. Three of these had previously been interviewed as part of the project's scoping phase.

We now propose to run a two-stage process to identify a preferred bidder:

- Shortlisting based on responses to the four questions below
- Pitches from 1-3 shortlisted bidders (15 mins presentation, 30 mins Q&A)

Shortlisting Questions:

1. What are the key things you need to get right in training data analysts at level 4, and what capabilities does this require? Give evidence that you have these.

Limit of 300 words.

2. How would you approach tailoring the curriculum for us? Roughly how many hours work would your team put into this?

Limit of 300 words.

3. Why do you want to do this?

Limit of 100 words.

4. Are you prepared to sign up to:

a.   100% online delivery
b.   A 10% referral fee

Yes / No answers.

Scoring

Responses to questions 1-3 are taken as a whole, and scored 1-5.

Question 4 is scored as pass/fail.

Response Format

Please send your response as an MS Word (or compatible) document, with no hyperlinks and no additional material by email to celine.gross@socialfinance.org.uk

Bidders' Questions, and Updates to the RFP

Q&A is open until 1200 on Monday 16th November. Please direct questions by email to celine.gross@socialfinance.org.uk.

Both questions and answers – but not the identity of the questioner, will be shared with all bidders.

Any bidder can register to receive updates on the Q&A log, and to this RFP, by sending an email to celine.gross@socialfinance.org.uk

Guidance for the pitch will come following shortlisting.

Who Are Social Finance?

Social Finance is a not for profit consultancy with c. 100 staff working to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable across a range of areas including: children's services, education (notably SEND and exclusions policy), domestic abuse, serious youth violence, addiction, health inequalities, and housing. Our traditional strengths in strategy and service design are complemented by a team of c. 20 specialising in data science and digital services.

We have been focussed on the opportunity to make better use of data in children's services since 2014, when we conducted research into the status quo with c. 45 senior leaders in the sector which underlined the size of the opportunity for impact.

Since then we have deepened our understanding of how to help the sector make better use of its data by delivering over 20 Children's Services data projects with over 44 Local Authorities on projects including developing an app for care leavers, building the business case for early help and for edge of care interventions, predictive analytics, data quality, data sharing, developing common data models (notably in early help), and understanding the barriers to staff using data in their decision-making.

Our current work on supporting systemic change in the sector has three strands:

1. Encouraging a culture of using data in decision-making;

2. Strengthening local authorities' ability to conduct data science themselves ethically, impactfully, and cost-effectively (including skills development);

3. Strengthening the foundations of data science in children's services – common data standards, services and frameworks for appropriate data sharing, and the tools and processes required to ensure data quality.

For More Information Contact:

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