

A PROGRAMME OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT FOR LEARNING PARTNERSHIP MANAGERS: DRAFT TENDER SPECIFICATION

Introduction / Background

1.1 A national network of 101 Learning Partnerships has been in place since 1999. The concept of Learning Partnerships stems from a joint commitment, by central government and other key partners, to get more coherence and better co-ordination of lifelong learning strategies at the local level.

1.2 Following a ministerial review of Learning Partnerships in April 2002, there are now new core roles for Partnerships:

- Promoting provider collaboration
- Maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration

1.3 There will also be a change to the funding route, which will take effect from April 2003. The Partnership Fund, which is currently channelled through Government Offices, will be transferred to the LSC's Local Initiative Fund, ensuring a better alignment between Partnerships' activities and local LSCs (LLSCs).

1.4 Each Learning Partnership has a manager in post, often part-funded from the Partnership Fund. Partners themselves contribute to the running costs and infrastructure of the Learning Partnership in cash and in kind. Some have developed small teams to support the co-ordination of the partnership activities. In some cases there is a Director/Manager (c. £30-40+k), Manager/Co-ordinator (c. £20-30k) and Administrator (c. £15k). Salaries are indicative only.

1.5 The Managers are employed on a variety of contracts and by an accountable partner, for example a local authority, college or training provider. Key players in partner organisations support managers and their partnership development skills can be included in the scope of this project.

Purpose

2.1 DfES intends that the programme will support the professional development of the 101 Learning Partnership Managers and key partner staff through and beyond the transition period.

2.2 The programme will deliver generalised and specialised support to improve the Partnerships' ability to address their core objectives. The tenderer is encouraged to put forward proposals and solutions that will identify and address a multiplicity of needs and learning styles.

2.3 In addition to providing induction support to new Learning Partnership managers (checking with them that they have the 'tools of the trade' e.g. on budget management, chairing meetings etc), the programme will be designed to deepen understanding of partnership. It will include strategic and theoretical concepts drawn from the growing body of knowledge on the development and management of partnerships. At the same time, the practical diplomatic and interpersonal skills required for the unique exercise of partnership facilitation will be covered in depth. The programme will therefore include tools and techniques to support the partnership process. It will allow participants to gain experience of partnership working and facilitation of change through innovative solutions, such as links with private sector mentors.

2.4 The programme should offer Learning Partnership managers and others the opportunity to have their learning accredited at an appropriate level. This should be an optional element of the programme.

2.5 The tenderer should outline the learning objectives of each element of their proposal, learning methodologies and options for accreditation. There should be evidence of capacity to deliver, including comprehensive information on the tutors intended to support the programme.

Costs

3.1 DfES intends to pay for the set-up costs for the programme and for an initial cohort to go through it, perhaps over two years. DfES would expect the programme to continue but become self-sustaining after two years since the programme could be accessed by participants working in other partnerships.

3.2 Tenders will be assessed on value for money and the ability to provide innovative and flexible solutions to Partnership Managers' needs, drawing on cutting edge thinking in practice in this field.

Management Information

4. Minimum requirements will be:

- Participant registration
- Needs assessment results
- Participant satisfaction levels with each delivery element
- Evaluation of progress made by participants
- Accreditation outcomes by participants