

On Monday 25 November 2024 the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Team at the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (the Combined Authority) hosted a webinar to introduce the route to procurement for Method 3 of the ASF Commissioning Plan as set out in the [ASF Strategic Skills Plan](#). During the webinar we gave a detailed overview of the Adult Skills and Learning Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

The presentation covered the following topics:

- What is a DPS
- How do you join the DPS
- What are the minimum requirements for you to join
- What happens when you join and what do you need to know
- Timescales
- Next Steps
- Helpful Links

Questions were invited from all stakeholders in attendance. This document accompanies the presentation slides and the recording of the session and is a record of all questions asked.

1. Is the DPS via the Crown Commercial Services Low Value Purchase Scheme?

Answer:

Yes. The Low Value Purchase System provides public sector buyers with a route to market for good and services and provides a 'Marketplace' of different purchasing opportunities, each with their own distinctive illustration to enable identification.

The Combined Authority are preparing to use the 'Adult Skills and Learning' DPS to procure services under Method 3 of our Commissioning Plan. The illustration that identifies this DPS in the Marketplace is included below for reference. The unique reference number of this DPS is **RM6348**.

The link to the Marketplace can be found here:

<https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/dps?fh=1>

2. Do we access the DPS via YORTender or Crown Commercial? Where will we find the DPS application?

Answer:

All stakeholders can access the DPS via the Crown Commercial Service.

It is vital your organisation is registered on the DPS to bid for opportunities. If you are not registered, you will miss opportunities.

- Please use the below link to 'register for an account':
<https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/organisation/register>
- If you are already registered to the Supplier Registration Service please 'sign in' to your account via the following link:

<https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/login>

3. The tender window of 4 weeks is very tight (even if it is the norm) - is there any way this could be longer - it is a barrier for many VCSE organisations

Answer:

The ASF Implementation Manager confirmed that it is a strategic priority to build capacity and capability of the provider base to meet the needs of learners living in York and North Yorkshire, and therefore if a slightly longer tender window is required, then we will consider this in our procurement plans.

During the tender period extension requests can be put forward for consideration via clarification.

4. How long does it take for applications to the DPS to be reviewed and approved?

Answer:

All organisations are encouraged to start the registration process as soon as possible.

Becoming appointed to the DPS can be a relatively straight forward process if an organisations meets all of the conditions set out in the bid pack and supplies all of the evidence required. However, timescales are subject to change. Organisations will need to be responsive to all Crown Commercial Service communications and reply to all queries and requests for further information in a timely way as part of the application process to ensure that delays are minimised.

This DPS launched in August 2024 and therefore as a relatively new DPS the number of organisations registering is likely to be high. The Crown Commercial Service have confirmed that there is an allocated management team responsible for managing all applications and they assure us that they can respond to surges in interest, but it is reasonable to anticipate that a surge in demand may cause delays in processing, hence the Combined Authority's message to start the process as soon as possible.

Organisations are encouraged to start their application process as soon as possible to allow adequate time to progress through the application process. The Combined Authority anticipate that we will be launching our procurement exercise in February 2025 and therefore organisations are encouraged to start the registration process now if they haven't done so already.

If an organisation is not appointed to the DPS **before** the Combined Authority launch their procurement exercise, they **will not** be able to take part.

5. Is the levy 1% of the cost of the opportunity?

Answer:

No. Registration to the DPS is free.

Organisations are charged a 1% levy by the Crown Commercial Service for revenue received under any agreement secured via the DPS.

Organisations are encouraged to refer to DPS Schedule 5 (Management Levy and Information) for further information.

6. We have been appointed to RM6348 for another Combined Authority. I'm assuming that I don't need to register again?

Answer:

You are correct. You would not be expected to register again.

We recognise that becoming appointed to the DPS can widen an organisations exposure to opportunities launched by other commissioning authorities. Therefore, becoming appointed to the DPS may have a positive impact to an organisation in regard to growth.

7. Other CA's have agreed to refund the 1% fee for using the DPS. Is this something the CA would consider to fall in line with other CA's nationally?

Answer:

We recognise that an organisation may wish to add 1% to their projected costings when submitting tender applications as opposed to absorbing the Crown Commercial Service's management Levy.

We recognise that becoming appointed to the DPS can widen an organisations exposure to opportunities launched by other commissioning authorities. Therefore, becoming appointed to the DPS may have a positive impact to an organisation in regard to growth. We would ask that organisations consider this when submitting their costs.

The price of services will form part of the contract award criteria as the basis for the decision to award an 'order contract' and therefore all organisations must ensure that pricing is competitive in your market sector and represents good value for money.

8. If we are using subcontractors, are they also expected to produce a cyber essentials certificate and insurance certificates? or is this just a requirement of the main supplier?

Answer:

We asked the Crown Commercial Service this question following the webinar, and their specific answer is included below:

The requirements for sub-contractors are set out in Joint Schedule 6 and also in DPS Schedule 9 which can be found in the Bid Pack on the Supplier Registration Service.

Joint Schedule 6 - Key Subcontractors

1.4 The Supplier shall provide CCS and the Buyer with the following information in respect of the proposed Key Subcontractor:

1.4.1 the proposed Key Subcontractor's name, registered office and company registration number;

1.4.2 the scope/description of any Deliverables to be provided by the proposed Key Subcontractor;

1.4.3 where the proposed Key Subcontractor is an Affiliate of the Supplier, evidence that demonstrates to the reasonable satisfaction of the CCS and the Buyer that the proposed Key Sub-Contract has been agreed on "arm's-length" terms;

DPS Schedule 9 - Cyber Essentials Scheme

2.5 The Supplier shall ensure that all Sub-Contracts with Subcontractors who Process Cyber Essentials Scheme Data contain provisions no less onerous on the Subcontractors than those imposed on the Supplier under this Contract in respect of the Cyber Essentials Scheme under Paragraph 2.1 of this Schedule.

- 9. Are the Combined Authority requiring suppliers to be on the Crown Commercial Service Adult Skills and Learning DPS for the ASF procurement only, or will this be a requirement for other education/skills tenders like Skills Bootcamps and Free Courses for Jobs?**

Answer:

At the current time the Combined Authority are using this route to market for the ASF only (which includes Free Course for Jobs).

This does not currently include Skills Bootcamps or any other education/skills tenders or any other tenders that the Combined Authority are currently launching. These are subject to their own procurement strategies/routes.

- 10. When in January does the DPS application window finish?**

Answer:

Organisations can register to become appointed to the 'Adult Skills and Learning' DPS (RM6348) at any point up to October 2028 which is the end date of this particular DPS.

The Combined Authority are planning to use this DPS to launch a tender exercise in early February 2025 (based on current timescales), therefore for the purposes of our procurement exercise we advise all organisations to start the process as soon as possible to become appointed on this DPS by 31st January 2025.

If an organisation is not appointed to the DPS **before** the Combined Authority launch their procurement exercise, they **will not** be able to take part.

- 11. Can you please advise the anticipated min/max contract values (per supplier) and overall contract length for this procurement? / Could you please repeat the funding available for the first round of ASF procurement through the Contract for Services route? / Is there any indication of what maximum funding a provider could bid for? / Will there be a maximum value providers can bid for through the tendering process?**

Answer:

At the current time we are unable to provide this specific information.

The **indicative total value** of the contracts to be awarded under Method 3 of our Commissioning Plan is projected to be approximately £2M. However, the Combined Authority has not had confirmation of the total value of the ASF from central government, therefore this value represents an indicative value at this stage.

The Combined Authority reserves the right to launch tender exercises via the DPS at any point, although the tender exercise anticipated in February 2025 will be the first occasion. There may be additional opportunities to submit tenders throughout the year depending on the strategic priorities of the Combined Authority.

The Combined Authority will inform all stakeholders when we have made our specific decision about the training and learning programmes that we wish to commission including all values.

- 12. Will providers be able to express interest in specific lots, ASF provision types or geographical areas through the tendering process? / Are there any restrictions on supplier location?**

Answer:

When you register through the DPS you will be able to specify where you can deliver services and the type of services that you can provide.

Commissioning authorities through the UK may use this DPS to tender for learning and education programmes. You will then be notified of appropriate opportunities from commissioning authorities as and when they arise. You can choose if you wish to submit a tender for these opportunities as they arise.

Please be aware that you will only receive opportunities for the areas in which you have said that you can provide services. So if you have said that you can only provide services in Yorkshire for example, you will not receive notifications for opportunities outside of the region.

There is the functionality to amend your location and service delivery preferences via the Crown Commercial Service.

13. Are there any specific areas where the CA feel providers can add the most value in their tender submissions?

Answer:

It is difficult to answer this question at the current time. However all organisations are encouraged to read the [Adult Skills Fund Strategic Skills Plan](#) to give you full insight of our strategic priorities.

The Combined Authority will inform all stakeholders when we have made our specific decision about the training and learning programmes that we wish to commission including all values.

14. Building on the subcontractors question and whether they need to provide insurance and cyber essentials cert, again this is a barrier to smaller VCSE organisations who may be part of a wider pathway. Can this be taken into account/reconsidered?

Answer:

The Crown Commercial Service has set the criteria for the DPS. They have consulted with the Department for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency in the creation of this DPS.

All organisations must meet the essential criteria before they can be appointed to the DPS.

Organisations can make their own informed choices about whether they wish to register to become appointed on the DPS, and subsequently if they wish to be considered for the upcoming tender opportunities.

Organisations are encouraged to seek further advice and guidance surrounding this subject, and may find the following link useful:

<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-essentials-scheme-overview>

15. Is there any Ofsted related minimum criteria (e.g., Grade 2 or above) in order to qualify on the DPS or be invited to bid for the ITT which would be released later.

Answer:

No. This is not a firm criterion that the Crown Commercial Service has applied.

16. Will the Combined Authority be using the Social Value Portal to monitor providers social value commitments.

Answer:

No. This will be measured via contract management.

Questions received following the webinar:

17. We're interested in applying to get on the DPS but need to get our Cyber Essentials and Dunn and Bradstreet score – is there any financial support available for these to support with the cost?

Answer:

The Combined Authority are not offering any financial support to obtain the Cyber Essentials accreditation or the Dunn and Bradstreet score.

18. Does this have any connection to being on the APAR (apprenticeship provider and assessment register) – I assume not but wanted to see if this would also be a requirement for any procurement?

Answer:

As far as we are aware, there is no requirement to be on the APAR as the Adult Skills Fund doesn't not include apprenticeship or end point assessment delivery.

Additional Queries

We encourage stakeholders to submit all further queries about the Dynamic Purchasing System directly to the Crown Commercial Service using the links contained in the presentation slides.