

Frequently Asked Questions - Adult Skills Fund Route to Procurement Adult Skills and Learning Dynamic Purchasing System (RM6348)

In December 2025 the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Team at the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority published a presentation to announce the route to procurement for the 26/27 academic year (AY).

In this presentation, we give a detailed overview of the Adult Skills and Learning Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS).

The presentation covers the following topics:

- Proposed procurement timeline
- 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
- Next Steps

This document is designed to accompany the presentation slides and the recording and includes frequently asked questions about the DPS. This information is designed to complement the comprehensive information contained within the bid pack, including any formal clarification questions that have been submitted by previous prospective applicants to the DPS. The link to the clarification questions can be found here:

<https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/dashboard/clarifications?cid=@NjJNT08=UFVWRVR6VkZhazQ9>

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 goods and services and provides a 'Marketplace' of different purchasing opportunities, each with their own distinctive reference number.

The Combined Authority are preparing to use the 'Adult Skills and Learning' DPS to procure services for the ASF AY 26/27.

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 and the associated application documents via the Crown Commercial Service.

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

- Please use the link below 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. 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 organisation 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 manner as part of the application process to ensure that delays are minimised.

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 2026 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.

4. 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.

5. Would the Combined Authority consider refunding the 1% levy?

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.

6. We have already been appointed to RM6348. 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. 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:

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:

- 1.1.1 the proposed Key Subcontractor's name, registered office and company registration number;*
- 1.1.2 the scope/description of any Deliverables to be provided by the proposed Key Subcontractor;*
- 1.1.3 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;*
- 1.1.4 *for CCS, the Key Sub-Contract price expressed as a percentage of the total projected DPS Price over the DPS Contract Period;*
 - 1.1.5 *for the Buyer, the Key Sub-Contract price expressed as a percentage of the total projected Charges over the Order Contract Period; and*
 - 1.1.6 *(where applicable) Credit Rating Threshold (as defined in Joint Schedule 7 (Financial Distress)) of the Key Subcontractor.*

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.

8. Building on the previous subcontractor question and whether they need to provide insurance and cyber essentials certification. This may be considered a barrier to smaller VCSE organisations who may be part of a wider pathway. Can this be taken in account / considered?

Answer:

The Crown Commercial Service has set the criteria for the 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:

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

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 Courses 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 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 February 2026 (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 to this DPS by February 2026.

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 us of the anticipated minimum / maximum contract values and overall contract length for this procurement?

Answer:

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

We will however be sharing some high-level information in February 2026 prior to the launch of the tender exercise to ensure that all suppliers are appraised of the potential values associated with the opportunity and the type of learning programmes we are seeking to procure.

The Combined Authority reserves the right to launch tender exercises via the DPS at any point. Although the tender exercise is anticipated to launch in February 2026, there may be additional opportunities to submit tenders throughout the year depending on the strategic priorities of the Combined Authority.

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 throughout 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 North Yorkshire for example, you will not receive notifications for opportunities outside of this specific 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 Combined Authority 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.

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.