

# INVITATION TO TENDER

## GROWTH PLATFORM LIVERPOOL CITY REGION – SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION STRATEGY

Date Issued - 26 July 2021

### 1. Introduction

In January 2021, the Liverpool City Region's Combined Authority (LCRCA) agreed a new Inward Investment Marketing strategy to support the Mayoral priority to establish a single front door for investment into the region backed by a high-quality account management service. Through a commissioning arrangement to March 2023, Growth Platform will co-ordinate this activity by working in collaboration with the region's local authority investment teams, DIT and commercial stakeholders to generate investment leads, manage the resulting enquiries and provide aftercare/key account management.

We are seeking an SEO specialist agency to develop and deliver an SEO strategy for the Invest Liverpool digital channels, comprising the website and social media to improve website rankings and create keywords across Liverpool City Region brand and key sectors for use as part of our content strategy.

The successful company will develop a catalogue of key search terms according to the stages of the investor sales journey, such as sector specific search terms and common inward investment search terms. The application of the search terms will be used across PPC, social media channels, business guides and the Invest Liverpool website. The website will need reviewing to analyse performance and provide guidance on website and on-page optimisation.

The company must demonstrate how they would approach improving website and digital channel rankings and how we can achieve a healthy website compared to competitors on a national and international scale.

### 2. Growth Platform

The inward investment service will be delivered through Growth Platform, the Liverpool City Region's Growth Company which has been established by the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Combined Authority (CA) to deliver the City Region's business growth and investment priorities. As part of this, Growth Platform works in partnership with business, the constituent Local Authorities, Universities, Colleges and third sector partners.

In July 2020 a new investment team was established within the Growth Platform with the purpose of positioning Liverpool City Region (LCR) for inward investment growth, as part of the emerging Place Making strategy. The team combines specialist/dedicated marketing for inward investment, account management and sector expertise to provide an integrated approach to proactive lead generation and enquiry handling. Working in conjunction with the region's Inward Investment Board, it is tasked with raising the City Region's share of FDI to 2% and generating 400 qualified marketing/sales leads per annum from domestic and FDI markets.

### 3. Current Position

The City Region has attracted c.£1.4bn inward investment over the last 5 years, the majority being across the key sectors of manufacturing, health & life sciences and digital. The City Region also has recognised strengths

in logistics, maritime and port access, professional services, the Visitor Economy and low carbon/renewable energy.

The strength of Liverpool as an international city, as well as the diversity and affordability of the City Region as a place to live and spend leisure time, also makes a considerable contribution to the area's overall investment proposition and quality of life. This is further enhanced by the pull of the region's universities and access to graduates, its position within the Northern Powerhouse and connectivity to other national/international cities and regions. The skills base is highly specialised in areas such as health & life Sciences, digital innovation and advanced manufacturing where the combined value of foreign direct investment into the City Region over the last 5 years has exceeded £200m.

Against this backdrop however, the City Region only secures 1.5% of all UK FDI projects equating to an average of almost 10 projects per annum. While the City Region's Internationalisation Strategy identifies that attracting this level of FDI projects is comparable with the UK's other core cities when assessed as a share of its GVA/economic output, it is significantly below that of Greater Manchester who are averaging circa 30% - 35% more FDI projects above the national trend.

#### 4. LCR Inward investment Marketing Strategy

Liverpool City Region's Inward Investment Board has agreed a new Inward Investment marketing strategy that delivers across 5 priority areas - Customer Value Propositions (CVPs), Brand development, content marketing, sector specific campaigns and strengthening partnerships.

A key component to the marketing strategy will be to develop our digital channels (Invest Liverpool website and the associated social media channels etc) to raise awareness of the City Region and its key assets, capabilities and specialist expertise. The goal is to generate leads and develop an extended pipeline of qualified opportunities for the investment services team in the Growth Platform and Local Authorities to convert.

As part of this strategy, we will be developing the City Region's brand narrative by creating content to focus on our talent base, global connectivity, research and development capability, sectoral strengths and overall sense of place. We have also prioritised the development of fresh content to support the positioning of the City Region and the new SEO strategy will help inform this work.

#### 5. Content Strategy

'[Here for Good](#)' has been accepted as the unifying idea for the Liverpool City Region's brand narrative and uses eight themes to reflect the region's individual strengths and characteristics. The outworking of the brand strategy is being delivered through an open access repository hosted on the Invest Liverpool website, allowing stakeholders to access and provide content for investment marketing. In developing the brand and its positioning, further work is being commissioned to establish the visual identity of the brand essence 'Here for Good' and will be crucial in bringing to life the brand guidelines into content and campaign activity.

The Brand narrative can be found on the [Invest Liverpool website](#) and sets out a narrative framework, a set of values and key messages that define the narrative, a summary evidence base and stories to support the values and bring the narrative to life.

Alongside this and to maintain the broader awareness of the City Region's investment proposition, the generic marketing of the City Region's investment opportunities will be based on the translation of the sector Customer Value Propositions (CVPs) into inbound content marketing activity across our digital channels (owned and

earned). The aim of the sector CVPs is to identify the unique and key characteristics of each sector so that Liverpool City Region can influence the decision making when it comes to competing for investment with other regions across the UK and overseas. From an investment perspective, it is those regions that understand and can satisfy the needs/wants of the companies it is seeking to attract that enable competitive advantage.

## 6. Our Approach to SEO

Both brand and CVP work has resulted in the need to update content across the Invest Liverpool channels which in turn, will require content on our digital platforms to be fully optimised and backed by an SEO strategy. The SEO strategy will be critical in developing content, such as business guides and making sure that content is relevant to target markets both nationally and internationally. Building out the right content backed by SEO should work towards improving the visibility of the Invest Liverpool website in search rankings for inward investment key search terms.

The SEO strategy should reflect the City Region's key investment messages as outlined in the brand guidelines and sector CVPs. It will play a crucial part in improving website rankings and turning InvestLiverpool.com into a lead generation website. Once the SEO strategy is in place, there will be required guidance on how this can then be maintained over a 1–2-year period.

## 7. Your Brief

We are seeking to appoint an SEO specialist agency to develop and inform our SEO strategy for the Invest Liverpool website and associated Invest Liverpool digital channels which will support the website as our main call to action and generate leads.

SEO will inform activity within the City Region's marketing programme for inward investment to help secure national, international and sector specific leads as part of an inbound marketing approach. This requires a specialist to develop the SEO strategy for the channels outlined i.e. website, social etc. They will also be required to work with Marketing Liverpool who host and manage the day-to-day running of the website in terms of updating and amending content to ensure it is fully optimised. This may also include working with the website developers Kaleidoscope on any major recommendations for the website outside of the scope of work carried out by Marketing Liverpool.

We see the first phase of the commissioning to focus on these areas below in order to get a baseline of SEO established:

- **Identification of key search terms according to stages of the investor journey** – from initial enquiry, comparison (talent, operating costs, cost of living) & sector specific search terms to business support and brand terms etc.
- **SEO strategy** – helping to shape the SEO strategy and establishing ongoing process for monitoring search terms, updating search terms and content across our owned digital channels and assessing Google/Bing rankings.
- **Website optimisation** – The website will need auditing/reviewing to analyse performance and provide guidance on website and on-page optimisation, such as priorities for the site, inform structure and landing pages. We will need technical guidance on areas such as, how we can optimise loading speeds (target 2 – 5 seconds) through review and management of media files within Invest Liverpool etc.

The second phase of work will focus on implementation covering these areas below:

- **Application & use of search terms/key words** – including application across web-based content, PPC, our social channels and the formulation of online guides to match the key search terms used to attract inward investment and most importantly foreign owned investors.
- **Web page optimisation** – this will include recommended back links (relevant news, editorial etc), tags/headline search terms, meta tags/general content descriptors etc., in order to help maintain our Google rankings in the long-term.

## 8. Timeline & Milestones

Project procurement, award and initiation will need to be progressed within an acute timeframe. In order to provide bidders with key milestones, the timeline below indicates the response time and proposed timescales for the award:

The planned project timetable is as follows, please note these dates are subject to change:

Project Advertised	26 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Questions Deadline	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2021
Responses	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Submission Deadline	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Clarification Interviews (if required)	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Appointment Decision	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Contract Commencement	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Contract Completion	March 2023

## 9. Supplier questions

Any questions should be directed to [sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org](mailto:sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org), on or before the 'Questions Deadline' date stated in the above timeline.

All questions and answers will be made anonymous and disseminated to all potential suppliers on Growth Platforms [tender page](#). It will be the responsibility of the potential supplier to monitor the site for latest activity.

## 10. Format & Content of Submission

The company must demonstrate the ability and capacity to deliver the brief. Performance will be reviewed on a monthly basis against relevant KPI's, such as:

- Organic traffic
- Search rankings
- Search visibility
- Link strategy
- Organic CTRs
- Bounce rate and average session duration

Companies/applicants expressing an interest in this opportunity should provide:

- A submissions in MS Word or PDF formats and not exceed 6 sides of A4.

Further details of evaluation criteria are found in section 11 which will be the framework of your submission.

**COMPLETED TENDERS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY EMAIL TO [sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org](mailto:sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org) BY 5pm on WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2021.**

The deadline for any queries prior to submission is Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021 and these should also be sent by email to [sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org](mailto:sylvia.pollock@growthplatform.org)

## 11. Evaluation

When awarding this contract Growth Platform on behalf of the LCR LEP reserves the right not to accept the lowest price tender, but the most economically advantageous tender taking into consideration the award criteria below.

Submission will need to score at least 65 to be eligible. In the event that all submissions score under 65, Growth Platform reserves the right to re-advertise the opportunities.

### Evaluation Criteria

Proposals / Quotations will be assessed and scored on the following criteria:

<b>Quality 65% made up of;</b>		<b>Weightings</b>
1.	Please include an outline implementation plan that defines roles and responsibilities (with associated resource requirements), covering all aspects of the proposed outline of approach in response to this brief – It is expected that submissions will set out how the requirements will be met, in terms of providing the desired outputs on time and on budget and what methodology you will adopt to deliver the brief.	35%
2.	Provide information on monitoring of the contract and how you will ensure our required outcomes are met. How will you keep the Growth Platform team up to date with progress? How will you address any failure to generate results? In phase one, how will you deliver final evaluation of the project to provide an overview of outputs achieved, to inform the next phase of work.	15%
3.	Detail the resources and your technical ability to carry out the service. Provide information on the workforce to be employed for performance of the service and level of resources to be used. This should include providing any details of ability in developing SEO strategy and maximizing the impact of content across all channels. This should include how you would approach the delivery of this project.	15%
4.	<b>Price</b> Breakdown costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase one work</li> <li>Phase two work and proposed approach to payment structure</li> </ul> Other overheads	35%

The scoring mechanism for scored questions will be detailed as follows unless stated otherwise.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
0	Unacceptable response. Requirement level is not met. Many important issues are completely un-addressed or response wholly inadequate or inappropriate. Concerns are serious and risk levels unacceptable for many areas.
2	Poor response. Requirement levels are adequate for only some important issues. Some important issues are largely incomplete. Concerns are serious and risk levels unacceptable for some areas.

Score	Meaning
4	Adequate response. Requirement level is partially met. Overall the proposals are satisfactory, but some issues are weak. Risk levels apply but Bidder has demonstrated understanding of how they will meet all minimum requirements.
6	Good response. Requirement level is partially met, competence is demonstrated in all areas but there is scope for more detail and more depth in some areas.
8	Very good response. Requirement level is met with only a few minor weaknesses or queries. Competent bid demonstrating overall understanding of requirements and experience in all areas.
10	Excellent response. Requirement level fully met. All key issues addressed. Range of examples of good practice, experience, understanding of requirements.

Price will be scored based on the following formula.

Lowest price submitted [divided by] your bid price [multiplied by] by 35%

## 12. Terms & Conditions

The Liverpool City Region Growth Platform standard legal terms and conditions will be used to govern procurement and contract management. These arrangements will be confirmed on completion of the tender process. Please note that Growth Platform does not negotiate these standard terms as they are considered to be fair and reasonable.

## 13. Conditions of Tender

- Please be aware that due to the relatively low indicative budget for this work (i.e. less than the current OJEU limits) there is no regulatory obligation for us to provide feedback if you are unsuccessful.
- We reserve the right to discontinue this tender process at any time and not award a contract.
- You will not be entitled to claim from us any costs or expenses which you may incur in preparing and/or submitting your Tender at any stage of this exercises. This applies whether or not your organisation is successful.

## 14. Budget

Based on external support for the delivery of phase one SEO services a maximum of £7,500 (inclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the period August 2021 to October 2021. The second phase will need to be scoped on a proposed cost for a monthly retainer by the agency.

## 15. Clarification Interview

If it is felt that submissions require clarification, tenderers will be invited to a clarification interview. The representatives who attend should be the people who will be working on this contract. Suppliers will be sent an invitation with an allocated slot before the interview date in the timetable above.