

## **Growth Platform Invitation to Tender**

### **LCR High Growth Peer Networks and Action Learning Cohorts**

#### **Growth Platform**

Growth Platform is Liverpool City Region's growth company, designed to support people and businesses to realise their potential and generate growth. Our role is to strengthen and simplify our regional landscape, creating a sustainable economy that reflects the needs of all our business community across Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

We exist to enable change and growth that makes our economy work for everyone; to provide guidance, inspiration and support for businesses, create opportunities for growth and foster resilience. [www.growthplatform.org](http://www.growthplatform.org)

#### **LCR High Growth Programme**

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) ERDF High Growth Programme provides a range of business support mechanisms for high growth SME businesses or SME businesses estimated to have high growth potential (potential to grow turnover or headcount >20% per year for 3 years) across the Liverpool City Region.

The programme will offer complementary business support mechanisms in LCR coordinated by Growth Platform. As a result, all the businesses supported as part of this Programme will also be introduced to the wider business support opportunities available.

SME businesses within the relevant LCR areas, who have demonstrated growth of 20% year-on-year for 3 years (employment or turnover); or businesses that a diagnostic process estimates will have the potential to achieve these rates of growth are eligible for the programme

#### **Requirement**

Growth Platform wish to procure one or more suppliers to recruit to and facilitate the Peer Networks cohorts; bidders may bid on an individual cohort basis or specify their lower and upper number (between one and four cohorts). We do not anticipate that facilitators will deliver more than 4 cohorts each.

Whilst we want full geographical and sector coverage of all businesses in the LCR we welcome geographic or sector specific submissions to ensure we have full coverage across the LCR.

In total Growth Platform are procuring the delivery of 6 cohorts comprising of a minimum of 10 participants with each supplier bidding for a maximum of 4 cohorts.

The successful supplier will need to understand the business support landscape within the region to ensure that the service provided will complement and add value to the support currently available within the region to help SMEs. Suppliers are expected to provide all platforms, equipment and materials required for the delivery of the programme, unless agreed in advance through specific arrangements.

[Further details are given at the end of this document.](#)

## Timescales

This project will run from February 2023 and all cohorts need to be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

Should there be a situation where this programme is extended beyond June 2023, Growth Platform reserves the right to extend this contract to meet the programme timescales. This will be at Growth Platform's absolute discretion, subject to funding, performance and strategic alignment.

Published	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Deadline for supplier questions	19 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Deadline for Growth Platform response to supplier questions	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Deadline for tenders to <a href="mailto:lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org">lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org</a></b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> January 2023</b>
Supplier notified of award of contract	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
Contracts issued	31 <sup>st</sup> January 2023
Contract Start date	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2023

We aim to work to the dates above but these may be subject to change. However, the deadline date for submissions will remain static.

## Indicative Budget

Maximum of £19,000 per cohort (excl VAT)

Please state your VAT status in your response.

## Supplier Questions

Any questions should be directed to Growth Platform's point of contact Lisa Duddridge, Programmes & Compliance Manager via email. [lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org](mailto:lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org) before the deadline for supplier questions (stated in the above timeline).

All questions and answers will be made anonymous and disseminated to all potential suppliers on Growth Platform's tender page <https://growthplatform.org/tenders/>. It is the responsibility of supplier to monitor the site for latest activity.

## Proposal Format

The successful company should demonstrate they have the capabilities and resources to deliver the above brief taking into consideration the evaluation criteria below.

## Evaluation Criteria

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

Quotes will be scored by the Head of Business Growth and the High Growth Programme Manager.

In the event that all tenderers score under 65, Growth Platform reserves the right to re-advertise the opportunity.

We are looking to appoint one or more suppliers to deliver 6 cohorts between February 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023. We reserve the right to offer a lower number of cohorts than a supplier expresses in their submission.

Quotations will be accessed and scored on the following criteria:

Quality 80% made up of;		Weightings
1.	Please include an implementation plan those outlines roles and responsibilities (with associated resource requirements), covering all aspects of the proposed service implementation for each of the service elements for the whole period from award of Contract to Project completion – include proposed start dates, length and duration of cohorts, whether you will deliver face to face or online	20%
2.	Provide information on monitoring of the contract and how you will ensure our required outcomes are met. How will you keep the project team up to date with progress? How will you address any failure to generate leads? How will you ensure that the pipeline of contacts generated through the project supports the profile of outputs required throughout the project? How will you deliver final evaluation of the campaign to provide an overview of outputs achieved, conversion rates etc.	10%
3.	How do you plan to identify, recruit and enrol SMEs and how do you propose to ensure each cohort has an optimal mix and balance whilst ensuring SMEs are representative of businesses across the LCR?  Please specify if you intend to deliver mixed/general cohorts and/or more targeted cohorts. For targeted cohorts outline the specific networks, routes and methods to recruit for these. How do you intend to ensure you have maximised diversity in each cohort?	15%
4.	What do you see as the needs and characteristics and issues faced by SMEs within the LCR, and the range of issues they face associated with growth, productivity, innovation, strategy, people and skills, driving change, resilience, technology adaption - and how will you address these.	10%
5.	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 experience and level of resources to be used. This should include any providing details of ability to deliver facilitated group support to businesses (including delivering action learning sets)	15%
6.	Detail any additional value that you would derive for the participating SMEs. This should focus on any additional benefits that your proposals will deliver – above and beyond the core outputs and outcomes.	10%

7.	Price Breakdown costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of group sessions</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Admin/monitoring/reporting</li> <li>• Other overheads</li> </ul>	20%
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## Scoring Methodology

Score	Meaning
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.
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 and understanding of requirements.

## Deadline and Submission:

Proposals are required by **26<sup>th</sup> January 2023** electronically to [lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org](mailto:lisa.duddridge@growthplatform.org)

## Date Published

16<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## 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 exercise. This applies whether or not your organisation is successful.

## This work is part funded through the European Regional Development Fund.

The Liverpool City Region High Growth Programme is receiving up to £5,504,829 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department of Levelling up Housing and Communities (and in London the intermediate body Greater London Authority) is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by



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STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND



investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>.

**The Northern Powerhouse** is a key aspect of this Government's approach to addressing the productivity gap in the North and ensuring a stronger, more sustainable economy for all parts of the UK. Alongside over €1.5 billion of European Regional Development Fund support for businesses and communities across the North, the government has awarded £3.4 billion in three rounds of Growth Deals across the Northern Powerhouse.

# LCR High Growth Peer Networks

The LCR High Growth Peer Networks will see the creation of an initial 6 cohorts, each consisting of a minimum of 10 owners or managers from the SME business community participating in each network. Led by an experienced facilitator, these cohorts are required to meet for at least 12 hours across the various sessions. Active involvement in the Peer Network will enhance the leadership capabilities, knowledge and confidence of business owners and entrepreneurs within the LCR. It will help build local connectivity and strength within the business community.

The Peer Networks programme is part of the LCR High Growth ERDF Programme.

## Peer Networks and Action Learning

Action Learning is an approach to problem solving and learning in groups to bring about change in individuals, teams, organisations and systems. It is based on the principle that the most effective learning takes place in the context in which people are working. A Peer Network is a private group of invited business leaders, formed to support its participants by working together to share challenges, solutions, knowledge, expertise and experience. Typically:

- Participants gather on a regular basis with the support of a facilitator to explore individual participants' challenge and to co-operate by sharing learning from each other's successes, setbacks and practices.
- The point is to realise opportunities, overcome challenges, develop themselves and their businesses.
- The conversation is structured and facilitated using action learning principles to ensure consistency, efficiency and effectiveness, leading to specific actions self-directed by participants.
- Participants reflect on the feedback and discussion and act on new thinking following the session, reporting the results back to their co-members the next time they meet. This helps everyone move forward on their challenges and learn from each other's progress. The fact that participants always report back to the group helps everyone hold each other to account for progressing with their issues and opportunities.
- The process is designed to deliver new insights for participant and result in tangible actions or solutions.

The context of the sessions is driven by the participants from a list of key themes (e.g. business development, marketing, people management, technology adoption) and can be tailored to focus on their specific needs, including wider issues that may be affecting their sector, locality or business model.

## Format

Each Cohort will be underpinned by an Action Learning methodology which is designed to enable participants to unlock benefit from – and the collective thinking power and experience of – a peer group. The Action Learning process is a cyclical one, typically running over several weeks. Each member has the chance to present an opportunity or issue and receive help to explore this and any solutions, whilst also commenting on challenges for others.

## Benefits

Learning from others – participants benefit from the collective experience of others in their cohort. They gain practical insight into how others have approached challenges and opportunities, understanding what worked well and what didn't.

- **Perspective shift** – the structure and format of the facilitated group sessions ensures participants will consider their challenges and opportunities through a wider variety of lenses, as they explain their situation and are questioned by the group.
- **Accountability** – participants feel far more accountability to a group of their peers than to an individual, consultant, coach or advisor alone. Being accountable for detailed outcomes in the context of the actions they bring back to the next session is a particularly strong motivator.
- **Building relationships** – the confidential sharing and exploration of real business challenges is far stronger than that created in standard networking scenarios. These connections endure and promote informal mentoring and support between businesses outside of group sessions.
- **More Action** – interactions lead to follow on conversations outside the disciplined environment of the facilitated group sessions. Suggestions and offers of help from peers inevitably derive further connection and often action based on inspiration from a peer.
- **Perpetuation** – the strong relationships formed between peers, through the facilitated sharing and consideration of each other's business challenges, often continue to be valuable long after the formal interventions have completed.
- **Reflective practice** – each session also ensures participants share experiences in the context of business theory, exploring ideas and solutions with others and reflecting on what they might do differently next time and what the outcomes may be. The act of taking part in these structured conversations builds the understanding and capability of participants to reflect upon their own performance, including successes and setbacks.

Once participants are familiar with the process and format, they can continue post programme, with sessions becoming self-facilitated by the group members. Groups often form LinkedIn or WhatsApp groups and maintain interactions in some cases for many years.

## Delivery Model

The programme provides the opportunity for leaders and senior managers from eligible SMEs to participate in a local peer network led by an experienced facilitator. The specifications for cohorts are –

Target cohort size	A minimum of 10 business owners or senior decision makers per cohort
Number of sessions	Each cohort must meet for a minimum of 12 hours, the number of sessions can be determined by each supplier
Frequency of sessions	This can be determined by each supplier. All sessions must be completed by 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2023.
Location	The sessions will ideally be done face-to-face, but some could be delivered virtually.
Topics	Topics could include, but are not limited to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• HR</li> <li>• Sales &amp; Marketing</li> <li>• Business Model Innovation</li> <li>• Change Management</li> <li>• Embedding formal management processes &amp; systems</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital</li> <li>• Use of data to drive the business</li> <li>• EU transition</li> <li>• Net zero</li> </ul>
Methodology	Each session must be facilitated according to action learning principals

To give participants maximum foresight, all sessions should be scheduled at the outset. Except in exceptional circumstances participation attendance is mandatory at all sessions. Making a commitment to attend is central to the action learning ethos and should be encouraged.

Sessions should remain participant focused with groups selecting the issues that are most relevant to them. Experienced facilitators will use the high level topics as springboards to focus on participants specific needs, including wider issues that may be affecting their sector, locality or business model.

## Flexibility in session structure

The facilitator can establish their own session structure for a session providing it adheres to action learning principals. The first session is likely to be follow a different format to the later sessions as the facilitator will need to establish the ground rules for the cohort and introduce the action leaning format.

## Target Audience

The LCR High Growth Peer Networks is aimed at high growth SME businesses or SME businesses estimated to have high growth potential (potential to grow turnover or headcount >20% per year for 3 years) across the Liverpool City Region.

Participants must be senior decision makers and can be drawn from almost any industry sector. See Annex 1 for a list of ineligible businesses. In recruiting participants and forming cohorts, consideration must be given to the optimal group dynamics.

The participant must –

- Have the autonomy to decide to join the programme and the licence to act
- Be interested in developing leadership and management
- Be ambitious for their business
- Value the opinions of others
- Want to contribute to the success of others

The action learning methodology requires that each participant must own a task, problem or opportunity that they can present to the cohort and action within their business. It is also essential that each person takes part voluntarily and makes a commitment to act and learn from the effects of that action. This means they cannot delegate responsibility to a colleague to attend on their behalf.

The programme is focused on supporting multi business sessions and it would not be suitable to have more than one person from a business or organisation.

## Facilitator Role

Facilitators are responsible for the week to week management of their cohorts and should perform the following tasks –

- Schedule sessions & send invites
- Host each session in a venue of their choice and cost
- Record attendance at each session
- Promote good discipline around attendance
- Use action learning methodology



- Direct participants to capture actions
- Identify potential for additional support
- Inform Growth Platform of any participants who disengage with the programme
- Raise any conflict of interest issues
- Resolving problems, issues and clashes

It is inevitable that on occasion, problems will arise relating to personality clashes and disagreements between cohort participants. The facilitator should look to address this through robust facilitation and use the reflective nature of action learning to focus the cohort on thinking about their individual behaviours and the overall performance of the cohort.

Where personality conflicts cannot be resolved, or in instances of emerging competition not foreseen at the outset, it may be necessary to move an individual to a new cohort. This would need to be discussed with Growth Platform as in most instances it would not be desirable to integrate a participant into an existing cohort. They would need to join a new cohort at the beginning, only as a last resort.

## Recruiting Clients

Suppliers will be responsible for the recruitment of participants to the programme. The supplier will need to carefully consider who is recruited to minimise participant drop out. Businesses will also be referred to suppliers via the Local Growth Hubs, but these will need to be assessed for suitability by the supplier.

## Setting up cohorts

Whilst the action learning methodology is designed to allow individuals to learn from others regardless of their business sector and specific experience, it is recommended that consideration is given to the following aspects of the cohort profile –

- **Sectors** – there should be diversity in the structure of the cohorts in terms of types of business as this may generate more to share and will encourage cross sector fertilisation of ideas & knowledge.
- **Competitors** – individuals from competing businesses should not be included in the same cohort due to likely conflicts of interest. Whilst confidentiality should be paramount to the running of the cohort it is inevitable that sensitive information is both presented and discussed. The participating owner/managers will need to be comfortable that the cohort presents a safe environment for them to develop.
- **Diversity** – where possible there should be a balance in terms of gender and all Equalities Act protected characteristic diversity criteria should be considered.
- **Personalities** – the programme does not require formal testing of personality types as the facilitators should be experienced in managing the personalities within the room. However, any existing knowledge of individual personality types should be considered when creating cohorts to ensure they are optimised for team working.
- **Stage of growth journey** – consideration should be given to where a company is on its growth journey. Whilst there are opportunities for more mature companies to learn from younger businesses that may be more agile or technologically advanced in an unbalanced group, more mature companies can find they are left out disproportionately because of their experience. This can be mitigated by ensuring a balanced mix in terms of growth journey or creating cohorts for businesses at a similar state.

## Success will be measured by

### Outputs

- Increase in staffing levels – jobs created
- Increase in turnover

### Additional

- Improvements in labour productivity
- Participant views on the resilience of their SME
- Participant views on their leadership and management skills
- The SME's ability to recruit and retain staff where appropriate
- Changes in the SME's adoption of technology

## GDPR

For the purposes of this programme Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will act as the Data Controller and Growth Platform will be Data Processors or Sub processors. All delivery organisations in this programme will be required to comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018 along with the law relating to these regulations and the processing of Personal Data and privacy.

## Annex 1

The following are NOT eligible for support:

- Businesses in the fishery and aquaculture sectors, as covered by Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000
- Businesses in the primary production of agricultural products as listed in Annex 11 to the Treaty
- Businesses linked to the processing and marketing of agricultural product where the following applies: - when the amount of aid is fixed on the basis of the price or quantity of such products purchased from primary producers or put on the market by the undertakings concerned; - when the aid is conditional on being partly or entirely passed on to primary producers.
- Businesses involved in export related activities including financing the establishment of distribution networks in other member states or third countries
- Businesses contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods
- Businesses involved in the acquisition of road freight transport vehicles granted to undertakings performing road freight transport for hire or reward
- Businesses in difficulty.