

Wiltshire Improvement Partnership Capacity Building around Equality and Diversity

Consultants Brief

1. Background

The Wiltshire Improvement Partnership was set up in 2005 and brings together local authority policy and performance resources from across the county, to share experience, ideas and work on a range of corporate matters.

Membership of the partnership includes representatives from Wiltshire County Council, West Wiltshire District Council, Salisbury District Council, North Wiltshire District Council and Kennet District Council as well as representatives from the Audit Commission and GOSW. Support and training has also been provided by IDea.

In 2005 the partnership successfully bid to the ODPM Capacity Building Fund for resources to support a programme of activity around Community Leadership, with three related strands

1. Member Development

2. Equalities and Diversity

3. Local Strategic Partnerships and performance management framework

The bid grew out of work of the partnership, which included identification, review and analysis of common CPA weaknesses from inspection reports and the results of an Audit Commission Customer Focus Inspection in 2005.

The programme is designed to help ensure that all Wiltshire authorities maintain a positive direction in terms of CPA travel, it will add to other CPA activity and directly support service improvement and partnership, linking this with community leadership and member development.

Work on the member development and LSP performance management elements of the programme are underway. The Equalities and Diversity element has obvious overlaps with these and some areas of collaboration have already been identified, (e.g. incorporation of equality and diversity into member development and training, however the main focus of work under this element has yet to be developed.

The Partnership now wishes to appoint consultants to further develop the scope and progress the equalities and diversity element of the work

2. General problems being addressed

The areas of weakness identified in CPA reports and customer focus inspection reports indicate that

- Equality and Diversity issues have not been consistently mainstreamed across organisations, particularly in strategies, policies and service plans.
- In some areas the application of equalities policies and procedures are not implemented consistently by all contractors working on behalf of councils
- There is insufficient expertise, research and experience in individual authorities
- The mix of members does not reflect their communities. Barriers may exist to widening participation of people in under-represented groups.

3. Outputs and Outcomes sought in bid

- Improved access to services for minority hard to reach groups
- Equalities and diversity mainstreamed into strategies, policies and service plans
- Improved understanding of the needs and requirements of minority hard to reach groups
- Attraction of new members that reflect diversity in communities
- Authorities to achieve level three of equalities standard for local government

5. Consultancy support required

Consultancy support is required to ensure that the project objectives are achieved in the most effective way

The proposed deliverables are;

- a. An assessment of how authorities are currently performing in terms of the Equality Standard for Local Government across equality strands, incorporating consideration of Customer Focus, Audit Commission inspection reports and self assessments.
- b. Identification of action taken or currently underway by Council's to address weaknesses identified in previous inspection reports
- c. Identification of ongoing weaknesses in terms of mainstreaming of equality and diversity and improving access to services
- d. Identification of areas where joint working could usefully be explored, more consistent approaches developed and resources used more efficiently, including examples of projects which could be developed or mechanisms put in place to improve performance and move all councils towards level 3 ESLG and Kennet DC towards level 4
- e. A target date for achievement of level 3 ESLG for all councils (and level 4 for Kennet DC District Council), developed in agreement with councils

- f. An action plan to achieve this
- g. A mapping (with the support of the project team and reference groups/partnerships) of Equality and Diversity initiatives research and consultation activity across the county by councils (and where possible by extension to other organisations and agencies), highlighting examples of good practice which could be shared and identifying 'minority and hard to reach groups'

Consultants are also encouraged to present alternative (fully costed) proposals, where these can be clearly demonstrated to address the required outcomes detailed in paragraph 3 above.

The final specification of work will be agreed through further negotiation, following consideration of proposals against joint key objectives.

7. Linked work running alongside the consultancy work

Linked work includes

- Development of a county wide consultation mechanism
- Work around development of a more collaborative approach to basic equality and diversity training across councils
- Assessment of application of equalities policies by contractors and recommendations for improvement
- Exploration of opportunities for ensuring mix of members better reflects communities over the long term

6. General Principles of working

- Activities developed should support but not duplicate activities already planned or underway across the authorities
- Activities developed should directly address key areas of weakness and develop solutions which can be sustained in the long term by authorities
- Clear recommendations should be made as to action which could be taken to improve performance around the equality standard for local government and enhance access to services for minority and hard to reach groups
- Activities developed should lead to the development of a more strategic approach to equalities and diversity across councils and higher CPA assessments for all councils
- Local variations and solutions should be recognised and good practice highlighted
- All relevant partners should be brought into the process and links maintained throughout the commission
- Best practice and shared learning should be incorporated into the programme

- Any consultation required, should take place in the most appropriate and effective manner in consultation with local councils and voluntary sector organisations and representative groups as appropriate

8. Requirements

Consultants are required to submit proposals setting out

1. Their qualifications and experience in the area of equality and diversity consultancy including the names and addresses of two referees who can comment on similar/related projects delivered effectively within the last two years
2. The approach they would take to the work to deliver the key outcomes detailed above
3. The number of days to be allocated to each element of the project work and outputs which will be delivered over these time periods
4. The approach they would take to working with and supporting the project team and partners
5. Any alternative delivery options identified and full costs provided as above
6. A statement of the capacity of the consultancy to carry out the commission in the timescale shown, providing summary of the qualifications and experience of all staff who will work on the project
7. Full costs including standard daily rates, rates for production of reports etc. any additional costs and identification of areas where savings can be made
8. A total cost statement
9. A statement of membership of any professional bodies
10. Their policy statement on equality and diversity and promotion of equality of opportunity
11. A statement of quality standards/measures which will be incorporated to ensure that a high quality product is delivered
12. Certificates of insurance
13. Details of any actual or potential conflict of interest associated with the commission
14. Any other procurement requirements (as subsequently advised)

9. DRAFT timetable

Agreement of consultants brief	Nov 2006	WIP Board
Expressions of interest sought	Dec 2006	WWDC ?
Interviewing consultants	Feb 2007	WIP board members
Appointment	Feb 2007	WWDC
Interim report	April/May 2007	Consultant
Final Report	May/June 2007	Consultant

10. Key Roles and responsibilities

The WIP Project Board will

- Agree the consultants brief
- Undertake tendering, recruitment and appointment of consultant
- Monitor the progress of the project at monthly meetings
- Advise on any changes which need to be made to the contract
- Monitor performance of the contract
- Arrange for payment of consultants fees in line with agreed costs and upon delivery of outputs to the required standard
- Agree development of future projects and authorise spend accordingly

The Project Manager will

- Request representatives from authorities to act as a project team
- Agree project outcomes with the WIP board and project team
- Ensure links made with LAA
- Assist with appointment of project consultant
- Maintain regular contact with members of the project team and convene such meetings as are required
- Maintain regular contact with the project consultant and ensure outcomes are delivered and any problems identified and addressed at an early stage
- Provide regular reports to the WIP Project board
- Work up projects to deliver on outcomes in association with the project team and project consultant

The Project Team will consist of representatives of all participating authorities and will

- Identify groups/organisations/agencies with an equalities role or remit who may provide information in relation to the project
- Provide audit commission and customer focus inspection reports in relation to their authorities
- Provide information and benchmarking data from their respective authorities on areas required by consultant
- Ensure links are maintained and information fed into relevant local partnerships/boards
- Assist with ongoing development of improvement projects
- Feedback to their respective authorities on project proposals, progress and outcomes as appropriate
- Attend meetings as appropriate

Project Reference groups will

- Receive regular updates and information about the project

- Advise the project team of relevant research or other information of benefit to the project
- Advise on good practice locally and from elsewhere
- Ensure that duplication of initiatives is avoided as far as possible

The Project Consultant will

- Finalise scope of work with the project team and project board
- Familiarise themselves quickly with key areas of weakness across authorities in terms of equalities and diversity, as identified in inspection reports and the Customer Focus reports
- make immediate contact with members of the project team, who represent the councils in the county
- make immediate list of information/data requirements
- arrange visits to key personnel within authorities to gather information as required. (Data requirements should be pre-indicated to ensure that time savings are maximised)
- make and maintain regular contact with any advisory or reference groups set out in the project management arrangements
- advise the project manager immediately of any difficulties in obtaining data or other requirements
- attend meetings of the project team and WIP Project Board upon request.
- provide written updates to WIP project board meetings
- produce interim and final reports in line with the project timetable (which may through agreement be subject to change)
- advise on the development of projects to deliver objectives

Five hard copies of all reports will be required along with electronic copies on CD ROM.

All data gathered will remain the property of the Wiltshire Improvement Partnership

11. Payments

Payments will be made in stages subject to the delivery of agreed outcomes to a satisfactory standard, which will be determined by the project board. Further details will be provided in accordance with the final specification of work and timetable as agreed.

12. Submission Requirements

Suitably experienced consultants should submit their fully costed proposals in a sealed envelope clearly marked '**Sealed Bid for Attention of Addressee Only**' to **Mary Cullen, (Project Manager) Development Services, Wiltshire County Council, 2nd Floor County Hall, Bythesea Rd, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8JN** by the closing date of 12 noon on 12th January 2007.

Late submissions will not be accepted

Proposals will be assessed on the basis of both cost and quality and please note that the Partnership is not obliged to accept the lowest or any quotation for the work.

Shortlisted consultants will be invited to attend for interview and presentation of proposals on 9th February 2007. Further details will be provided in due course.