

# Education, Work and Skills FPS

01 - FPS Descriptive Document

April 2022

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The purpose of this document is to set out Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s (GMCA) ambitions and objectives for the Education, Work and Skills Flexible Procurement System (FPS).

The FPS will be used to commission various projects related to the above across Greater Manchester. GMCA will communicate commissioning intentions to prospective bidders and existing suppliers on the FPS throughout the lifetime of the FPS.

## Introduction

Our ambition in Greater Manchester is to create an integrated labour market eco-system which has the individual and employer at its heart, that better responds to the needs of residents, communities and businesses, and which contributes to the inclusive growth and productivity of the GM economy.

Our vision is for an integrated education, work and skills system that will help all of our residents to be school ready, life ready and work ready so that:

Young people will leave education with the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to succeed in the labour market

Adults can acquire the skills they need to enter and progress within work

Employers can access a system and talent pool with the reliance, flexibility and adaptability that will enable GM’s businesses to compete on the basis of good quality work, high productivity and good employment practices

Our employment support and welfare system provides access to good work for those who can, support for those who could, and care for those who can’t.

As a result of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and its impact, considerable restart and recovery activity is now underway across Greater Manchester’s communities, localities and economy. A significant strand of this work relates to the labour market and Greater Manchester’s Employment and Skills Advisory Panel (ESAP) has taken the lead in planning and co-ordinating an integrated labour market response to the crisis. It has worked hard to strike a balance between responding to the needs arising from the evolving pandemic and maintaining the necessary focus on the existing forward-looking priorities, so that those who already faced labour market challenges prior to the pandemic are not displaced or overlooked, drawing on the expertise of our core strategic and delivery partners across GM’s work and skills landscape.

The purpose of the FPS is to facilitate compliant and easy access to quality suppliers who are able to demonstrate they have the required experience, expertise and desire to work in partnership with GMCA to deliver its vision for Greater Manchester for education, work and skills programmes over the next 5 to 10 years.

In order to be admitted to this FPS, suppliers will be required to demonstrate, amongst other considerations, how they contribute to GM’s strategic vision and labour market ambitions by delivering education, work and skills provision that supports the frontier sectors identified in GM’s Local Industrial Strategy, as well as the foundation sectors which are so important to GM’s economy and public services. They must also demonstrate how they can respond to the wider findings and recommendations within GM’s Independent Prosperity Review and associated technical reports, which helped to inform the GM Local Industrial Strategy.

## Education, Work and Skills Strategic Priorities

Education, work and skills underpin every facet of life in GM, from running the businesses our economy needs, to building the homes we live in and delivering the public services we rely upon. Both nationally and in GM there is a pressing need for more highly skilled and effectively trained people than ever before, to support recovery from the impacts of Covid, grow the economy and raise productivity.

Prior to the pandemic, forecasts suggested greater demand for higher-level technical and specialist skills in the future; we still expect this to be the case, together with significant demand for upskilling and reskilling of workers who have been impacted by economic downturn in the wake of Covid-19, including those made redundant or furloughed. Greater international competition and faster technological change will put many roles that exist today at risk but will in turn create a myriad of new opportunities for GM residents and businesses. GM’s economic strength now is in its diversity: in contrast to many other cities in the UK, the city region is not reliant on a single sector or large employer for growth. This offers real opportunities for both business and residents, and should assist GM’s recovery from the economic shock arising from the pandemic. All of GM’s work and skills programmes form part of a broad and complex skills landscape contributing to the talent pipeline which will support that labour market recovery and economic growth.

Our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) along with the Great Manchester Strategy (GMS) recognise the critical role of responsive and effectively targeted education, work and skills investment in unlocking and enabling inclusive economic growth, with a system built with employer skills requirements at the heart. It recognises the central role of education, work and skills in helping our residents to get ahead in life and in work, in building inclusive communities, and in developing the talent pipeline of suitably skilled workers that our economy needs now and in the future to drive overall productivity.

In response to Covid-19 GM businesses are having to adapt and create new business models in order to survive. This will impact ways of working, the skills needed within their workforce and some of the fundamental assumptions that have traditionally been made around workforces and workplaces. Support is required to help them recognise and address the risks and opportunities available to them and their employees as their business adapts.

However, the picture is not solely one of challenge. There is a strong appetite from individuals, businesses and across GM to not simply return to where we were, but to **build back better**. With collaborative partnerships on the ground in GM and the right support from Government, we can create a fairer, greener, and more inclusive Greater Manchester: a city-region that is still ambitious in terms of future growth and which actively advances not only the frontier sectors that have such great potential for growth and productivity, but also the foundation sectors, services and key workers which have risen to new prominence. It is an opportunity to work with employers to look at good jobs, not just any jobs, and to recognise the value of work, not just the cost.

Within our Work and Skills Strategy, we confirm our commitment to strengthening employer engagement, developing the education, work and skills infrastructure to meet the needs of the economy and growing the quantity and quality of work ready, skilled adults who strive to sustain employment through continuous professional development.

In order, to realise our ambitions for GM as a dynamic, inclusive and knowledge-intensive city region, GM’s current ranking for skills levels among Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) must improve. Despite recent progress and the commitment, expertise and enthusiasm of suppliers and stakeholders, the current education, work and skills system does not deliver enough people (including employed and unemployed) with high quality, relevant skills and, at higher levels, the technical knowledge required by employers.

## Engagement

GMCA held an online market engagement event on 30th July 2020. Following this event, suppliers were invited to submit comments and questions regarding the proposals presented to them. GMCA reviewed the feedback and produced this final descriptive document, requirements matrix and activity descriptions based on the feedback received.

Further Supplier Information Events occurred on 11th and 16th December 2020. These events contained advice on completing the application, amendments to the original documents, up and coming commissioning opportunities and guidance on the Information Governance section of the SSQ response document.

GMCA will be holding an information event on Wednesday the 20th of April and places can be booked through the following link:

[Education, Work & Skills Flexible Procurement System: Information Event Tickets, Wed 20 Apr 2022 at 11:00 | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/education-work-skills-flexible-procurement-system-information-event-tickets-304064704717)

We will also be holding an application workshop on Wednesday the 27th of April, places can be booked through the following link:

[Education, Work & Skills Flexible Procurement System: Application Workshop Tickets, Wed 27 Apr 2022 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/education-work-skills-flexible-procurement-system-application-workshop-tickets-304090531967)

**It is strongly advised that all bidders attend these sessions. However, the recordings of each event will be made available on request**.

## Anticipated Contract Value and Duration

The approximate spend under this FPS is anticipated to be approximately £50m -£100m in the first 12 months of the contract.

The value of the FPS over its lifetime is dependent on funding streams and use of the FPS by other purchasing bodies. We estimate therefore that the value of the FPS over its lifetime will be between £0.5billion and £1billion

The period of the FPS will be for an initial period of 5 years with the option to extend for further periods of 2 years to a maximum of 10 years from commencement.

It is anticipated that the minimum value of individual call off contracts will be around £50k. However, there may be instances where purchasing bodies use the FPS to run further competitions below £50k, for example, for apprenticeship delivery requirements. There is no maximum value.

## Ambition and Objectives of the FPS

### Ambition

Our vision for the FPS is to provide a streamlined route to market, which allows for the compliant procurement of services that are efficient, cost effective and fit for the transformational change that Devolution brings.

It will allow commissioners and procuring bodies access to pre-approved suppliers, reduce the time they spend tendering and allowing more time to focus on service delivery.

The provision will reach across the whole of GM and whilst we are not necessarily expecting one supplier to be able to deliver on this scale the FPS will seek to ensure a consistent, exceptional standard of service across all appointed suppliers.

Suppliers will be expected to work in partnership with employers, employees, individuals, GMCA, other suppliers and organisations in order to deliver a co-ordinated approach to meeting the demands of the service commissioned under this FPS.

### Objectives

The objectives of the FPS are:

* To create a single Procurement System that allows easier and quicker commissioning of education, work and skills activity by GMCA.
* To minimise the timescale for procurement activity for GMCA
* To reduce confusion and administration whilst creating opportunities for a wider range of suppliers to bid for GMCA commissioned activity

## Scope

GMCA wishes to procure a Multi Supplier Flexible Procurement System which will contain external suppliers capable of delivering to a variety of education, work and skills provision, including but not limited to:

* Support and guidance into work for a variety of vulnerable, marginalised or underrepresented groups
* Careers support for young people
* Support, guidance and training for in work adults
* Accredited training in a variety of professions up to level 6
* Non-accredited skills training and continuous professional development
* Working in partnership with industries and employers to design specific training provision to upskill those in employment and unemployed where there is an identified skills gap
* Providing support and training to identified groups, suppliers and individuals

## Acceptance onto the FPS

Applicants meeting the minimum standards detailed in the **Application Instructions and Guidance document** will be accepted onto the FPS. Those that do not meet the minimum standards will not be accepted onto the FPS.

On each section where applicants have been unsuccessful, feedback will be provided detailing why.

Acceptance onto the FPS is **not** a guarantee of work. Applicants accepted onto the FPS will subsequently be offered the opportunity to tender via the Chest for further competitions if they are approved on the FPS for the relevant requirements matrix sections that the purchasing body filters by.

## Requirements Matrix

The Requirements Matrix identifies 5 Criteria against which the purchasing body may want to filter by at further competition. The 5 Criteria are as follows:

* Location of Supply
* Contract Value
* Characteristics
* Sector and / or Occupational Specialisms
* Interventions

The Requirements Matrix contains a description of each Characteristic, Sector and / or Occupational Specialism and Intervention which GMCA have identified as their requirements at the present time. This is not thought to be an exhaustive set of requirements and applicants should note the section in this document regarding Futureproofing the FPS.

In order to ensure we select the right suppliers to meet our current needs and potential future needs, we have compiled a Requirements Matrix which applicants are asked to complete indicating the Location of Supply, the Contract Value, Characteristics, Sector and / or Occupational Specialism and Intervention they wish to provide to GMCA.

To secure a place on the FPS against a specific criterion, the Applicant will need to demonstrate their capability and submit evidence as detailed in the individual response documents published with this opportunity.

At this stage the FPS is not seeking to define specific requirements, but is seeking to pre-select suppliers able to demonstrate they have the skills and experience that meet our future education, work and skills ambition for GM.

At further competition stage, GMCA or purchasing bodies will:

* Use the requirement matrix to filter all the suppliers on the FPS who can provide the occupational route, variable and specialism required to meet the specification
* Define specific requirements in a detailed specification
* Seek further information to assess the most suitable supplier from the filtered list.

## Futureproofing the FPS

The requirements matrix provided should not be viewed as exhaustive and GMCA reserves the right to add new categories, requirements and descriptions within the lifetime and scope of this FPS.

This could include any of the Characteristics, Sector and / or Occupational Specialisms, or Interventions, and contract values.

GMCA are committed to being open and transparent and suppliers will be kept informed of any changes / additions in a timely manner. Where additional requirements are added all suppliers (existing on the FPS and new suppliers) will be given the opportunity to apply.

## Use of the FPS

It is envisaged that the main user of this FPS will be GMCA, however this FPS is also open to the 10 Greater Manchester Local Authorities (see below) to use if they choose to do so. It should be noted that although GMCA intend to use this FPS for future requirements they are not committed to using this FPS at the exclusion of other procurement routes and the choice of procurement route is solely at the discretion of the procuring body.



The services commissioned under this FPS will be required across Greater Manchester however it is not the expectation that any one supplier accepted onto the FPS will have to deliver services in every locality. Specific geographical requirements may however be required for following call off arrangements.

## Ability to Deliver

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and experience to deliver the requirements for the activity on the Requirements Matrix for which they have applied and, where appropriate the necessary qualifications and accreditations.

The supplier must ensure and be able to demonstrate that the management structure is of sufficient size, is organised appropriately and is supported by administrative systems and any other infrastructure necessary to effectively manage and deliver the activities for which they have applied.

Applicants should not simply tick all the financial thresholds indicated in the Requirements Matrix as GMCA reserves the right to reject applications for that financial threshold where an applicant cannot demonstrate the financial stability to do so.

## Information Governance and Data Protection

Suppliers must be able to meet the requirements of GMCA’s Information Governance requirements and meet the minimum standards requested in the response documentation.

Applicants will be requested at further competition stage to submit evidence and/or further evidence that you are / remain compliant.

Applicants should carefully consider the implications of these requirements before deciding to bid for this FPS.

## Funding Streams

GMCA funds its activities through a number of funding streams. Funding streams that the FPS has been used to commission to date include the European Social Fund (ESF), Adult Education Budget (AEB) and National Skills Funding (NSF).

It is anticipated that these funding streams will change / increase during the lifetime of this FPS.

Applicants should note that it is possible that each potential funding stream could come with specific criteria / conditions of funding which GMCA may have to invoke on its suppliers to be eligible for the funding. Details of the applicable funding stream and conditions will be highlighted to the Supplier at the further competition stage and suppliers may be asked additional question regarding how they meet the funding criteria.

Applicants’ attention is drawn to clause 34 of the terms and conditions which describes actions which will be taken if suppliers fail to fulfil their obligations under the Contract relating to specific actions and conditions in relation to funding requirements.

## Social Value

Social Value will play a key role in supporting Greater Manchester in its post Covid-19 economic recovery, helping to tackle inequality and build back a better, fairer and greener economy.

To support this, GMCA is in the process of developing a new Greater Manchester Social Value Framework, alongside a refreshed Social Value Policy for Greater Manchester. Grounded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Greater Manchester Strategy and Local Industrial Strategy, this will support and encourage all organisations across GM to embed the key principles of social value across all the work we do (the new GMCA social value policy will be issued to all suppliers once published).

Applicants for the FPS will be asked to demonstrate how they currently or have previously delivered social value as an organisation.

As part of the further competition process for this framework, applicants will be expected to demonstrate how they will commit and contribute to delivering social value across Greater Manchester, aligned to the Greater Manchester Social Value Framework.

It is anticipated that the [Social Value Portal](https://socialvalueportal.com/the-portal/bid-submission/) will be used for future further competitions as a method of measuring and monitoring social value commitments. Applicants are asked to confirm that they are willing to use this tool as part of the application.

Purchasing bodies do not have to use the Social Value Portal.

## Contract Performance and Management

### Performance Management

GMCA operates a robust performance management regime to hold suppliers to account for performance offers within their contract. This Performance Management Framework (PMF) has been developed to support the delivery of provision and underpin supplier contracts.

The aim is to ensure suppliers meet the performance levels and Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) stipulated within contracts and, where necessary, take formal action against suppliers where they do not meet such performance levels and MSDS.

GMCA will manage performance at the headline contract level, Local Authority and Minimum Service Delivery Standard level, and may take performance improvement action should your performance in any of these fall below the levels stipulated in your contract. There are four levels of this Framework:

• Level 1: Performance Management - GMCA Programme Office;

• Level 2: Informal action - GMCA Programme Office;

• Level 3: Informal action – Relevant Governance Board;

• Level 4: Formal action (PIN).

GMCA Programme Office will hold regular Contract Performance Review (CPR) meetings with suppliers, which will focus on achievement of contractual performance levels. These meeting will include representatives from GMCA and may also include key stakeholder representatives from Local Authorities and other national government departments.

1. As GMCA is committed to transparency on how its programmes are working, suppliers need to be aware that MI will be shared across suppliers and may also be fed into published official statistics on GMCA and DWP provision. Consequently, suppliers must treat information they have access to as restricted, and for their use only, ahead of formal publication.

2. At a national level, DWP will host regular Operations, Partnership and Stakeholder Forums to give a strategic focus to programme performance and delivery.

As part of the wider programme GMCA has designed and procured an individual tracker system (Greater Manchester Individual Tracker – GMIT) which the provider may be required to use to manage their claims and performance submissions monthly to the GMCA Programme Office.

The GMIT system uses a cloud-based AWS server hosting the database. For security the server is fully encrypted, password and user protected with automated alerts to identify unauthorised system access. The aim of the system is to create a centralised database that skills delivery providers will input the data information regarding each individual to generate the individual record of the participant accessing the provision of learning.

The Programme Office will access the GMIT system to verify individual information from the skills delivery provider to enable the monthly payment for services/ provision to be made.

### Open Book Accounting

GMCA reserves the right to use Open Book Accounting to review the financial operations of the successful supplier in delivering the service.

As part of the Cabinet Office Guidance on Open Book Contract Management in Public Sector Contracts, there will be an Annual Contract Review between the supplier and GMCA Finance and Operational leads.

Open Book Contract Management is a structured process for the sharing and management of costs and operational and performance data between the supplier and GMCA. The aim is to promote collaborative sharing of data between parties as part of financial transparency. The outcomes should be a fair price for the supplier, value for money for GMCA and performance improvement for both parties over the life of the Contract.

### Additional Checks

GMCA Programme Office may undertake additional checks to complement those listed above by looking more in depth at individual cases. The checks will seek assurance that the supplier is addressing the business needs and requirements, and to test that the approach is in line with the Contract.

GMCA Programme Office may also undertake “deep dives” into specific areas to understand where there are specific areas of weakness.

The Supplier will be expected to participate in both regular performance management and quality meetings. The meetings will be conducted in the spirit of co-design for the purpose of continuous improvement, but the commissioners reserve the right to terminate the contract, in line with GMCA performance and management framework, if performance is consistently low.

## Links to Documentation

[Local Industrial Strategy](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/2132/gm-local-industrial-strategy-web.pdf) (LIS)

[Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/greater-manchester-strategy/)

[Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1826/gmis_reviewersreport_final_digital.pdf)

## Further Reading

## To understand more about GMCA please visit our [website](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)