

## **D2N2 Connected Futures Employer Engagement Project Specification**

**May 2024**

### **Background and Context**

**Youth Futures Foundation (YFF)** is designated as the What Works Centre for youth employment. It aims to narrow employment gaps for marginalised young people by identifying what works and why, and investing in evidence generation to improve policy and practice.

**Connected Futures** is a £16m programme that seeks to improve the journey from education to employment for young people facing exclusion and disadvantage. YFF have been supporting the development of local approaches to youth employment that put young people at the heart of the system.

YFF are currently funding 8 partnerships, in Blackpool, Brent, Burnley, the East Midlands (D2N2), Haringey, Hastings, Hull and Lewisham to explore local systems from the perspectives of young people, employers, education and employability services, and other stakeholders. This exploratory phase aims to discover key systemic barriers facing young people and identify potential opportunities and levers for change. At the end of Phase 1, YFF hope to see a shared analysis of the problem and a shared ambition for change among a wider range of local stakeholders. In Phase 2, larger grants will be made in support of these ambitions. Young people are at the forefront of the process, setting the direction for partnerships, carrying out research and shaping ideas and solutions for Phase 2.

**The Connected Futures Partnership in D2N2** is made up of 3 core partners, D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and Direct Education Business Partnership (DEBP). The partnership is working across the Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire (D2N2) region to gain a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work to support young people with Learning Disabilities (LD) and/or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) to move towards secure and sustained employment.

The partnership aims to change the system across the East Midlands, increasing the visibility and voice of young people, so as to foster new approaches to decision-making as well as delivery.

In the first year of research, partners have conducted systems mapping, interviews, and focussed group discussions to gain a better understanding of the systems currently in place, identifying success criteria, enabling factors, and barriers.

The partnership has already begun working on testing new approaches to strengthening Youth Voice and DEBP now employ a Youth Voice Facilitator and 4 part-time Youth Voice Ambassadors (YVAs), 1 representing each of the 4 upper tier Local Authority areas. The young people in these roles take ownership of the project and platform the voice of other young people in the region to support changes.

The partnership has identified 4 key themes for further exploration and testing of approaches:

- Foundational Skills in Education
- Strengthening Youth Voice Across the System
- Transition: Consistent Pathways into Employment
- Employer Support

The partnership will be receiving a 'testing' budget from YFF which will allow the YVAs to begin leading commissioning processes and activities.

## **Overview of Requirement**

On behalf of the D2N2 Connected Futures Partnership, the D2N2 LEP is seeking to appoint a suitably experienced and connected individual or organisation to work with employers as key stakeholders within the system. The timetable for this work is June 2024 to March 2025.

This work is funded by the YFF and will be overseen by the D2N2 Careers Hub Strategic Lead. This is an exciting opportunity to be able to enact change and be part of a systems shift that will improve employment outcomes for young people with LD and/or ASC.

The work will involve:

- Developing an engagement strategy to identify and build positive relations with employers in the D2N2 area to engage with the Connected Futures Programme.
- Linking with established structures for employer engagement across the D2N2 area.
- Developing a purpose driven group of employers to identify business support needs in preparation for Phase 2 of the Connected Futures programme.
- Working in collaboration with the YVAs and employers around business support needs and informing developments.
- Working in collaboration with the YVAs to explore what exists and what could be scaled/built on.
- Assisting the YVAs in relation to the testing budget and commissioning activities where needed.
- Developing and providing individualised support for employers in response to needs. This may include, for example, negotiating and facilitating adjustments, developing inclusive recruitment policies, return to work strategy, and other workplace management policies.
- Connecting employers to other provision, for example, Working Well, Individualised Placement Scheme (IPS), Careers Hub, Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- Working with other members of the Connected Futures Partnership across the D2N2 as required, including the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) who will be working with the YVAs over the next 12 months.

- Promoting the work of the Partnership and having a positive ethos, promoting inclusivity and professionalism within that support.
- Collating and completing reports for funders, including impact measures and case studies, and updating on best practice, key learning outcomes etc.
- Supporting with delivery of activities/events where needed.

## Proposal response process and timetable

### Timetable

Call for proposals issued	2 May 2024
Deadline for submission of proposals	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
Interviews (if required)	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Preferred proposer identified and notified	W/c 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Contract commences	June 2024
Contract duration	10 months to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025

### Budget

The total budget for work from June 2024 to March 2025 is £46,800 **inclusive of VAT**.

### Response Format

When writing your response, please follow these guidelines:

- Page limit: 6 pages (CVs can be appended)
- Font size and spacing: Font size 12 or above, line spacing 1.0 minimum
- Response format: Use the response template provided to address the following areas:

#### Expertise and experience

- Your knowledge and understanding of the D2N2 region, its employer landscape, and stakeholders in the region
- Your experience and expertise in meeting the specification requirements and why you would be a good fit for this programme of work, including examples of similar work.

#### Methodology and approach

- Your proposed approaches/method statements to deliver on the specification requirements
- A clear timeline with identified deliverables for the lifetime of the project .

#### Project Management and Risk Mitigations

- Details of who will be working on the project, including their role, previous experience, DBS checks (if applicable). NB – submissions are welcome from individuals or organisations.
- Your ability to commit to this work for the duration of the project (10 months)

- Your appraisal of the risks likely to arise in this work, and mitigations.

### Costings

- A quote for this programme of work, including a breakdown of costs. This should include a commitment to provide a specified number of days per week to the project
- All budgets should be inclusive of VAT

### **Scoring criteria**

Each criterion will be scored out of 5 using the below criteria.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
0	Totally fails to meet the requirement - information not available
1	Meets some of the requirements - limited supporting information
2	Meets some of the requirements - reasonable explanation and supporting evidence
3	Mostly meets the requirements - good explanation, supporting evidence
4	Fully meets the requirements - detailed explanation and evidence
5	Exceeds requirements - extensive explanation and evidence, adds significant value and where appropriate, provides innovative approaches/ options to fully deliver the stated aims and objectives

### **Weighting**

Scores will be weighted as follows:

25%	Experience and expertise
35%	Methodology and approach
25%	Project management and risk mitigations
15%	Costings