



Department for
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Instructions to Applicants Access to Work (NI)

Competitive Grant Call instructions for the delivery of assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted to include those who are neurodivergent

November 2024

Project Title:

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES – ACCESS TO WORK (NI) COMPETITIVE GRANT CALL FOR THE DELIVERY OF ASSESSMENT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED TO INCLUDE THOSE WHO ARE NEURODIVERGENT

Access to Work (NI) assists people who are in paid employment or who have a job to start, through the provision of practical support and by helping to meet the additional costs that are associated with overcoming work-related obstacles that may result from having a disability.

Resource ID:

This document should be read in conjunction with the Competitive Grant Call Specification document and Evaluation Methodology document.

An application shall only be accepted if:

- It is received before the closing **date of 22 December 2024 for this competition.**
- The application is written in the English language.
- It is complete and fully compliant with the requirements detailed in the competitive grant call documentation.

Your application should be made by responding to the questions in the 'Apply Now' link uploaded within the Department for Communities website: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/grant-call-process-blind-neurodivergent>

Applications for the award of this grant to deliver the assessment services as part of the Access to Work (NI) programme are welcome from sole organisations and consortiums as long as they meet the full requirements outlined in the Specification and Evaluation Methodology documents.

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1. Background Information

Please see document entitled “Specification for the delivery of assessments for people who are blind or partially sighted to include those who are neurodivergent” for further details.

Access to Work (NI) assists people who are in paid employment or who have a job to start, through the provision of practical support and by helping to meet the additional costs that are associated with overcoming work-related obstacles that may result from having a disability.

2. Security Vetting

Applicants must have appropriate security vetting procedures in place and comply with the requirements outlined in the Specification document. This will include having necessary personnel security Access NI checks in place.

3. Right to Reject and/or Disqualify

Questions relating to the grounds for mandatory exclusions are included within the Application Survey in the Eligibility Criteria response section. Applicants are required to complete these questions in full in order for their application to be considered.

Applicants must read the document entitled: Applicant Grounds for Exclusion which can be found in **Annex A**, before completing the questions.

Where a consortium of multiple organisations is seeking to make an application for the grant award, a lead provider must be identified and only one response should be submitted in the name of the consortium that is applying for the grant. Therefore, all requirements of the grant application process must be provided for the consortium that the information relates to. In the event of this consortium application being successful, the lead provider is required to take overall responsibility for management and administration of the delivery of the programme.

4. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE)

Applicants are advised to seek their own legal advice with regard to the application of TUPE.

5. False Information

Applicants must ensure that all information included within their application is accurate. The inclusion of information that is found to be false or misleading may result in the applicant's exclusion from this Grant Award process.

Furthermore, if false or misleading information comes to light after a Grant Award has been awarded, this may be considered as grounds for termination of the Grant Funding Agreement.

6. Evaluation Methodology - how your application will be evaluated

This grant will be awarded to the applicant most suitably qualified to deliver on the Department for Communities' policy objectives.

The selection process will comprise of two stages: Eligibility and Minimum Standards and Award Criteria.

Please Note:

The term of this Grant will be four years from the commencement date of 1st April 2025 subject to departmental funding. The successful provider will sign a Grant Funding Agreement at the start of each year of the grant period that will set out the requirements of the grant and provide an estimate of the amount of the grant for each year.

6.1 Stage 1: Eligibility and Minimum Standards

6.1.1 In order to pass the Eligibility and Minimum Standards stage, applicants must demonstrate that they are eligible to apply and meet the minimum standards as per paragraphs below.

6.1.2 All applicants must initially confirm that they are not guilty of any of the offences stated in **Annex A** below and hence not excluded on the grounds for mandatory exclusion.

6.1.3 This stage will also comprise of questions to determine that the applicant can meet a minimum standard of delivery. They must demonstrate that they possess the necessary skills and experience to deliver the assessment services across Northern Ireland. Applicants must also provide an assurance that they are registered on the Government Funding Database (GFD) [Organisation Registration Details (nics.gov.uk)] or are prepared to register on the database prior to awarding of the grant.

To note: If successful you may be required to provide a copy of relevant business documents such as:

- Copy of Constitution/ Memorandum of Association,
 - List of office bearers or Board of Governors,
 - Organisation Chart,
 - Copy of Audited Accounts or Financial Statement,
 - Rental Agreement/Lease or Evidence of Ownership
- (this list is not exhaustive)

Furthermore, applicants must illustrate that they can comply with UK General Data Protection Regulation (UKGDPR) and Data Protection 2018 (DPA) requirements.

6.1.4 Responses to Eligibility and Minimum Standards will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. Applicants will be assessed on their ability to meet all eligibility and minimum standards detailed in this section using the following definitions:

- Pass – Where the applicant has confirmed they should not be excluded and fully demonstrated their ability to meet all of the minimum standards; and

- Fail – Where the applicant has failed to confirm they meet these standards, they should be excluded as they need to fully demonstrate their ability to meet all of the minimum standards.

6.2 Stage 2: Award Criteria

Applicants must not make assumptions that the panel has prior knowledge of their organisation or their service provision. Applicants will only be evaluated on the information provided in their response.

Table 1

Criteria		Weighting (%)	Sub-category	Weighting (%)
AC1	Personnel Experience	40	Experience of delivering assessments to people who are blind or partially sighted and those that are neurodivergent	30
			Stakeholder engagement/ management in the delivery of assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted and those who are neurodivergent	10
AC2	Methodology	20		20
AC3	Allocation of resources and contingency	20	Allocation of resources	10
			Contingency Measures	10
AC4	Ability to deliver services within the KPI Targets	20		20

Due to the specialist requirement of the role, the personnel experience has been given the highest weighting of 40% as the greater the knowledge and experience of the team of assessors, the more successful the service delivery will be.

Methodology as set out in the Specification document has been given a weighting of 20% as a thorough approach to the assessment is a vital aspect of the requirement.

Allocation of resources and contingency measures has also been given a weighting of 20% as the provider has to provide the assessment services throughout NI.

The ability to deliver the service within the KPI targets has been given a weighting of 20% as it is vital the provider can meet the targets set.

Due to the specialist nature of the application, please refer to the Evaluation Methodology document for assistance when completing your application.

6.3 Key to Scoring

To ensure consistency and equity in approach the evaluation panel will assign scores using the scoring key below:

Table 2

Score	Indicator
0	Failed to address the criterion.
1-2	Poor proposal to address the criterion.
3-4	Limited proposal to address criterion.
5-6	Acceptable proposal to address the criterion.
7-8	Good proposal to address the criterion.
9-10	Excellent proposal to address the criterion.

6.4 Threshold Score

If applicants score 0-2 in any of the qualitative criteria detailed above in 6.2, then it shall be deemed that they have failed to meet the specification, and their application will be eliminated from the competition. Similarly, a fail on the pass/fail criteria will constitute elimination.

6.5 Funding

The funding model is as follows:

- 1st assessment cost is set at **£585** for a face-to-face assessment of need.
- Follow-up visit cost is set at **£335**.
- The Department for Communities cannot provide any guarantee as to the level of business under this agreement as it is demand-led (2023-2024 figures have been detailed in the Specification document).

6.6 Tie Break

In instances where applicants achieve the same overall score and there is a tie break situation, the applicant with the highest % score in **AC1 - Personnel Experience** will be awarded the grant.

If the tie cannot be broken according to **Personnel Experience**, it will be broken by the applicant which received the highest marks for the following questions, to be taken in order of priority, for first AC3 and then AC2 and finally AC4 until the tie is broken:

Table 3

Order of Priority	Technical Question
1.	AC1
2.	AC3
3.	AC2
4.	AC4

If, when applying the tie breaker, a clear result is identified (i.e. the tie breaker score differentiates the applicants who have the same score for the initial evaluation of applications), the process will be terminated at that step.

Use of Next Ranked Provider

In the event of any subsequent agreement being terminated in accordance with the provisions of the terms and conditions and/or special terms and conditions, the Department reserves the right to offer the second ranked provider in this process, the opportunity to enter into an agreement, provided the original terms offered to that applicant remain unchanged from those originally offered to that applicant during the course of this process. Should this not be the case and/or the second ranked provider declines, the Department reserves the right to approach the next ranked providers in turn on the same basis. This will continue until all ranked providers have been exhausted or if the Department determines, at its sole discretion, to launch another competitive Grant Call process. This right will exist throughout the 4-year agreement period.

7. Responding to the Award Criteria

7.1 Citizen Space

Your response must be submitted via Citizen Space. Responses must not include reference to URL's, appendices,

cross referencing, embedded files, or any other form of attachment or supplement, unless specifically requested.

Applicants must note that responses to each criterion are standalone and **must not** be cross referenced to other sections of the application response. The Evaluation Panel may **not take** account of information presented in another part or section of your application when scoring your response to each criterion.

Where character limits have been applied, this will be clearly stated in the application survey. **Should an applicant exceed the character limit permitted, any information provided beyond the character limit permitted will not be considered.**

All other queries related to this specific competition can be sent by email to: healthandworksupportco-ordination@communities-ni.gov.uk

Clarifications are to be submitted no later than 5 days prior to the closing date of the Call, 16th December 2024.

Any requests for clarification received after this date may not be responded to.

7.2 Responding to the Award Criteria

Applicants must respond to each criterion by providing a detailed methodology as outlined below.

Table 4

Selection Criteria	
AC1	<p>Personnel Experience</p> <p>The organisation must provide at least two specific examples of the experience of the team proposed to deliver the assessment services on DfC’s behalf for each of the following experience criteria (1a-b). These should include dates and roles and responsibilities of the relevant individuals.</p> <p>(a) Delivering assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted and those who are neurodivergent.</p> <p>(b) Stakeholder engagement and management in the delivery of assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted and those who are neurodivergent.</p>
AC2	<p>Methodology</p> <p>Applicants must provide a step-by-step process or a well-defined methodology with supporting narrative to demonstrate how they will deliver the assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted and those who are neurodivergent and deliver the specification requirements in full.</p>
AC3	<p>Allocation of resources and contingency</p> <p>(a) Allocation of resources</p> <p>Applicants must outline how their organisation would allocate resources to ensure that assessment services for people who are blind or partially sighted and those who are neurodivergent are provided throughout Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Note: In 23/24 – 71 assessments were carried out for people who are blind or partially sighted (31) and those who are neurodivergent (40).</p> <p>(b) Contingency</p> <p>Organisations must outline the contingency measures their organisation would put in place to ensure that adequate provision is provided throughout Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Furthermore, applicants must detail their proposed approach to address business continuity and ensure delivery of a quality service in the event of unplanned events (e.g. staff absences, transport disruptions, industrial disputes, severe weather, a pandemic outbreak, systems or utilities failure).</p>

Selection Criteria	
AC4	<p>Ability to deliver services within the KPI Targets</p> <p>This criterion evaluates the provider's ability to consistently deliver assessment services within the KPI targets.</p> <p>The assessment provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make contact with the client within 3 working days of receipt of referral.• send monthly data showing client contact dates by the 5th working day of the month.• ensure an assessment takes place within a maximum of 20 working days of receipt of the referral.

The Department for Communities cannot provide any guarantee as to the level of business under this agreement.

Annex A – Mandatory Grounds for Exclusion

Exclusion Grounds

The Department for Communities shall exclude Applicants from the process if they have been found guilty of any of the offences listed below:

Mandatory exclusions

(1) The Department shall exclude an applicant from participation in this grant call process where they have established, or are otherwise aware, that the applicant has been convicted of any of the following offences:

(a) conspiracy within the meaning of section 1 or 1A of the Criminal Law Act 1977 or article 9 or 9A of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 where that conspiracy relates to participation in a criminal organisation as defined in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA on the fight against organised crime.

(b) corruption within the meaning of section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Corrupt Practices Act 1889 or section 1 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1906.

(c) the common law offence of bribery.

(d) bribery within the meaning of sections 1, 2 or 6 of the Bribery Act 2010, or section 113 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

(e) any offence listed:

(i) in section 41 of the Counter Terrorism Act 2008; or

(ii) in Schedule 2 to that Act where the court has determined that there is a terrorist connection;

(f) any offence under sections 44 to 46 of the Serious Crime Act 2007 which relates to an offence covered by subparagraph.

(g) money laundering within the meaning of sections 340(11) and 415 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

(h) an offence in connection with the proceeds of criminal conduct within the meaning of section 93A, 93B or 93C of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 or article 45, 46 or 47 of the Proceeds of Crime (Northern Ireland) Order 1996.

(i) an offence under section 4 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004.

(j) an offence under section 59A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

(k) an offence under section 71 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

(l) an offence in connection with the proceeds of drug trafficking within the meaning of section 49, 50 or 51 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994; or

(m) any other offence within the meaning of Article 57(1) (1)(a), (b), (d), (e) or (f) of the Public Contracts Directive:

(i) as defined by the law of any jurisdiction outside England and Wales and Northern Ireland; or

(ii) created, after the day on which these Regulations were made, in the law of England and Wales or Northern Ireland.

(2) The obligation to exclude an applicant also applies where the person convicted is a member of the administrative, management or supervisory body of that organisation or has powers of representation, decision or control in the applicant.

Mandatory and discretionary exclusions for non-payment of taxes etc

(3) An applicant shall be excluded from participation in this grant call process

where:

(a) the Department is aware that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions; and

(b) the breach has been established by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which it is established or with those of any of the jurisdictions of the United Kingdom.

(4) the Department may exclude an applicant from participation in this grant call process where the Department can demonstrate by any appropriate means that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions.

(5) Paragraphs (3) and (4) cease to apply when the applicant has fulfilled its obligations by paying or entering into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the taxes or social security contributions due, including, where applicable, any interest accrued or fines.

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