

**REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

<b>Directorate</b>	BES
<b>Master Category</b>	People
<b>Supplier name</b>	Better Connect
<b>Contract title</b>	Management of the Action Towards Inclusion VCS Partnership
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Tracy Watts, Laura Baxter
<b>Senior Category Manager</b>	Katie Longstaff
<b>Proposed contract period</b> <i>(including extensions)</i>	12 months 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
<b>Total contract value</b>	Best value: £10,000 This waiver: £200,068 inclusive of VAT Total: £210,068
<b>Budget / cost centre</b> (which will pay for this Contract)	100 RK 60070 3800 00000
<b>Type of contract</b>	Services

**RECOMMENDATION**

The recommendation is to award a contract to Better Connect for a period of 12 months to provide the management and coordination of the Action Towards Inclusion VCS partnership of providers to ensure this service and VCS delivery organisations is not at risk from the withdrawal of ESF funding and can continue delivering key worker and wrap around employability support to inactive individuals across North Yorkshire.

**GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE**

Waiver in relation to Rule 9.1 of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules states;

If the estimated value of a contract exceeds £25,000 but is less than the appropriate UK Procurement Threshold, bids must be invited from all potential Contractors.

**BACKGROUND TO SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATION**

Better Connect Ltd is a small non-profit organisation based in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. Currently, Better Connect manage a number of European Social Fund (ESF) funded programmes covering the North Yorkshire, York and East Riding area. Better Connect do not deliver frontline services themselves and instead work with an extensive network of, locally-based organisations, most of which are part of the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

Better Connect have a long-established track record of managing VCS partnership programmes and have been doing so since 2007. Since that time, Better Connect has secured more than £30 million of investment for the sector, working with hundreds of local VCS delivery partners supporting tens of thousands of individuals in areas including employability, skills, work experience, volunteering, health, finance and well-being. Better Connect are currently managing Action Towards Inclusion (ATI) which is part of the national Building Better Opportunities programme funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and co-funded and managed by the National Lottery Community Fund. The end of European funding will mean that delivery of support under the Action Towards Inclusion programme cannot be sustained beyond March 2023. With UK Shared Prosperity funding for People and Skills not due until 2024, there is the potential for a huge gap in support for vulnerable individuals within local communities as well as the vitally important organisations that support them. The project addresses the critical and ongoing need to improve skills locally and reduce levels of economic inactivity by supporting those furthest from the labour market. UKSPF does provide flexibilities to bring forward funding into year 1 & 2 where VCS organisations are at risk from the withdrawal of ESF and it is under this provision this activity will be funded as per the North Yorkshire UKSPF Investment Plan approved by Government in December 2022 and agreed by the North Yorkshire UKSPF Local Partnership Group. City of York Council, in their Investment Plan, have also committed in year two to support the ATI model of delivery ensuring continuity across the whole region. An initial allocation of £10,000 has been made to Better Connect in year 1 (2022-23) via best value procurement in order to ensure the project can transition from ESF to UKSPF and be operational as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

As the procurement falls below the appropriate procurement threshold for services, a waiver is a compliant route to market.

Better Connect will act as Lead Partner and Grant Coordinator for the programme in 2023-24, using the management fee to cover all elements of programme management including:

- Acting as the accountable body for the programme
- Partnership profiling and development
- Grant criteria, monitoring form and evaluation development
- Delivery of partner training workshops
- Ongoing partner support and performance management
- Programme marketing and promotion
- Monitoring and financial paperwork verification
- Financial claims processing
- Partner payment calculations
- Internal and external audit management
- Programme storage and archive
- Strategic liaison with funders and stakeholders

A maximum of 20 grants will be awarded (this is based on the current number of ATI organisations delivering in North Yorkshire). Grants will be drawn down by partner organisations direct from North Yorkshire Council. Grants will range between £5,000 to £55,000 for 12 months delivery. Grant values and profiles will be allocated according to performance (based on ATI performance), partner specialisms and geographical coverage. Grant values and profiles will be calculated using

indicative unit costings per participant/intervention. Better Connect will present grant offers to partners and following acceptances grant agreements will be issued.

The contract will be managed by the UKSPF People and Skills Lead at YNY LEP. Quarterly monitoring claims will be put in place as well as quarterly meetings with Better Connect to ensure project performance in terms of both spend and against UKSPF outputs and outcomes as specified in the Investment Plan.

## APPROVAL

**This section is to be completed by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and the Corporate Director, Strategic Resources.**

**Request agreed/rejected with reasons:**

Signed:	Gary Fielding	Signed:	Barry Khan
Date:	Via email 08/03/2023 @15:07	Date:	Via email 13/03/2023 @18:10