

Expression of interest notice

Assessment of the current opportunities for linking datasets between the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) databases and larger datasets

1. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is planning to jointly commission a research project with several of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to assess the feasibility of linking the monitoring and evaluation data held by the latter for their business support schemes to larger datasets such as the IDBR.
2. Contractors are invited to register expressions of interest in this project with Liz Anastasi by 12 noon, 27 January 2006. Please keep the expression of interest to 2 pages, excluding CVs, but covering the points set out in section on 'Specifications' below.

Objectives

3. The aim of the research project is to provide an assessment of whether Business Support data held by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) is sufficient to allow the Agencies to link these data to the those held in larger datasets such as the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR)
4. The objectives of this research can be summarised under the following questions:
 - a. What systems are currently in place in the RDAs for the collection and storing of company data?
 - b. Are these systems and the data collected sufficient to allow datasets to be linked to large business registers and other databases?
 - c. If the framework in place is currently insufficient, what needs to be done to increase the feasibility of data linking?

Background

5. Over the last few years, increasing levels of responsibility have been devolved to the RDAs in terms of assessing the demands of each of their regional economies and allocation of funding on that basis. A key element of devolved responsibility is the provision of direct support to businesses, with examples including applications for grants up to £2 million from the Selective Finance for Investment in England scheme (successor of the Regional Selective Assistance, RSA, grants) and the more recent devolvement of the running of Business Links.
6. With greater devolvement comes the greater need for robust monitoring and evaluation (MAE) systems and more detailed administrative databases. Accountability of public resources requires continuous MAE of the impact and effectiveness of funding and support given. However, it is clear that structures have evolved differently between RDAs and as such different systems for MAE will have evolved within each Agency.
7. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has rationalised its portfolio of support products for business, which are designed to improve overall productivity, and introduced a more comprehensive MAE framework to look at the impacts of these products. Part of

this framework was the arrangement of the information systems in such a way that linking the datasets of company data to a larger more inclusive dataset (i.e. one that includes non-recipients for government assistance, and also contains relevant information that can be burdensome to extract from additional, repeated surveys) which can be used to more fully test the effectiveness of business support products, for example in terms of comparing the performance of those firms who did not receive assistance with those that did gain support. The MAE information system was also set up in such a way that future dataset-linking opportunities could be undertaken. This is important for looking at the change in impacts and inclusion of developments in the economy over time.

8. The aim of this project is to test whether such opportunities exist for the linking of RDA datasets to a larger more inclusive dataset, such as the IDBR.

Outputs

9. This is effectively a feasibility study looking at the extent to which existing RDA datasets can be linked to larger datasets such as the IDBR. Consultants would be expected to make an assessment of the opportunities for data-linking by the participating RDAs and to highlight where there are barriers. In making the assessment, consultants should also take account of the differences between the systems in place in each RDA.
10. The key outcome of the project will be to provide a series of 'next steps' or recommendations for RDAs to improve their ability to link their data to meet their MAE needs. Evidence should be provided to support any recommendations made. This should also include assessments of the cost of implementation.
11. The results of the report will be presented to DTI and the RDAs in the form of:
 - Interim report (electronic and loose bound copies);
 - Final report (Electronic and loose bound copies);
 - Meetings when required;
 - Two presentations, with the possibility of more.

Timetable

12. Expressions of interest to be submitted by 12 noon on 27 January 2006.
13. When the project moves forward, short-listed candidates will be sent a full Invitation to Tender (ITT) and asked to submit a full tender on the basis of that document.
14. It is expected that the work will start at the end of February/beginning of March, with the final report due in April 2006.

Specifications

15. The expression of interest should include:
 - A statement of suitability of the organisation;
 - Details of the person(s) who are likely to work on the project and identify a principle point of contact for the DTI, who will be managing this project;
 - An indication of the likely input being provided from the key members of the proposed team;
 - State whether you might be drawing on experts outside your organisation, who they might be and what will be their input;
 - A summary of relevant previous work.

16. Joint expressions of interest with other interested parties are acceptable for this project.

Evaluation of Suitability of Potential Contractors

17. The final tenders for this project will be evaluated using the following criteria;
- Understanding of the policy context and the overall project brief;
 - Good track record and ability to deliver to tight deadlines;
 - Relevant experience of data-linking in the proposed team;
 - Cost and value for money;
 - Development of ideas and recommendations and quality of supporting evidence;
 - Overall quality of the proposal.

Project Management

18. Although the project will be commissioned jointly by the DTI and participating RDAs, the work will be managed by the DTI.
19. The contractor will be supervised by an official of the DTI who will act as Nominated Officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the contract. The Contractor will appoint a project manager who will act as principle point of contact for the DTI.
20. The DTI project manager will monitor progress and provide guidance on objectives and outputs.
21. Standard DTI terms and conditions will apply.
22. The DTI and the participating RDAs reserve the right not to proceed with the contract.

Further Information

23. If you require further information, please contact either Liz Anastasi (tel: 020 7215 6125; email: elizabeth.anastasi@dti.gsi.gov.uk) or Katie Feeney (tel: 020 7215 6348; email: Katie.feeney@dti.gsi.gov.uk), Regional Economic Analysis team, DTI.
24. Responses to this invitation should be sent to:

Ms Liz Anastasi,
Regional Economic Analysis,
Department of Trade and Industry,
Bay 1126, 1 Victoria Street,
London, SW1H 0ET