**The value of HE project**

July 2021

**Introduction**

The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) aims to improve lives through evidence-based practice in higher education (HE). Our vision is to eliminate equality gaps for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, allowing all students to have the same chance to enter HE, get a good degree and progress into further study or employment. TASO was set up in 2019, by a consortium of King’s College London, Nottingham Trent University and the Behavioural Insights Team.

We are an independent hub for HE professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to eliminate equality gaps. We inform practitioners of the best available evidence and produce new evidence on the most effective approaches. TASO is an affiliate ‘What Works’ centre and is part of the [UK Government’s What Works Movement](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network). This means that TASO is committed to the generation, synthesis and dissemination of high-quality evidence about effective practice in widening participation and student success.

As part of TASO’s strategy to influence the policy narrative and maintain the profile of our mission, we propose to commission a discrete evidence synthesis on the value of HE.

This project will be a rapid evidence review focused on the evidence on how HE benefits, or not, society and individuals, with an emphasis on addressing existing equality gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

**Scope**

**Evidence Review**

The purpose of this review is to explore the evidence on the positive social, cultural and economic value of HE as well as any evidence on disvalue. The focus should be on reliable evidence of the value of HE, prioritising robust data analysis and, where possible, reports that draw on quantifiable evidence and demonstrate causal evidence.

It is vital this focuses tightly on equality gaps (rather than on more general benefits of HE more broadly). Below is a non-exhaustive list of which topics and themes on the value of HE we anticipate the report to include:

* income and labour market effects for disadvantaged students attending HE
* closing the gaps for self-actualisation
* social cohesion and the education effect – the student experience
* Social return on investment (SROI) in higher education
* R&D investment and society-wide benefits (where these can be shown to address equality gaps)
* the prosperity of towns and regions with universities
* contributing, or not, to social mobility.

The review should prioritise UK evidence but where this does not exist suppliers should cast the net more widely and look at the international evidence.

**Additional information**

There is also scope (and additional budget) for supplementary data analysis to quantify the value of HE (e.g. using LEO data). However this is not a requirement and we will welcome proposals that focus exclusively on the existing evidence.

**Broader considerations**

The review should include FE providers as well as HE providers. In your tender submission, please outline how you would disaggregate and address the differential parts of the sector and how they benefit diverse groups in different ways.

While we are open to a range of methodological approaches in answering the question of the value of HE, we expect part of the review to address evidence on labour market outcomes.

**Requirements**

This section outlines the requirements expected from the chosen supplier.

**Project deliverables**

* Interim update to TASO on project progress, including an outline of the final report.
* The final report:
  + Executive Summary - outlining the key findings from the report.
  + Introduction - outlining the format and content of the report.
  + Methodology – outlining the scope of the review; approach used to identify and select literature; rationale for evidence inclusion and exclusion; and any methodological limitations.
  + Evaluation of the literature
  + Conclusion - summarising the findings, key evidence gaps and recommendations.
  + Harvard style references provided for the evidence cited.
  + The report will be provided in a format which is ready for external publication. A comprehensive outline of publication requirements will be distributed to the successful supplier.

**Project timeline**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Activity | 09/21 | 10/  21 | 11/  21 | 12/  21 |
| Inception meeting & kick-off |  |  |  |  |
| Conduct evidence review |  |  |  |  |
| Bi-weekly catch-ups |  |  |  |  |
| Present progress |  |  |  |  |
| Carry out any amendments |  |  |  |  |
| Final review due |  |  |  |  |

**Project implementation**

The supplier will be responsible for end-to-end project management, including:

* Risk management.
* Ensuring that the project is effectively managed in a timely way, with advance notice of any challenges in delivering the project to the timeline specified.
* Ensuring that the final report fulfils the methodological and pre-specified criteria in the tender document, and providing suitable quality assurance
* Presenting a draft final report to, and collecting feedback from, TASO’s advisory groups.
* Reporting to, and engaging with, the TASO team. This will include bi-weekly catch-ups and a mid-point presentation on project progress.

In addition to financial support, TASO will:

* Provide advice throughout the project where required.
* Meet (virtually for the foreseeable future) with the contractor as per the project timeline to offer insight and feedback on the project progress.
* Support the partner in shaping outputs and framing the final report and resources. Please note, TASO will maintain final editorial control of the content and final outputs.
* Manage the contract.

**Ethics and data protection**

The supplier will be responsible for seeking ethics approval (if necessary) and ensuring data protection standards are met.

**Funding**

This project is funded by the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO).

The budget for the core evidence review is £30,000 (inclusive of VAT); for a project that includes additional data analysis the total budget is £40,000 (inclusive of VAT).

Responses to this invitation to tender should include accurate pricing, inclusive of expenses and VAT. Please note that assessment of responses to this tender invitation will be on perceived quality of service and demonstrable ability to meet the brief, rather than the lowest cost, but value for money is a selection criterion.

**Application and timelines**

* We invite you to submit an application using the form below.
* Please save the form using the name of your organisation.
* Submit the completed form to Helen.Lawson@taso.org.uk by 16th August 2021. You will be informed of the outcome of your application in the w/c 23rd August 2021.
* We anticipate the project will start w/c 1 September 2021 with final reporting in January 2022.

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| Call for applications opens | 12th July 2021 |
| Deadline for applications | 16th August 2021 |
| Clarification/negotiation with preferred suppliers and contracts signed | 27th August 2021 |
| Project kick off | 1st September 2021 |

**Assessment of applications**

Your application will be assessed by the TASO Research and Evaluation team. The strength of applications will be assessed on:

* *The team (40%)*
  + The relevant experience of the project team. This should include familiarity with labour market data on graduate outcomes
  + Evidence of success on similar projects.
  + The team’s approach to transparency and accountability.
* *The application (40%)*
  + How well the application answers the brief.
  + How well it articulates the ability of the team to deliver all requirements and deliverables.
  + How well it articulates the ability of the team to be responsive and flexible in delivering the brief.
* *Budget (20%)*
  + Feasibility based on the budget submitted.
  + Value for money.
  + Financial stability and long-term viability of the organisation, including detail of the organisations last set of accounts and current year budget. (due diligence will be undertaken on all shortlisted organisations).

**Expression of Interest Form**

Please note that hyperlinks to web-based information will not be accepted, and, if included, will not be evaluated.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lead organisation** |  |
| **Contact name** |  |
| **Contact email** |  |
| **Contact telephone** |  |
| **SECTION A: Relevant experience**  *Please provide details of the team who would be involved in this project. Describe their proposed roles and how their skills and experience are relevant to delivering the work.*  *[500 words max]* | |
|  | |
| **SECTION B: Meeting the project brief**  *Please provide an overview of how you would meet the project brief. Please cover:*   * *How you would approach each part of the project* * *A brief summary of key challenges/risks and you would address them* * *A project timeline*   *[2000 words max (but please do not feel you need to meet this limit)]* | |
|  | |
| **SECTION C: Project budget**  *You may apply for funding to the value of £30,000 to £40,000 to deliver this project. Provide a budget showing how you propose to use the funding provided.* | |
|  | |
| **SECTION D: Financial stability**  *Financial stability and long-term viability of the organisation is an essential criteria for this application. Please provide:*   * *Your organisation's last set of accounts* * *Your organisation's current year budget.*   ***You may also provide this as a pdf document alongside your completed application form.*** | |
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*Additional guidance*

* TASO reserves the right, acting reasonably, to:
  + Discontinue the award procedure in the absence of appropriate applications;
  + Change the timetable for the procurement of the Contract, and in such circumstances TASO will notify all applicants of any change by the fastest means possible;
  + Terminate discussions with organisations which apply;
  + Discontinue the procedure leading to the award of the Contract;
  + Not to award any Contract at all as a result of this process
* Under no circumstances shall TASO incur any liability in respect of any of these actions.
* No publicity regarding the project will be permitted until TASO has given express written consent to the relevant communication. No statements may be made to any part of the media regarding the nature of this application, its contents or any proposals relating to it without the prior written consent of TASO.
* TASO will not reimburse any costs incurred by organisations in connection with preparation of their applications.
* If you are unsure of the meaning of a question or anything in this call for applications, then it is your responsibility to ask TASO to clarify in writing via email.
* TASO will aim to answer clarification questions within five (5) working days, but does not undertake to do so. TASO may also decline to answer a question if it deems the question to be inappropriate. If TASO is unable to answer a question, this will be communicated.