MESH Regional Website to support ESOL provision

Website Specification & Options Appraisal

We are delighted to be seeking an experienced web developer or team to aid us in our aim of simplifying access to ESOL across Yorkshire & the Humber. We require a simple, accessible and clear front-end website to provide access to a comprehensive database of providers and courses in the region, managed by our dedicated members. In addition to the hosting and development of this website and database, we are aware of our need for support to make the best use of analytics and reporting. We are keen to hear from passionate and skilled people who can work with us to reach those needing to benefit from our initiative.

Background

ESOL refers to *English for Speakers of Other Languages*, the area of adult education devoted to the teaching and learning of English for adult migrants (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers, and also people who have migrated for work or family reasons). Following the mapping of ESOL provision across Yorkshire & the Humber in 2016-17, the need was identified for an infrastructure to provide up-to-date information on the nature and location of the region's ESOL provision. This will support resettled adults and other migrants in Yorkshire & the Humber to gain access to an ESOL class locally, where one exists. It will also support Local Authorities to better identify current gaps in local ESOL provision (be this formal or informal, statutory or voluntary), which may then be addressed using the resources made available to them through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) for refugee resettlement.

This proposal is to develop this infrastructure in the form of a coordinating online resource for the provision of opportunities to learn English for new arrivals in Yorkshire & the Humber. It will take the form of a new website, which will improve upon and expand the current Learning English in Leeds site (LEL) https://www.lel.help/. LEL is owned by MESH, the group responsible for its development and for that of the proposed new regional website, and applicants are invited to study the LEL site when preparing their bids.

The LEL website is viewed in policy circles as a viable means for supporting the local coordination of ESOL provision, to be adopted regionally (via the proposed project) and ultimately potentially nationally. The LEL model features in the draft *ESOL Strategy for England* (NATECLA 2016), presented as an example of good practice for coordinating English language provision in an area, promoting effective placement and progression in learning. The resource has also been identified and described as a model of good practice in the new *Integrated Communities Strategy* Green Paper, published by the MHCLG in March 2018.

The LEL model in Leeds was developed by the Migrant English Support Hub (MESH) – a consortium of learning providers and other stakeholders set up to support migrants to learn English in Leeds. MESH is a charity staffed largely by volunteers, with (currently) one paid development worker. There are plans for employing further development workers to support the regional-level version of the site for Yorkshire & the Humber, which this tender relates to, part of a project led by MESH in partnership with Migration Yorkshire.

Outcomes

Access, first and foremost

The core of this project is to enhance access to opportunities to learn English for new arrivals in Yorkshire & the Humber. Users of the new site – potential students and those who support them – might have limited experience with IT and may also be unfamiliar with English. Some will have little experience with literacy in any language. The interface should therefore be simple, straightforward and easy to navigate, with as little extraneous written text as possible.

In addition to this, the site administrators and development workers (superusers), as well as ESOL providers (possessing a range of IT skills and competences) will have similar requirements for a simple, intuitive interface, making it easy to add new provider and course profiles.

Provide a coordinated hub for ESOL providers in the region

ESOL provision is decentralised, with private, public and voluntary sectors all participating. This means that there is limited data in the public sphere which enables providers and other

users of the site (e.g. Local Authorities) to gauge availability of ESOL provision and to identify areas of need. The MESH regional website needs to provide the online infrastructure to connect these providers and to allow MESH and other key stakeholders to understand the nature and scope of provision. The work of MESH will map provision: we estimate that there are 200+ providers across Yorkshire & The Humber.

Ability to demonstrate the impact of the site

The current LEL website provides a source of information for prospective learners and those who support them, and the means to engage with providers. However, as there are multiple methods of engagement (phone, email, address) and no measureable metric to demonstrate successful conversion of website visits to students, quantitative evaluation (e.g. for funders, sponsors and providers) is difficult. Prospective developers are asked to consider this in their plans.

Requirements

Number of Users

The number of visits to the site will be significantly higher than the 2-4000 per month (from around 700 individual users) currently experienced by LEL, incorporating as it will the current Leeds-based LEL site, but spanning urban centres and more rural areas across the Yorkshire & the Humber region. A scalable solution is required (for potentially a national version) and indicative costs for expansion should be included. Developer-hosted or Hosted solutions (AWS etc.) are acceptable.

In addition to regular web visitors, accounts for a number of contributors to the CMS backend, including MESH superusers, will allow for the contribution to, and maintenance of course information. Up to five logins will be needed for such users.

Content

The content of the webpages will be populated by the MESH development workers and the ESOL course providers themselves, in an ongoing mapping and information-gathering process. The data will be entered and managed using a Content Management System which allows administrators to manage, export and manipulate data held on courses and suppliers. Providing information about ESOL courses and providers is the main job of the resource, but there needs to be scope for the potential future development of other areas, e.g. for self-access teaching and learning materials, and links to our social media presence.

Data Management

The migration of existing data on Leeds ESOL providers from the current Learning English in Leeds site (LEL, https://www.lel.help/) to the new site is essential and the ability to upload large datasets (where they exist) exported from local authority systems would be highly beneficial.

The ability to tag and apply key words to entries and courses is essential for the proper categorisation of data and the application of search filters by users. Applying filters to searches should be quick and simple in order to allow users to find appropriate lessons (e.g. 'free classes', 'classes for beginners', 'availability of childcare') easily. Similar filtering should be available to aid in superuser entry management.

Provider course details will be maintained on the site database and details will be held for re-use by the provider.

Provider input should require the validation of an administrator to ensure data quality.

Integrated services

The inclusion of Google Maps or similar mapping API is essential to visually communicate locations to users, including search results and directions. It is also crucial to carry over other key features of the current LEL site, e.g. searches by postcode, photographs of ESOL provider locations.

Metrics

Google Analytics should be integrated into the solution, incorporating site search terms. Third-party reporting of metrics and goal conversions is highly desirable, as is support available to create dashboards, goals and conversion targets. The successful supplier will support MESH coordinators in the use of these analytics.

Reporting

The new MESH website will be a primary source of information on ESOL providers in the region and this valuable data should be exportable for use elsewhere.

Conversion via the website should be demonstrable, either through basic metrics of interaction with buttons for example "register here" or through user accounts. User accounts are not essential, and any solution offering these will be expected to demonstrate the ability to securely maintain private data.

Responsive design

The primary method of access to the site is expected to be via mobile browsers. The site design should be responsive in order to address issues with scaling and legibility on different devices.

The ability to facilitate staff and user testing, along with a commitment to adopting testing feedback, will be beneficial. We are committed to continuous development and require a partner who will enable a continual iterative development process.

In designing and developing the website the web developer will be in close and continuous contact with the mesh development workers to ensure an appropriate design for users.

Technical Requirements

The successful provider will provide a service, in addition to the development and hosting of the website, which includes maintenance and support, and will cover necessary licenses and security updates.

The import of existing data (about providers, classes etc.) from the file library associated with the current MESH website will be overseen by a MESH coordinator in order to minimize the initial transfer size.

A provisional minimum uptime of 95% is expected of the front end website and, in the event of an outage, remediation within less than two hours is required. The redundancy of data held on the CMS system will be seen as beneficial. A full SLA from the supplier will form part of the contract award.

Any supplier must be able to demonstrate their understanding of the necessary hardware requirements in order to provide the smooth and responsive browsing experience needed for users of the MESH website, with minimal server side load times.

The structure of the site should allow for the indexing by popular search providers and facilitate good search engine optimization.

Knowledge and adherence to GDPR, including: the requirement for physical hosting to be held within the EEA, policies regarding the use of cookies and the implementation of SSL should be demonstrated. As part of the security and general health requirements of the site, the ability to mitigate the impact of automated or "spam" data entry should be evidenced.

Evidence of the ability to adhere to web accessibility standards, including the UK Equality Act and W3C WAI guidelines, should be provided and any product should meet these.

Although not crucial, the use of open source software will be seen as beneficial in the creation of the new MESH website and will be preferred in the contract award.

Budget

Upper limit for development, support and maintenance for two years and dedicated hosting for this time: £30,000

The MESH consortium understands that the evolution of advanced site features or content may require additional development work. Any applicant should provide details of the rates (hourly or daily) in advance so that these may be considered as part of the selection process.

The hourly and daily rates of support to MESH should be shown in any submission in order to allow for budgeting and to maintain transparency.

Timescales

We will appoint by early February. We would expect the website to be ready for use within the following six months.

Interested parties should submit an application to migrantenglish@gmail.com by midday on **Tuesday 29th January 2019**
Shortlisted applicants will be required to attend an interview w/b 4th February 2019

Queries about the tender should be sent to enquiries@lel.help