



## **Specification for Workshop Facilitator for Innovation Observatory – March 2018**

The specification seeks to appoint a facilitator to support the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the North East's four universities to refresh thinking and direction relating to an Innovation Observatory, learning from current experience and best practice to propose an effective and shared position in relation to future direction.

The facilitator would be expected to design, prepare for, and run a workshop of partners from the North East LEP and local universities to reach a new, shared position in relation to the purpose, design and direction of the Innovation Observatory.

The workshop should take place in April or early May 2018.

### **Background**

The North East LEP is responsible for enabling and supporting economic growth across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham. With a population of almost two million people, home to 867,000 jobs and an economic output of £38.7bn, the area is a major element of the economy of the north of England. The North East Strategic Economic Plan sets the challenge to achieve 'more and better' jobs for the North East.

To deliver against this ambition, the SEP sets out six programmes of delivery - supporting innovation, business growth and access to finance, skills, employability and inclusion, economic assets and infrastructure and transport and digital connectivity. Partners from across the North East contribute towards delivering these programmes and enable economic growth in the North East.

The innovation programme is structured around three core workstreams – ecosystem development; smart specialisation and innovation infrastructure, reflecting the requirements for supporting innovation-led growth through smart specialisation and open-innovation identified in the North East Independent Economic Review. As part of developing the ecosystem for innovation in the North East a key gap was identified as the provision of up-to-date, accessible data and insights on innovation trends and performance. To address this gap the North East LEP proposed the establishment of an Innovation Observatory.

## **Initial Concept of North East Business Innovation Observatory**

A key issue identified in the SEP was the need for a step change among our established and start-up businesses (including voluntary and social enterprise) to understand, develop and deliver innovation in the workplace, paralleled with innovative skills-related programmes, to ensure future workforce innovation sustainability.

### **The Problem identified**

- No central point with responsibility to research, collate and disseminate trends, practices and models relating to innovation.
- Lack of detailed insight into understanding what is actually needed- i.e. where are the business problems that can be resolved through innovation- in other words unearthing the 'what's needed' bit so that the 'what's possible' bit can be explored.
- Lack of meaningful baseline of innovation metrics to determine the current level of innovative capacity and activity within the North East LEP area.

### **The Solution proposed**

The establishment of a Business Innovation Observatory, would be linked to the proposed North East LEP Innovation Super-network /and or the proposition for Technical Assistance for a Smart Specialisation hub. The Innovation Observatory will be responsible for:

### **Understanding Innovation Success factors**

- Researching, identifying and disseminating good practice activity in innovative industries
- Researching, analysing and disseminating the barriers and inhibitors to innovation and proposing ways of overcoming these barriers.
- Researching business trends relevant to north east business sectors and analysing how innovation can contribute to growing north east businesses.
- Developing a better understanding among business communities about all aspects of innovation and how it can impact on business success through offering seminars, workshops etc.

### **Identifying opportunities**



- To undertake horizon scanning for potential innovation business opportunities for north east businesses so that they can capitalise upon them.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Validating a set of qualitative and quantitative 'innovation metrics' so that trends can be measured over time across sectors.
- Putting the north east in the context of other innovation regions, learning from them, positioning the North East alongside them.

In 2016, Durham University and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop an Innovation Observatory in the North East that will benefit North East companies. The MoU was based on a preliminary workshop involving the Business Schools from all four universities in the North East LEP area (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland) and a competitive call process that resulted in a Durham University-led proposal being selected to host the Observatory.

### **Specification Requirements**

It is important that the partners involved in the Innovation Observatory have an agreed strategy and workplan and that a governance structure and funding model are in place for the Innovation Observatory. The North East LEP wishes to commission a contractor to facilitate a workshop to help progress these. The intended outputs from the workshop are consensus across the North East LEP and the universities on:

- The purpose of the Innovation Observatory and a small number of objectives that will help deliver against this purpose.
- The key areas of focus for the first 2 years of the Innovation Observatory.
- The resources, capacity and structures required to deliver against the purpose, objectives and agreed areas of focus.
- Potential sources of funding for the Innovation Observatory.

This will provide the basis for the Innovation Observatory members to work together to develop a strategy and workplan and put in place the appropriate governance structures. It will also act as the starting point for developing a funding model.

This will involve:

- Facilitating workshop involving key individuals from the North East LEP and the universities



- Interview key partners in advance of the workshop to capture their views on the topics outlined above. Feeding these back will help make most effective use of time in the workshop and will help build consensus across partners
- Provide a write-up of the workshop that sets out clearly the agreed approach and next steps for each partner.

In relation to the workshops and preparatory interviews, these will involve two representatives from each university (one at Dean level and one academic that has been involved in the Innovation Observatory to date), a small number (2 or 3) of key staff from the North East LEP plus the university representative from the North East LEP's Innovation Board.

The maximum budget for the project is £3750 (excluding VAT) however applicants are expected to set out an appropriate delivery proposal and resulting cost.

Applicants will be expected to set out how they will undertake the task effectively and efficiently and show the following skills and experience:

- Recent, relevant examples of developing credibility with senior actors in academia and economic development.
- Recent, relevant examples of preparing, running and concluding workshop events with senior staff that result in a shared, practical action plan.

### **Timeframe**

Applicants are requested to submit their proposal by midday on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018 to complete that activity during April and early May 2018.

### **Application Process**

Interested applicants should provide a short response to this specification setting out a proposed approach to the specification, a minimum of two examples of recent, relevant work demonstrating the skills and experience set out above and a CV for relevant staff to be involved in delivery.

This should be submitted to James Davies ([james.davies@nelep.co.uk](mailto:james.davies@nelep.co.uk)) By midday **4th April 2018** who can be contacted in advance of the deadline for an informal discussion.

Applications will be considered on a cost and quality basis considering the quality of the approach set out and the experience demonstrated against the requirements included above.

The weighting will be based 60% on quality, 20% on proposed methodology and 20% on skills and experience.