

Invitation to Tender to Undertake a Range of Research, Impact & Evaluation Projects

March 2021

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Introduction

ThinkForward is a charity that works to empower young people in the UK through an innovative long-term coaching programme. We equip young people with the skills and experience they need to move into work after they finish school.

Everything we do is centred around giving young people the autonomy and confidence they need to be successful so that they have control over their own lives and futures. Our coaches are embedded in schools and provide one-to-one and group coaching to the young people on our programme from age 13 to 18.

Young people on ThinkForward develop the skills they need, learn to overcome the barriers that keep them from being successful in school and in later life, and take part in employability activities to broaden their horizons and provide experience of the workplace.

Strategic priorities

ThinkForward has recently agreed a new 5 year strategy; our goals are centred around Impact, Sustainability and Growth. Our work is usually long-term and preventative so we are often asking funders to make a longstanding investment in us; thus it's key that we can articulate the value of our Programmes and demonstrate their effectiveness.

Aims of this commission

We intend to appoint one or more long-term evaluation partners to strengthen and validate our developing internal processes to measure the impact of our programmes. We aim to secure a range of expertise and experience to support us to work through a number of questions and proposed enhancements in how we measure impact, to ensure we can demonstrate robustly that our Programmes work, and why they work.

ThinkForward currently has a range of requirements to support the Impact function. These have been divided into a number of commissioning workstreams which are described in more detail below. We recognise that it is unlikely that a single provider is best positioned to deliver on all strands of this work but we are also interested in any synergies/enhanced value that can be achieved by partnering with a provider across several workstreams. We would encourage interested parties to submit a proposal for the workstreams where they feel they are able to effectively deliver and to separately note any additional value that you think can be achieved by partnering with you across strands if you are submitting a tender relating to more than one workstream. We reserve the right to invite you to deliver on either your full proposal or just a portion of the workstreams you have applied to deliver.

Who we wish to work with

We are looking to cultivate longer term relationships with a small selection of suppliers in this space and so would anticipate that any supplier supporting any of the workstreams would have the opportunity to cultivate a longstanding supplier relationship with ThinkForward.

Once the initial configuration of suppliers across workstreams has been established, we may wish to bring suppliers delivering on individual workstreams together for relevant synergies to be realised. We seek effective collaboration and we're open to innovative models and alternative ways of working. We desire to work with suppliers interested in sharing expertise, who are able to support us to absorb learning from this work internally and enabling ThinkForward to hold and maintain any new processes or rhythms established through this work.

We seek value for money and we measure this with both quality and price rather than seeking the cheapest possible bid.

Outline of the Workstreams & Deliverables

Workstream	Brief	Phase 1 – to end of Summer 2021	Phase 1 Outputs	Later phases	Indicative Budget
#1: MoveForward Evaluation	<p>Fine-tune data collection/ measurement tools (this overlaps with WRC brief).</p> <p>Initial phase – understanding what works and why -refining the structure (Promise/Dosage).</p> <p>By Summer 2023 we need to have a full external evaluation in place.</p>	<p>Process level evaluation exercise and confirm data collection needs.</p> <p>Evaluation framework agreed and interim evaluations planned over the course of the programme.</p> <p>Literature review and evidence indicators.</p>	<p>A comprehensive interim process evaluation report</p> <p>A literature review of the evidence base setting the programmes mechanism against existing psychological, economic & education literature covering academic and practitioner research on financial, social & emotional outcomes.</p>	<p>Undertake interim evaluation work and implement revised systems.</p> <p>QA processes undertaken, revised and implemented as needed.</p> <p>Final programme process and impact evaluation.</p>	£7k
#2: ThinkForward Evaluation	<p>Process evaluation – what works and why? Asking specific questions of our data.</p> <p>Review gaps in measurement of impact and identify relevant short-term outcomes and processes to measure these/data collection needs.</p>	<p>Process evaluation for programme.</p> <p>Critical review of dosage with capacity modelling/ time & motion assessment of coaching capacity.</p> <p>Review of future evaluation plans for TF.</p>	<p>A comprehensive written report detailing the full research project undertaken including methods employed, analysis & findings as well as conclusions and recommendations. The report should be published in a format which could lend itself to internal or external circulation.</p> <p>An executive summary for broader distribution within the organisation, capturing the key learning and communicating the project in a concise, accessible format that contributes to the wider conversation in the organisation alongside other evaluation workstreams.</p> <p>Presentations of findings to the ThinkForward Executive team and Board of Trustees</p>	<p>Work to identify appropriate short-term outcomes and tools to measure them. Also, analyse gaps in current data capture and options around addressing these.</p> <p>Build out the measurement/data paradigm and implement new systems as required. Develop plans for future analysis/ reporting.</p>	£7k
#3: Work Readiness	<p>We wish to review our existing work readiness tool– to identify</p>	<p>a) critical appraisal of our current approach and process</p>	<p>A critical evaluation of existing models reviewing the evidence base for these</p>	<p>Review options and redefine our approach and process.</p>	£5k

Capabilities (WRC)	<p>if it's capturing the correct things in an evidence-based approach.</p> <p>Review and assess available and appropriate tools, pilot, test, and deploy.</p>	<p>b) theoretical/ lit review of evidence and aligning options with our needs</p>	<p>models as well as their appropriateness for ThinkForward across both our programmes, relating these theoretical models to a practical measurement approach</p> <p>A secondary review of ThinkForward's current dataset and what it can tell us about the most important factors to include in a future model</p> <p>A profiling of the approaches other youth employment charities are taking</p>	<p>Engage with young people to seek feedback on tools and approaches.</p> <p>Pilot/test preferred tools</p>	
#4: Benchmarking	<p>Review of externally available data that will support setting our outcomes in context.</p> <p>Identifying any key data that will support articulating the particular needs of our young people to frame outcomes appropriately.</p>	<p>Developing external benchmarks and reconciling with public data sources.</p> <p>Review of completion/ accuracy of data held to match to benchmarks.</p>	<p>A paper identifying the range of external datasets that are relevant for ThinkForward that could be of use for benchmarking purposes and profiling other organisations benchmarking approaches</p> <p>A paper detailing the audit work undertaken, the data we currently collect and the datasets that may require additional primary data collection</p>	<p>Implementing any agreed changes to data collection from phase 1</p> <p>Framing our outcomes within the benchmark data</p>	£3k
#5: MoveForward SROI	<p>Iterative approach as there are immediate external drivers to produce this. We need to understand government savings potential of the programme to support planned growth.</p> <p>Initially savings per young person with a view to move to end of programme calculations on total savings to government.</p>	<p>Work up initial full model with associated cost/ financial proxy modelling recognising gaps and areas for further development and iteration. Use existing work as a starting point to move forward quickly.</p>	<p>Initial SROI study reviewing the programme to date and improving an existing model to forecast the impact over the remaining programmes duration</p> <p>A gap analysis against current datasets and emerging plans from other workstreams in order to support the later phases of this workstream</p> <p>Proposed outline plan for phases two and three of this workstream</p>	<p>Unpacking the SROI iteration process and ensure model is stress-tested. Begin to adapt model to be malleable and applicable to future programme modifications</p> <p>End of programme, evaluative SROI for the full SIB programme.</p> <p>Establish model that can be applied to different programmes/ levels of abstraction.</p>	£3k

* Indicative budgets relate to phase one only

Requirements For All Suppliers

In addition to the requirements attached to each workstream, we anticipate that all suppliers will;

- be able to credibly communicate that ‘you get’ what we do as an organisation
- be able to demonstrate you can communicate credibly to a range of our internal and external stakeholders
- have demonstrable experience in working with both charities/social enterprises in the education and youth sectors.
- be able to demonstrate evidence of professional liability insurance of at least £100,000 (or confirm you are willing to put this in place prior to the project initiation)
- be able to confirm they are a living wage employer.
- be able to demonstrate a secure IT infrastructure and GDPR compliant approach to data protection and managing sensitive data securely.
- be able to demonstrate adequate project management, account management and quality assurance processes mechanisms or policies
- have a policy expressing your commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity
- be able to demonstrate that you share our values as an organisation
- We are open to working with a range of different individuals, organisations or consortia but would expect proposals to outline the proposed project management arrangements including building in any time required for project management meetings and adequate drafting rounds for outputs to your proposal
- Prior to the project initiation meeting, you are able to provide the following policies (or written agreements if working in a consortia);
 - Safeguarding
 - Research ethics
 - Data protection/GDPR
 - Project management protocols

Budget & Timescales

Please refer to individual workstreams for details of their relevant indicative budgets and project timescales. We anticipate that the stated budget will include all project expenses and the necessary project management communication/meetings/time to deliver the project effectively. We anticipate that commissions will be made on an outcomes/fixed budget basis but will be selecting a provider based on the maximum value to spend ratio that can be achieved within the agreed budget for the commission.

Budgets stated are for the first phase of activity (envisaged to run to the end of the current academic year i.e. August 2021). The split of total funds between workstreams is indicative. Further budgets are intended to be available on an annual basis, subject to internal sign off, in the region of £15-25k per annum (although there is potential for movement on this figure in order to achieve the right outcomes).

Our emphasis in assessing proposals will be on their ability to use the investment in this commission most effectively to meaningfully inform and progress our thinking about conceptualising, measuring and questioning the impact that we have on young people’s readiness to succeed in their adult lives and prosper in today’s labour market.

We anticipate that initial shortlisting and selection will happen in early April 2021 and we would like the work to be commenced by the beginning of May 2021.

Submitting a Proposal

Please submit your proposal including all documents by **12pm on Friday 9th April 2021** to Bhagirathi.Shah@thinkforward.org.uk

Your proposal should include;

- For each workstream you are applying to deliver;
 - For Phase One: Your proposed project plan with timelines including the outputs you plan to produce. This should include consideration of how you will tackle both quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement.
 - For Later Phases: An outline plan laying out how you would envisage the project developing beyond phase one including approximate timelines and suggested deliverables
 - A stakeholder engagement plan for how you would propose we involve internal and stakeholders in a meaningful and efficient manner including collaborating with internal youth engagement staff and the fundraising team in engaging our external stakeholders as appropriate.
 - A brief risk assessment of your delivery of the project highlighting any mitigation or contingency plans you would put in place to ensure high-quality delivery on budget and to deadline.
- Any added value you feel your proposal offers to ThinkForward. Also, noting any benefits that you feel can be achieved by working with you across multiple workstreams (if you are applying to deliver more than one workstream).
- CV's/background information for key personnel working on the project and the teams experience of working together. We would also invite you to demonstrate your understanding of our operating context working in the youth/education/employability/coaching spaces and the core skills the team will bring to delivery of the project.
- A brief summary of similar work previously undertaken by the team. We would prefer to see a sample or two of previous similar projects undertaken.
- At least two referees who can comment on your delivery of comparable projects.
- Your proposed budget and full details of costs relating to the full delivery of the outputs within the workstreams you are applying to deliver. Please provide a summary breakdown relating to each workstream you are proposing to deliver and the day rate attached to staff/grades on your project.

We would invite comprehensive but concise proposals. We are open to receiving submissions from a range of providers including independent consultants, collaborations between consultants and agencies. However, we will anticipate that you will have a robust plan for delivery and are able to progress the project at pace and in close collaboration with the ThinkForward Impact Team.

We are eager to ensure a robust process is undertaken which leads to a credible, evidence-based approach that will support our commitment to delivering and measuring impact that enables us to perform even better, learn even faster and influence more extensively in the coming years while working towards becoming more data-driven in our practice and decision-making. We are not looking to 'go through the motions' or to commission a report to tell us what we already know. Recommended solutions will also need to accommodate the context of the rest of our measurement systems and our developing digital strategy.

We are also open to being challenged in our brief and seeing proposals that put forward alternative approaches or present ideas that we have not yet considered in pursuit of our goals.

Supplier Recruitment Timeline

ITT Released	22 nd March 2021
ITT Response Deadline	12pm Friday 9 th April 2021
Initial Selection Conversations	Week beginning 19 th April 2021
Final Selection Interviews	Week beginning 26 th April 2021
Selection Outcome	Week beginning 3 rd May 2021
Project Initiation Meetings	From week beginning 10 th May 2021

We will be looking to progress at pace but depending on the number of suppliers we are engaging and the complexity of the contracting arrangements, the above timeline may be varied accordingly. We may offer final selection interviews the week beginning the 19th April subject to availability.

Contact

For further enquiries or an informal conversation about this piece of work, please reach out to Lee Robinson, Head of Impact on lee.robinson@thinkforward.org.uk.

Appendix 1: Detailed Workstream Breakdown

Workstream One: MoveForward Evaluation

Workstream Context

The MoveForward programme is currently halfway through a five-year programme underpinned by an innovative Social Investment funding model. The programme supports young people with mild to moderate learning disabilities to successfully prepare for work by achieving transition into supported internships and paid employment.

We support young people to undertake a range of one-to-one coaching, an employability qualification and a range of 'ready for work' activities as well engaging with parents and families. Coaches are often based within schools or local educational settings but also work with young people over a more flexible time-period than the ThinkForward programme, accommodating the less linear journey many young people with special educational needs may have to traverse in order to successfully transition into employment.

Phase One: Interim Evaluation

The first phase of the project will involve a process-based evaluation exercise, validating the existing evaluation framework and programme theory of change and sense checking the data collection mechanisms in place. It is likely that a literature review will need to be undertaken as part of this work to support the use of metrics against the theory of change and evaluation framework.

The other element of phase one is using the insights generated by the initial review of programme materials to validate measures, data collection protocols and research design to ensure the full programme evaluation will deliver a comprehensive process and impact evaluation. We are also open to the possibility of this work identifying additional research questions that ThinkForward could choose to tackle as part of our research and evaluation work and any additional data collection requirements that would need to be serviced in order to undertake such exercises.

Phase One Outputs

- A comprehensive interim process evaluation report
- A literature review of the evidence base setting the programmes mechanism against existing psychological, economic & education literature covering academic and practitioner research on financial, social & emotional outcomes.

Phase Two: Validating & Embedding the Evaluation Framework

Phase two will comprise interim evaluation work and supporting the implementation of any new processes designed as part of phase one work and periodic QA support, validating the data being collected against the overall evaluation framework and ensuring the project is on track to support our aspirations for final programme evaluation. This phase of work will need to happen in deep collaboration with the ThinkForward Impact Team.

We are also open to developing a more iterative approach to final programme evaluation such as setting up a series of learning periods and interim reports, introducing opportunities to make programme design iterations based on what we are learning about what works.

Phase Two outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase one and is likely to include;

- A document outlining any proposed changes, new measures, data collection approaches along with implementation plans developed in collaboration with the ThinkForward Impact team.

Phase Three: Comprehensive MoveForward Social Investment Programme Evaluation

The final phase of this workstream will be undertaking the comprehensive final programme evaluation covering both a process and impact evaluation. This will summarise the progress, outcomes and achievements of the MoveForward programme over the entire five year project period. An externally published report will be a key output of this phase. The Programme ends in Autumn 2023.

We are also interested in exploring the best mechanisms to embed learning into our practices so there is likely to be scope to participate in or facilitate learning sessions in collaboration with the ThinkForward Impact Team for the rest of the MoveForward delivery team.

Phase One is currently being commissioned. Phases 2 and 3 are likely to be awarded to the same supplier subject to successful delivery of phase one. However, ThinkForward reserves the right to commission the supplier we feel is best placed to deliver the project outcomes of each phase.

Phase Three outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase two and are likely to include;

- A final report formatted for external publication
- An executive summary that may include static, live and/or interactive elements
- Co-facilitation of internal learning sessions with the Impact Team
- An agreed set of recommendations with proposed implementation plans

Milestones/Budget

- Phase one will need to be completed by early August 2021.
- We anticipate that phase two will run between September 2021 and January 2022 with some tasks occurring periodically until around June 2023.
- We anticipate that phase three will be completed by September 2023.

The budget for phase one is up to £7,000. The overall budget for all three phases of this evaluation work is likely to be in the region of £20,000-£30,000 although this is subject to change pending the outputs of phase one.

Supplier Requirements

- We anticipate that suppliers will have specialist experience of evaluating programmes working with young people with mild to moderate learning disabilities, tailoring their approach to be sensitive to the needs of young people and proactively building in relevant mechanisms to engage young people and families where appropriate.
- We anticipate that suppliers will have specialist experience of evaluating programmes working in partnership with schools and in educational contexts.
- A dedication to supporting young people with additional learning needs realise their potential

Workstream Two: ThinkForward Evaluation

Workstream Context

The ThinkForward programme is ThinkForward's flagship programme, offering a unique, five-year coaching programme for young people who have been identified as being at the greatest risk of becoming NEET in the future and falling through the cracks of mainstream provision. We address the gap in rates of progress for these young people, ultimately increasing young people's ability to navigate adult life and the modern labour market.

Our coaches are based in schools throughout Kent, Nottingham and London, providing one-to-one coaching, group coaching, ready for work events and experiences (by building relationships with employers in local labour markets who support our work through business mentoring and a range of experiential events) as well as engaging with parents, families and allied professionals (such as teachers and social workers) to facilitate positive outcomes for young people.

Our current five-year strategy for ThinkForward involves validating the established programme design and contextualising this against the broader evidence landscape to ensure we are delivering the optimum impact and value in our services. As a long-term, in-depth programme, it is essential that we develop robust and rigorous evidence of the value of our approach and use evidence to inform future service development. As our programme spans both pre- and post-16 provision, we also need our evidence to speak to different kinds of partner agencies such as schools, colleges, training & apprenticeship providers and employers.

Having developed our internal resource to measure and manage our data and impact measurement over the last 2 years, we have made significant progress in developing a more data oriented culture and this workstream is focused on capitalising on this progress and formalising the plans and processes that will ensure we are a sector leader in using data and evidence to support the monitoring, measurement and improvement of our services as well as capturing the current effectiveness of programme delivery.

We have already moved towards a data driven performance management approach in supporting our coaches to deliver the 'programme promise' (i.e. a target level of service provision to programme participants) through a series of interactive dashboards and CRM/case management system as well as programme design, quality assurance and regional/national delivery management routines/systems.

Phase One – Interim Process Evaluation

This phase will be an initial process evaluation of the ThinkForward programme. This evaluation exercise will involve undertaking a critical operational review of the service delivery for the ThinkForward programme, paying particular attention to the current programme promise targets associated to different interventions and coach's caseload capacity. This may involve analysing an extensive range of output data relating to the programme delivery and may involve methods such as a time and motion study on delivery roles to model caseload capacity. We are open to discussion with potential suppliers on alternative methodological approaches but would anticipate that any method would involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The key role of the supplier in this phase of the work will be in providing a specialist external evaluation service, focusing on the operational management in delivering optimal value in programme delivery. It is also important to frame this phase within the broader context of our impact roadmap (i.e. that it is an interim step on a longer-term evaluation plan that will ultimately focus on the impact and value achieved by the programme).

Key questions to tackle as part of this evaluation will be shaped in discussion with the selected supplier but may include;

- How effectively does the ThinkForward programme deliver on its programme promise and how effectively can the programme promise be delivered within current coaching capacity?
- How does the delivery of the programme promise relate to the achievement of outcomes for young people? What would we model the impact of varying the programme promise to be on the outcomes we realise for young people? What other effects would this have for the organisation?
- How is our coaching capacity typically deployed and is this the optimum model to achieve outcomes for young people?
- What patterns can be identified from programme retention and drop-off data?
- How effectively does the programme adapt to young people's needs between the pre-16 and post-16 phases of the programme?
- What are the most promising areas to run further pilot programmes or experiments to further develop our services to meet the needs of young people? What are the key questions these exercises should tackle?

Phase One Outputs

- The priority output of this project will be a document communicating the key learning outcomes of this project and the recommendations for applying these learning which are agreed with the Head of Impact. These learnings and recommendations will be shared in the following ways;
 - A comprehensive written report detailing the full research project undertaken including methods employed, analysis & findings as well as conclusions and recommendations. The report should be published in a format which could lend itself to internal or external circulation.
 - An executive summary for broader distribution within the organisation, capturing the key learning and communicating the project in a concise, accessible format that contributes to the wider conversation in the organisation alongside other evaluation workstreams.
 - Presentations of findings to the ThinkForward Executive team and Board of Trustees
- Co-facilitation of an internal learning event in collaboration with the Impact Team, supporting the team to plan implementation of the agreed recommendations.

Phase Two – Programme Evaluation Framework

Phase two will turn its attention to the programmes impact, supporting the programme to review its theory of change and support service design modelling work, aligning our measurement systems with new digital systems and the programme delivery model, harnessing the insights yielded in phase one as they become available. Essentially, the task here is to clarify the impact journey we are measuring and the measures used for this. We anticipate that phase two will begin while phase one is still in progress.

ThinkForward has taken significant steps towards ensuring our services are able to be delivered safely and effectively through digital channels in response to the pandemic, continuing to deliver services remotely throughout 2020 and 2021. This phase of the project will also need to ensure evaluation plans are aligned with our digital strategy which is currently under development including adapting data collection methods and developing systems that work synergistically with our broader digital infrastructure.

An important element of identifying practical measurement approaches and tools will be that 1) they are congruent with our refreshed theory of change, 2) they are inclusive and accessible for

the young people and families we work with, and 3) they can be deployed across our face-to-face and digital services.

The focus of this phase will be for the supplier to act as an expert adviser, facilitator and consultant, helping to prepare the organisation for a full programme impact evaluation.

Phase Two outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase one and are likely to include;

- A refreshed/validated programme theory of change
- Updated customer journey map, identifying touch points and data collection against service delivery processes
- A document explicitly linking the theory of change with measurement approaches and data capture tools which are appropriate for our stakeholders

Phase Three – Implementing the Evaluation Framework

While phase two focuses on establishing what we should be measuring, phase three is how we are going to implement these measures, joining up the phase two measurement framework with the service design map/customer journey to map young people's journey through the programme and the points we capture various metrics from schools, young people, parents, employers and other relevant stakeholders. During this phase, we would also want to be validating our approach to data collection, storage protocols, analysis and reporting. This phase should result in us being able to define the questions that could be tackled in a full impact evaluation. We are also interested in embedding an evidence-based approach to programme iteration and continuous improvement.

Phase Three outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase two and are likely to include;

- An outline plan for full programme impact evaluation, identifying planned analytic/methodological approaches, making optimum use of the dataset we are collecting
- A training needs analysis to identify any measures needed to support delivery staff to embed data collection into their practice
- Potential co-facilitation of briefing sessions for staff, introducing new tools
- Potentially supporting to embed the tracking of metrics via dashboard and insight systems development

Milestones/Budget

- Phase one will be delivered by August 2021
- Phase two will run during from around June 2021 to September 2021
- Phase three will run from September 2021 to January 2022. It is likely that subsequent research and evaluation projects will emerge from this workstream beyond this.

The budget for this workstream is in the region of £7,000 for phase one. Budgets for subsequent phases will be agreed during phase one in collaboration with the successful supplier upon more detailed scoping of our impact roadmap.

Supplier Requirements

- We would ideally like to work with suppliers that have credible experience in both the following spaces as our work cuts across pre and post-16 provision, but appreciate we may or may not find this within a single supplier;
 - Experience working with young people, schools, parents and families in an education context

- Experience evaluating coaching interventions and/or work readiness/employability programmes, particularly working with young people and families
- A credible and experienced research team that can bring the rigour, zeal and curiosity that we are looking for
- An established interest in making a positive impact on the lives of young people, families and communities

Workstream Three: Review of the Work Readiness Capabilities

Workstream Context

A fundamental concept the ThinkForward intervention revolves around supporting young people to develop a set of seven Work Readiness Capabilities (with an adapted version of these for young people with special educational needs on the MoveForward programme). We also track progress through a series of practical milestones, forming our Ready for Work Passport.

As the economy and labour market changes, we feel it is an apt time to reflect on our current framework, review the external evidence landscape and consult our stakeholders to ensure we continue to learn what works in supporting young people who are at risk of falling through the cracks in mainstream provision to progress into training, education and employment beyond the programme.

The brief for this workstream is to support ThinkForward to answer these questions;

- What factors does evidence suggest are the most predictive of positive outcomes for young people given the starting place of our young people and families?
- Is this the same set of factors for young people with a mild to moderate learning difficulty or do we need to account for additional factors of our model? If so, what additional factors?
- What are the best ways to measure this in a manner that is inclusive, accessible and valid?
- How might we incorporate any changes to our understanding of the most important factors into our coaching practice?
- What dataset will enable us to robustly understand and articulate the impact we deliver and help us to improve the outcomes we support young people to achieve?
- What future research opportunities become open to us in light of the above work?

It is important that the answers we arrive at are also inclusive and accessible to young people, including those with mild to moderate learning difficulties and measures are arrived at which could be deployed across in-person and digital channels. While we have already worked through a number of these questions, we would value a critical friend to interrogate our working conclusions to date. It is also important to note that because our programmes span work across pre- and post-16, our focus also evolves from school-age groups (where we work in partnership with schools) and post-16 (where there is a much greater focus on progression).

In order to address the questions outlined above, we anticipate that the supplier will make use of a range of approaches but this will probably include;

- A literature review considering both academic and practitioner literature
- A critical evaluation of existing models/theories resulting in a synthesis that takes account of ThinkForward's operating context and aspirations
- The measurement options available for the domains of the models identified

- A consideration of any costs and licensing arrangements that would be required to implement a given approach
- A consideration of how the needs and experiences of young people both with and without mild to moderate learning difficulties are accounted for in the options we pursue
- Consultation with staff and other stakeholders including parents, employers, schools and young people
- Review of new options identified compared to ThinkForward's current practice to understand the degree of change required to implement a given option across measurement and service delivery

This workstream will unfold alongside other workstreams looking at the broader outcomes framework for our programmes and will need to join up with this work to support ThinkForward to be in a position where we have a refreshed outcomes framework and a set of associated measurement tools that will set the scene for even more robust research and evaluation opportunities in the future. Ultimately, this will help to position ThinkForward as a thought-leader in the space of inclusive youth employability.

In planning future insight work, we would want to be applying more sophisticated techniques to understand our data such as predictive modelling, factor analysis (or other multi-variate analysis), machine learning/AI or natural language processing/qualitative analytics.

Phase One

Phase one will focus on a critical appraisal of our current process and undertaking the initial literature review of existing evidence. This should enable the supplier to help us to reimagine the Work Readiness Capabilities and explicitly link this to our Ready for Work Passport (a series of experiences young people have attained that prepare them for progression) as well as our developing digital skills research.

This work should also align with our evaluation and benchmarking workstreams to ensure we are designing a comprehensive measurement set that ideally can be compared against external datasets although we recognise this may not be possible in all instances.

Phase One Outputs

- A critical evaluation of existing models reviewing the evidence base for these models as well as their appropriateness for ThinkForward across both our programmes, relating these theoretical models to a practical measurement approach
- A secondary review of ThinkForward's current dataset and what it can tell us about the most important factors to include in a future model
- A profiling of the approaches other youth employment charities are taking

Phase Two

Phase two will focus on selecting an option resulting from phase one and developing a plan to embed the preferred approach in our measurement and service delivery. In other words, given the factors we have identified as important for realising positive outcomes, what does this mean for;

- The measures we use/the data we collect and how to capture this data
- The way we analyse this data to translate it into useful insight and learning that informs our work in real time (i.e. how we deliver business intelligence to internal stakeholders in a way that improves practice and delivers outcomes)
- The practical interventions and approaches we emphasise on the programme (i.e. programme design)

- The operational targets we set for front-line staff and the metrics we use to assess and maintain high performance (i.e. how we define what good looks like)

Including the voice of young people and other stakeholders will be a key element of this phase, ensuring we engage our stakeholders in how we understand their experiences and that our refreshed model can be communicated effectively. We also anticipate that any practical measures, tools and approaches are inclusive and accessible for young people both with and without mild to moderate learning difficulties.

Phase Two outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase two and are likely to include;

- An options paper to summarise the implications of preferred model/s on our approach to measurement, data collection, analysis and serving useful insight to internal stakeholders
- A document detailing the implications of refreshing our model on both programme design and performance management (i.e. in light of the refreshed model, how will we iterate on our programme design and the performance metrics we manage against to optimise for impact)

Phase Three

Phase three will involve acting as a critical friend and supportive partner to pilot and test the new approaches we have identified, ensuring we continue to engage young people and other stakeholders in this process. Depending on the needs identified as part of phase two this may also involve supporting us to roll-out new tools and train staff in their administration. Outputs will be identified for phase three at the end of phase two.

Phase Three outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase two.

Milestones/Budgets

We are looking to be in a position to have completed the research and options analysis work by August 2021 so we are able to commence piloting new tools and measurement approaches for the preferred options at the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year (i.e. September 2021). We would prefer to accelerate this timeline and begin pilots and testing for new measures before this point if we are identifying clear measures/options to pilot during the course of phase one. Ideally, we would commence phase three (roll out) in September 2021.

We are anticipating making a commission in the region of £5,000 for this work in the first instance. Budgets for subsequent phases will be agreed during phase one in collaboration with the successful supplier upon more detailed scoping of our impact roadmap.

Supplier Requirements

- Demonstrable experience of delivering on comparable client projects, evaluating youth, education and employability programmes
- Experience of research synthesis and literature reviews, with an ability to draw on both academic and practitioner literature
- An understanding of the evidence landscape around work readiness and enterprise/employment education/coaching programmes
- A passion and enthusiasm for re-inventing how we understand what skills, competencies and experiences young people need to prepare them for successful transition to work based on the evidence

Workstream Four: Identifying External Benchmarks

Workstream Context

While we are working to improve our primary data collection to evidence our impact and improve our services, we also aim to be able to reference the data we are collecting against external datasets to benchmark the achievements of the programme in areas that resonate with our theory of change. Ideally, we would like to be able to do this against both national and regional datasets.

Phase One: Identifying Benchmarking Datasets

This phase is focused on establishing clear references against external benchmarks and public data sources to ensure future programme evaluation results can be contextualised against the broader youth, education and employment sectors. This will be a factor shaping the choice of measurement approaches we adopt against the refreshed programme theory of change and feeding into other workstreams.

The first stage will be mapping the public datasets of relevance and evaluating their utility for ThinkForward's purposes, as well as desk research profiling the benchmarking practices of other youth enterprise and employment agencies.

A secondary element to this phase will be auditing/reviewing our current dataset for completion and accuracy around participant demographics and other metrics that may be used for benchmarking.

The key role of the supplier in this workstream is to act as an external expert on public data-sources which could be utilised by ThinkForward in demonstrating the value of our work. This workstream builds on existing work undertaken internally with the support of Impetus.

Phase One Outputs

- A paper identifying the range of external datasets that are relevant for ThinkForward that could be of use for benchmarking purposes and profiling other organisations benchmarking approaches
- A paper detailing the audit work undertaken, the data we currently collect and the datasets that may require additional primary data collection

Phase Two: Implementing a Benchmarking Routine

Having identified potential data sources for benchmarking, any new metrics we may need to implement and any costs associated to doing so, we would be looking to select some options for piloting/testing and begin to capture benchmarking data, building this data into our automations and analytics.

We currently envisage the steps to this being;

- Mapping out the processes to undertake benchmarking using a given dataset, identifying where these processes could be automated and where this requires manual data processing, the frequency of data refreshes and the analysis model (i.e. what figure are we using the benchmarking and ThinkForward data to calculate and what can we conclude from the outputs of the analysis).
- Identifying new processes and skills that need to be implemented in order to support this workstream and embed it into our practice (particularly for data-sources that are refreshed at regular intervals vs one-off benchmarking activities)
- Supporting us to work through any options that require more complex licensing arrangements of third party data processing to work with a given dataset (for privately maintained or selective access government datasets)

- Supporting the development of approaches to communicating the output of benchmarking exercises to both internal and external stakeholders
- Support the change management plans to implement the agreed processes and skills development needed to embed this approach successfully

Phase Two outputs will be reviewed following completion of phase two and are likely to include;

- Document outlining the options selected for piloting and the draft implementation plans
- Further outputs to agreed at the end of phase one based on the options identified at this stage

Milestones/Budget

We are anticipating that phase one will be completed by around August 2021 and we will collaborate with the successful supplier on mapping out a timeline for phase two during this time. The budget for phase one is up to £3,000. Budgets for subsequent phases will be agreed during phase one in collaboration with the successful supplier upon more detailed scoping of our impact roadmap.

Supplier Requirements

- A working knowledge of open or public datasets in the UK youth and education space and practical experience of how to use them for benchmarking & analytics purposes
- Experience in supporting clients to access a range of data sources, particularly large public datasets
- Experience working with large datasets and integrating it with other business intelligence systems
- Experience of both delivering research projects as an external consultant and building clients capacity to embed systems and new ways of working
- A passion for working with data and making use of cutting edge approaches to make a difference for young people, families and communities

Workstream Five: Preliminary Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study for the MoveForward Programme

Workstream Context

As part of MoveForward's innovative social investment service model, we are interested in exploring a financial/economic appraisal of the value created by the programme using a social return on investment approach. This workstream will support the MoveForward programme to become even clearer on the mechanisms through which the programme creates social impact and economic value and even better able to measure, articulate and evidence this.

While we recognise that SROI within the 7 principles involves a longer timeframe and extensive consultation with stakeholders, we are looking to make headway using an iterative approach and starting with appraisal of the data and evidence we already have at our disposal to formulate an assessment based on current best-knowledge, using this to then inform further planning, stakeholder consultation and data collection culminating in a more extensive SORI analysis in phase three of the workstream.

Phase One

A preliminary study picking up the programme evaluation data to date and forecasting the full value created over the entire five year funded programme.

This phase will involve picking up some initial work which has already been undertaken, working up a draft of a full model with associated cost/ financial proxy modelling recognising gaps in our current measurement approach and identifying areas for further development and iteration.

We are looking for this initial exploration to be undertaken at significant pace and would be looking to conclude this exercise by the end of May 2021. Given the pace at which we would like this work to progress, we recognise this will leave limited scope for stakeholder engagement at this stage but we are keen to work this in to the extent that is possible.

Phase One Outputs

- Initial SROI study reviewing the programme to date and improving an existing model to forecast the impact over the remaining programmes duration
- A gap analysis against current datasets and emerging plans from other workstreams in order to support the later phases of this workstream
- Proposed outline plan for phases two and three of this workstream

Phase Two

The second phase of this process will be picking up the results of phase one and pulling out how the learning so far can be applied and more importantly, how this frames the lines of enquiry we are to pursue in further iterations of the preliminary study. There is also scope to validate any assumptions we have had to make as part of phase one through further stakeholder consultation and desk-based research. There will also be a need to develop plans to address any gaps in our data and understanding emerging from phase one such that these can be addressed in the phase three study.

Depending upon the results of these plans we may look for training & support to build the teams capacity to embed new approaches and/or look for some of these solutions to be implemented directly by a supplier. This may also include engaging in collaboration with suppliers working on other relevant workstreams to ensure our overall approach is connected to the programme theory of change. The approach we arrive at should be robust enough to adapt to the MoveForward programme as it develops over the course of its current funded period and beyond.

The final part of this phase will be to support us to form a plan for incorporating iteration processes from here on in and establishing project plans for the next phase, applying the

learning so far to working up the approach so we set the stage for a full evaluation of the MoveForward programme at the end of the current five-year social investment bond (SIB).

Phase two and three outputs to be determined as phase one develops.

Phase Three

The third phase of this workstream will be to undertake the full final evaluative SROI study for the MoveForward programme over the lifetime of the SIB programme, picking up on the work undertaken and additional data generated to date. The final model arrived at should be robust enough to adapt with the MoveForward programme and take account of the learnings emerging from other workstreams (e.g. workstream one).

We may also wish to engage the supplier in helping to share the learnings emerging internally and externally but would scope this as the workstream develops. There may be additional phases of work planned based on the findings at this stage.

Phase two and three outputs to be determined as phase one develops.

Milestones/Budgets

We are looking to complete phase one at considerable pace and come to an initial model by the end of May 2021. Beyond this, we anticipate that phase two will pick up the process from this point with the full phase three exercise being completed by August 2022.

Supplier Requirements

- Demonstrable experience in understanding the needs and experiences of young people with learning difficulties and their families as they apply to projects of this nature
- Demonstrable experience of economic approaches to evaluation and supporting organisations to apply the social return on investment methodology
- Demonstrable experience of identifying credible approaches to assigning financial proxies to complex and hard to measure outcomes
- Experience of working with clients as both an external supplier delivering an evaluation project and supporting clients to build their capacity to embed such approaches
- Experience of working with clients in the youth, enterprise, education and employment space
- You are a team that gets excited about sharing the story the numbers tell you and can translate complex financial and economic ideas to a non-technical audience