

Girls' Learning Trust

External Audit: Invitation to Tender

Context

On behalf of the Trust Board of the Girls' Learning Trust, we are writing to offer you an opportunity to tender for our external audit work. We currently operate three large secondary schools located in the London Borough of Sutton, with potential to expand further in the future:

- Carshalton High School for Girls
- Nonsuch High School for Girls
- Wallington High School for Girls

Our business, in common with other state funded multi academy trusts is both a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. We have a turnover in excess of £27 million, approximately 500 staff and around 4,500 students. We have a shared finance team that works across all schools in the Trust. We are supported by a dedicated team of members, trustees and governors.

Our current auditors were appointed in the summer of 2018 and in line with best practice, we are now undertaking a competitive tender process to ensure we have best value for the organisation.

More information on our governance can be found here: www.girlslearningtrust.org/our-governance

Our latest accounts and other key documents can be found here: www.girlslearningtrust.org/our-governance/key-reports

Services We Require

The services we require are as follow:

- Annual Audit and Accounts/ Accounts Return
 - External annual audit of accounts
 - Regularity audit for accounts purposes
 - Preparation of the Annual Report & Accounts
 - Assistance with completion of the ESFA Accounts Return
- Completion and support with the preparation of our Budget Forecast Return (BFR and BFR3Y)
- Preparation of legacy companies accounts (former Wallington High School for Girls and Nonsuch Business Enterprise) and winding up in due course
- Audit of our Teachers' Pension return
- Corporation tax compliance
- Tax/VAT related support when required

Evaluation Criteria

All tenders will be evaluated using the following five criteria with the weighting for each specified:

1. Ability to provide the full range of services (20%)

Please describe how your firm would provide the services as requested, including appropriate separation of duties, together with any added services and/or benefits offered by your firm.

2. Track Record (20%)

Please state the number of academies / MATs that you currently act for, and the combined annual turnover of the relevant companies. In addition, please provide details of three reference MATs with a short case study. In each case, please supply contact details for the Accounting Officer (usually the CEO / Executive Principal).

3. People and Leadership (15%)

Please provide details of the leadership team managing services to educational institutions within your firm. In addition, we will require individual short biographies for the team that would be managing and directly involved in delivering services to us. We will require an assurance that these staff are available to work on our account, and not fully utilised elsewhere. Please also provide details of any separation of duties arrangements.

4. Relationship and Experience with the ESFA (15%)

Please confirm that you have experience in undertaking audit work in compliance with the ESFA's Financial Handbook.

In addition, please provide assurances that your firm has a strong working relationship with the ESFA, and, if appropriate, disclose any disputes / differences of audit opinion that are currently in open discussion.

5. Fee Proposal (30%)

Please itemise proposed costs for each of the services. The proposed contract would take effect from the financial year 1 September 2023 - August 2024. The contract is offered for an initial three years, with potential to agree further extensions on a rolling basis thereafter. Please provide a fixed fee proposal for the first three years.

Lastly, your proposal should also include details of your insurance and professional indemnity arrangements, data protection policy and safeguarding / child protection arrangements.

Application Information

Application Deadline

The deadline for a written proposal is 3pm on Friday 10 March 2023. Please provide this in a consolidated electronic format. Please send these to: nowen@girlslearningtrust.org.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting will take place on Thursday 16 March. Firms successful at this stage will be invited to interview.

Interviews

Interviews will take place on the afternoon of Tuesday 28 March via Microsoft Teams. This will involve a 10-minute presentation and a series of structured questions from the panel. We will try to accommodate timing preferences, but we won't be able to offer an alternative date.

The interview panel will comprise:

- Nigel Pepper (Chair Trust Finance Committee)
- Robert Etchell (Chair Trust Audit and Risk Committee)
- Jennifer Smith (CEO and Accounting Officer)
- Angela Attah (Member)
- Thomas Flynn (Chief Operating Officer)

Appointment Process

As per the ESFA regulations, the Members of the Trust will convene after the interviews to formally appoint the auditors recommended by the interview panel.

Further Contact Details

If you are interested in this opportunity, we would be grateful if you could indicate your interest by registering your details at an early stage with:

Nicky Owen
Trust Administrator
nowen@girlslearningtrust.org

Please raise any queries you have with regards to the scope of services or any technical matters to:

Hamish Lungany
Director of Finance
hlungany@girlslearningtrust.org

Jennifer Smith

Chief Executive & Accounting Officer
February 2022