

Medical Schools Council

and

Dental Schools Council

Invitation to tender – 2425-001

Market Research for Effective Communications

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Prepared by: Clare Owen, Director

Invitation to tender

This specification invites tenders for market research into effective communications for the Medical Schools Council and Dental Schools Council.

We want to ensure our communications to teachers/advisers and young people have the maximum impact by using the right tools, language, and are communicated at the most appropriate time.

We want our communications to:

- Raise awareness and aspirations to medicine and dentistry for those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Support students (and their teachers/advisers) to navigate their application to medicine and dentistry.

For both target audiences we would like to:

- Find out which resources they are currently accessing to get information about medical and dental careers
- Understand what information they feel are missing from the current offering
- Understand their preferred methods to receive communications (e.g. email, website, type of social media, print) and whether an app would be appropriate
- Understand what tone/language of communications has the biggest impact
- Understand the best times of day/week and time of year to communicate

This market research is focused on:

- Teachers and advisers who are supporting young people in their studies and onward progress
- Young people in Years 7-13, with a particular emphasis on Years 11-13
- Parents of students in Years 7-13 (with particular emphasis on Years 11-13)

Research Purpose

This research will inform our communications strategy for connecting with students, their teachers and careers advisers. We want to ensure that we are the place where teachers and careers advisers go for advice and resources on applying to medical or dental school. We are keen to ensure that there is no advantage to students accessing other paid-for programmes (which are often costly and prohibitive to students from a disadvantaged background).

Currently, we have a network of just under 700 teachers and advisers signed up to our mailing list to receive email communications and support for their students who are interested in medicine and dentistry. We are looking to grow this significantly and gain wider geographical coverage.

We currently have limited social media presence, and so are aware that our student-facing communications are lacking. Increasing our social media presence is crucial to our ongoing communications. We are aware that social media platforms are often age-limited and we would like to understand the impact of this and any implications of engaging with this age group. Also important is promotion of the Studying Healthcare website, where the majority of our resources are located, so that the target audiences are aware that it exists, and that they access it. We also want to make sure that we are promoting relevant information and resources at the right times according to the yearly application cycle.

Market Research Target Group

Our target audiences are:

- Year 7-Year 13 school students
- Teachers, careers advisers and parents of Year 7-Year 13 students

Particular emphasis should be placed on Years 11-13.

Research Methods

We expect the tenderer to advise on the best way to conduct the research.

We have a particular focus on improving access to medicine and dentistry for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, ideally, we would like the sample audiences to include those from schools with poor attainment and/or located in deprived areas that see few applicants to medicine/dentistry. It is important to us that a range of student demographics are included in the participant sample.

We are already conducting a widespread survey of Year 12 and 13s (piloting in Scotland) which will generate quantitative responses. The results from the pilot can be shared with the market research company.

Deliverables

We are looking for a comprehensive report which addresses the research objectives and provides us with practical recommendations which we can implement into our communications strategy for students, teachers, advisers and parents going forward.

We would like you to present (online) your findings to the Medical and Dental Schools Council teams.

The research will be owned by the Medical and Dental Schools Councils to use as we see fit. We would expect to be provided with data files of any research conducted e.g. survey responses and transcripts, etc. We will reference the successful organisation appropriately.

We are open to alternative approaches, as long as our objectives are met.

Monitoring

We would expect at least monthly meetings with the successful tenderer. The project will be monitored by Chris Pearce (Communications Adviser) and Courtney Krstic (Senior Policy Officer).

Budget

The budget to conduct this market research is £15,000-£20,000.

Funding will be delivered on completion. We will be happy to accept a phased budget with payment on achievement of milestones. If this is to be the case, include the milestones and payments in the tender.

Timescales

We would like to conduct this market research as soon as possible, ideally with completion by January 2025.

We are open to a discussion about timescales and would encourage the tenderer to contact us prior to submission if suggesting alternative completion dates.

About us

The Medical Schools Council is the representative body for UK medical schools. Our sister body is the Dental Schools Council, which is the representative body for UK dental schools.

The Councils are made up of the heads of UK medical and dental schools and meet in order to shape the future of medical and dental education in the UK.

As well as the heads of medical and dental schools, other groups meet under the auspices of the Councils to provide expert opinion on areas of education and research.

A key aspect of both the Councils' work is outreach and access. We wish to increase opportunities for people from a diverse range of backgrounds into medicine and dentistry. We wish to:

- Expand the talent pool available to the NHS
- Ensure that the health service is diverse, highly capable and understanding of the needs of the entire patient population
- Enable social mobility through education

To support these aims we run a programme, supported by NHS England, which provides:

- Residential and online summer schools to students in Year 11 and 12 who are from an under-represented background
- Information to teachers, advisers and their students on studying medicine and dentistry, and how to navigate the application process (this includes webinars)

To support this work, we oversee a website called Studying Healthcare (studyinghealthcare.ac.uk) on which there are free resources and information for school students and their teachers/careers advisers on the application process for studying medicine or dentistry.

Tender requirements

1. The tender proposal

Candidates should deliver a concise tender, focusing on the proposed work and budget. The tender should include information on the following:

- details of organisation including name, legal status, full contact details and lead contact
- details or CVs of staff who will undertake the work and a clear break down of how much time each person will contribute to the project
- details of other pieces of work that your organisation has delivered which are similar in focus, scope and tone to the project
- reasons why you are interested in applying for the project
- professional experience and expertise relevant to the project including experience and expertise of market research for young people and/or teachers/advisers
- any other details about yourself or your organisation you feel may be relevant
- proposed methodology to deliver the research including:
 - a clear timetable for the work, including key milestones and clear timescales for completing the project
 - a schedule of all costs including a detailed breakdown of how costs will be allocated in terms of staff hours, travel, VAT etc, including any preferred variation to the payment terms set out in section 2 below
 - how you propose to conduct the market research, ensuring that the right audience is targeted
 - details of how you will obtain a sufficiently robust sample from a representative range of teachers/advisers and students
 - details of how you will work closely with the Medical and Dental Schools Council as the research is conducted
 - a risk assessment of your proposed approach and how you will mitigate any key risks

- assurance you have any necessary insurance and clearance in place e.g. DBS, liability insurance, indemnity
- conflicts of interest (as requested in section 7 below)
- a signed certificate of non-collusion and declaration, set out in the form given in Appendix A to this ITT
- details of the sustainability credentials of your organisation and how you will minimise impact on the environment

If the tender is submitted on behalf of a consortium, please:

- list the members of the consortium
- identify the lead member and a point of contact

If the tender contains a sub-contracting relationship please state:

- the main contractor and sub-contractors
- the nature of this relationship

2. Fees

The total amount available for this work, including all fees and expenses is between £15,000-£20,000 including VAT. This includes all expenses related to the project.

We will agree a fixed price for the work.

We are not bound to accept the lowest priced tender and shall not be bound to accept the contractor as a sole supplier.

3. Selection criteria

In awarding the contract, we will consider the balance between the quality of the candidate's tender and value for money, taking account of the factors listed in this ITT and, in particular, the proposed methodology.

Each candidate's tender shall be assessed on the following:

- Relevant experience and research credibility of the team, including publications and track record in managing similar and credible market research projects

- Understanding of young people and the education sector
- Understanding of potential challenges in the market research and identification of practical solutions
- Appropriateness of the proposed methodology in terms of securing credible and robust market research
- Feasibility of completing a practical programme of work to a high quality within the specified timetable
- Understanding of need to work closely with the Medical and Dental Schools Council to achieve strategic aims for the project
- Risk mitigation
- Overall value for money

4. References

The name and contact details of two referees for whom the candidate has recently worked (within the past five years only) should be provided in the submission so that references can be acquired.

5. Timing

The project should be undertaken between 4 November 2024 and 31 January 2025. The candidate should note the following key dates:

- Deadline for receipt of emailed tenders: 21 October 2024 at 16:00 (UK time)
- Interviews with tenderers 26 or 27 October 2024
- Award of tender to successful candidate by: 4 November 2024
- Delivery of work by: 31 January 2025

The dates set out in this paragraph are provisional only and may be altered by the Medical and Dental Schools at our discretion.

6. Reporting responsibilities

Monthly meetings on progress will be with Chris Pearce (Communications Adviser).

The successful candidate will report to Clare Owen (Director), Medical and Dental Schools Council.

7. Conflict of interest

Details of the candidate's policy on handling conflicts of interest which may exist or arise regarding this engagement must be provided. In the event that a director, partner, employee or employee's representative of the candidate has an interest or connection in the Medical or Dental Schools Council please provide that person's full name, position and the nature of the connection/interest.

8. Tender submission

Please return one email copy of your response in English to Ceri Nursaw (c.nursaw@gmail.com) which should arrive no later than 16:00 (UK time) on the 21 October 2024.

We have the right to disqualify any candidates who submit incomplete or late tenders.

9. Contracting

This tender is being issued by the Medical and Dental Schools Councils. Any contracts with the successful provider will be made with the Medical Schools Council. The form of contract that the successful candidate will be expected to enter into with the Medical Schools Council is enclosed with this ITT at Appendix B.

10. Further information

For further details, please contact Chris Pearce (chrispearcefood@gmail.com) who is candidates' point of contact for any queries that you have relating to this ITT.

Any queries should clearly reference the appropriate paragraph in the documentation and, to the extent possible, should be aggregated rather than sent individually. The deadline for submitting queries is 15 October 2024 and should be sent to Ceri Nursaw (c.nursaw@gmail.com).

We will respond to all reasonable requests for clarification of any aspect of this ITT and supporting documents as soon as it is reasonably possible.

Please note that no pre-tender negotiations are permitted.

Confidentiality statement and disclaimer

The information contained in this ITT and all other information made available at any time to the candidates by and on behalf of the Medical and Dental Schools Councils in connection with the project is supplied on the basis that the candidates will keep such information confidential at all times and that such information will be used only for the purposes of participating in the bidding process.

No information contained in this ITT or any other written, oral or other information made available to the candidate shall form the basis of any warranty, representation or term of any contract by the Medical and Dental Schools Councils with any third party.

We do not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy or completeness of the ITT or any other oral or written information provided by us to any candidate.

We reserve the right not to follow this ITT in any way and/or to withdraw from or amend the procurement process.

Medical and Dental Schools Councils rights to cancel

The Medical and Dental Schools Councils reserve the right, without prior notice and in its absolute discretion, to change or terminate the tendering procedure for the project at any time before signing the contract with the successful candidate.

Appendix A - Certificate of Non-Collusion and Declaration

I certify that:

1. The prices in the Tender have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, agreement or understanding for the purpose of restricting competition, as to any matter relating to such prices, with any other Candidate or with any competitor.
2. Unless otherwise required by law, the prices which have been quoted in the Tender have not knowingly been disclosed by the Candidate, directly or indirectly, to any other Candidate or competitor, nor will they be so disclosed.
3. No attempt has been made or will be made by the Candidate to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a Tender for the purpose of restricting competition.
4. No attempt has been made directly or indirectly to canvas any employee or adviser of the Medical and/or Dental Schools Council concerning the award of the contract which is the subject of this invitation to tender.

I acknowledge that any price fixing or collusion with other Candidates in relation to the Project shall give the Medical and Dental Schools Councils the right to exclude a Candidate from the procurement process and may constitute an offence.

I am authorised by the Candidate (and all relevant associated companies and organisations) to supply the information given in the Tender.

I declare that, at the date of signing this declaration, the information given is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge having made reasonable enquiries.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

On behalf of: