

## Request for Tender

### External Consultancy Services

**Description:** In order to deliver on the objectives set out in the *Higher Education Pathways for Non-Traditional Learners Project* An Cosán wishes to appoint a consultant.

The consultant will be required to conduct desk-based research and to organise a stakeholder consultation with relevant employers in order to identify the organisational and programme-level structures and supports needed to enhance the relationship between An Cosán’s adult learners and the labour market.

The consultant’s analysis will assist with the development of a new Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development (NFQ Level 6) for An Cosán and draw on examples of good practice from similar programmes in Ireland and the EU.

Work to commence in October 2022 for c. 6 weeks, until the body of work is complete, and the report has been signed-off.

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## Administrative details

Duration of the desk-based study consultancy engagement: 6 weeks.

**External Consultancy Services tender** must be returned:

**Email to:** Dr. Thomas Murray  
[t.murray@ancosan.ie](mailto:t.murray@ancosan.ie)

not later than **2pm, Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> October**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Tenderers must have a valid Tax Clearance Access Number to be awarded a contract if a successful tender is submitted and evaluation process concluded. The Contractor must remain in possession of a valid TCAN for the duration of the contract.

## Project Description

### Context

An Cosán and South East Technological University are committed to the creation of a new Higher Education Pathway for Non-Traditional Learners. This work is funded by the Higher Education Authority.

A 'Certificate in Personal and Professional Development' (NFQ Level 6, 60 ECTS) has been developed as part of this project. The first delivery of the Certificate to c. 24 part-time adult learners concluded in October 2021. The second round of delivery to a new cohort of c. 24 part-time adult learners will conclude in October 2022. Certificate participants may be described as non-traditional or marginalised learners, 'those left furthest behind'. Our current learner group comprises primarily of lone parents, asylum-seekers, and people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and exclusion.

The **Higher Education Pathway for Non-Traditional Learners Project** will further research and document learning from our current programme delivery as well as consider alternatives from international best practice. This information will inform future Higher Education delivery at An Cosán. For example, it is envisaged that An Cosán will submit a Programme Proposal for the accreditation of a new Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development (NFQ Level 6, 120 ECTS).

An Cosán's Higher Education researchers, supported by an international Project Advisory Group, have made significant progress in reviewing programme delivery to date. The review highlights many examples of good practice in the community-based provision of Higher Education programmes and the widening of participation in HE within disadvantaged communities. It further highlights learners' expressed needs for career guidance and support, particularly with regard to future employment in community development and in care services.

However, it is also clear from the review that a more detailed analysis is required to support the development and sustainability of the new Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development and to enhance the relationship between awardees and the labour market with specific regard to An Cosán learners' expressed needs and career plans. The required analysis will include:

- *Identifying the organisational and programme-level structures and supports needed to enhance the relationship between An Cosán's adult learners and the labour market.*
- *Comparison with similar, community-based Higher Education programmes available in Ireland and in the EU.*
- *External environment analysis, including available policy tools and funding supports for similar Personal and Professional Development programmes.*
- *Results of a consultation with relevant employers concerning programme design.*
- *Collating evidence of employment opportunities for awardees.*
- *Development of an employability and work preparedness statement.*

## Scope

Conduct a desk-based analysis and stakeholder consultation to identify the organisational and programme-level structures and supports that An Cosán requires to enhance the relationship between ‘non-traditional’ or marginalised adult learners and the labour market.

Submit a final report that will collate these findings and further assist with the development and sustainability of a new Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development.

The appointed consultant will work with the Project Lead for a 6-week period.

Relevant areas of research include:

- Organisational and programme-level structures and supports needed to enhance non-traditional or marginalised adult learner relationships with the labour market;
- ‘Linked Provision’ relationships between adult community education organisations and Higher Education Institutions in comparative (Irish and EU) perspective. (This should focus on examples of good practice in collaborative higher education provision within disadvantaged communities).
- Policy tools and funding to support lifelong learning provision among part-time adult learners;
- Organisational responsiveness to the future world of work and lifelong learning.
- Career development needs of non-traditional adult learners in Higher Education.

The scope of this work does not include a primary focus on:

- Pedagogy or module design;
- Engagement with current learners or alumni;
- Unaccredited or Further Education (NFQ Levels 1-6);
- Widening Participation in Higher Education.

The consultant will carry out the following tasks:

1. Conduct a review of the current relationship between An Cosán learners and the labour market, their expressed needs and career plans, as well as the organisational and programme-level structures and supports currently in place.
2. Compare Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development with similar, community-based programmes available in Ireland and the EU under the following headings:
  - a. Success in meeting Equality of Access to Higher Education criteria
  - b. Progression, Retention, and Performance rates
  - c. Evaluation of programme facilitators / inhibitors
  - d. Sustainability of programme
3. Advise on Irish and EU models of good practice in employability and work preparedness structures and supports – with focus on similar Linked Provision models whereby Higher Education programmes are delivered in adult community education settings.

4. Identify policy tools and funding supports available to An Cosán for sustaining the Higher Certificate in Personal and Professional Development into the future.
5. Collate evidence of employment opportunities for awardees and develop an employability/work preparedness statement for the programme.
6. Coordinate and conduct a consultation with relevant employers to assist with programme design (career guidance and work-based learning components) aimed at enhancing relationship between An Cosán awardees and labour market.
7. Conduct an agreed cycle of meetings with the Project Lead and, when appropriate, any other relevant personnel engaged in the Higher Education Pathway for Non-Traditional Learners Project.
8. Prepare a draft report for review on completion of the 6-week period with a view to final completion and incorporation of any revisions within 10 working days

## Consultancy to be undertaken

Task No:*	Task Description	Duration (Weeks)
1, 7	Review current relationship between An Cosán learners and the labour market – building on work already done by the working group.	1
2, 3, 4, 5	Based on a bench marking exercise against relevant programmes in Ireland and EU, identify a best practice model for structures and processes required to enhance An Cosán learners’ relationship to the labour market.	3
6, 7	Coordinate and conduct a consultation with relevant employers to assist with programme design and enhancing relationship between An Cosán awardees and labour market.	1
8	Prepare a draft report for review at the completion of the 6-week period with a view to final completion and incorporation of any revisions within 10 working days	1
<b>Total project Duration (Weeks)</b>		<b>6 weeks</b>
<i>* Tasks to run concurrently</i>		

## Schedule

It is anticipated that the consultant will commence work in October 2022 with a view to completion of a draft report within 6 weeks of commencement date.

## Delivery

A draft report to be submitted no later than 6 weeks after commencement. A review period of no more than 5 working days will follow to allow for input from relevant stakeholders. Subsequent revision and final version to be submitted no later than 5 working days thereafter.

The Consultant will be required to coordinate and facilitate a consultation with relevant employers in late November to early December. This engagement is deemed to be part of this body of work and associated agreed fee.

## Consultancy costs

The consultant costs should state a daily rate (state whether this includes/excludes VAT\*\*), and the number of days required and include any expenses (The daily rate **must** include expenses).

The costs are estimated to be between €8, 000 - €10, 000

## Selection criteria

The table below shows the selection criteria which will be used in deciding upon a consultant with whom to engage during the process and the weight given to each criterion.

Scoring in each category will be scored on a range from 1-4 and will be weighted according to importance.

1 – Poor/ not demonstrated

2 – Fair

3 – Good

4 – Excellent

Criterion	Weight
Relevant experience	40%
Methodology / approach	20%
Value for Money and Costings	20%
Other – including quality of submission and availability	20%

*Relevant sectoral experience:* Consultant should display relevant experience of educational projects seeking to enhance the relationship between non-traditional adult learners and the labour market – ideally including experience of similar Linked Provision models whereby Higher Education programmes are delivered in adult community education settings.

*Methodology / approach:* Consultant should possess a sound understanding of the issues surrounding the particular project and be capable of tailoring the sequence of activities to ensure that the desired outcome is achieved.

*Value for Money and Costings:* Scope of services included in the fee proposal and the appropriateness of the quoted amount.