

# FAQs: Invitations to tender

## July 2023

### General

**What are the eligibility criteria for HE providers (HEPs) to bid on these projects?**

*The lead applicant must be a registered English higher education provider in the approved (fee cap) category.*

**Can a single institution bid on more than one project?**

*Yes, and the bids will be considered independently of each other.*

**Would a proportion of institutional overheads (e.g., estates and indirect costs) be expected within the budget?**

*A maximum overhead rate of 25% on staff costs will be considered. Please note that value for money forms part of the assessment criteria for applications.*

**For the ITTs that provide funding for HEPs please provide some more specific information on what costs are eligible to be claimed within the £20,000?**

*To buy out staff time or recruit a research assistant, travel costs for attending workshops (if applicable), compensation for staff/students who participate in focus groups/interviews that relate to the project.*

**If you have an existing Theory of Change, should this be submitted alongside the application or should this just be referenced in the application?**

*It should just be referenced in the application.*

**Will any workshops/meetings be online or in person?**

*This will depend on the location of the HEP involved and, for the ethnicity degree awarding gap project, the location of the independent evaluator; they could be either in-person, online or hybrid. Regular project meetings, usually every fortnight, will normally be conducted online.*

**Could you say something about how cross-interventions will be considered too, please? e.g. if a separate intervention strategy that supports Vocational Technical Qualifications/BTEC students is also expected to support the intervention strategies designed to close the ethnicity degree awarding gap, would that be considered by the evaluators?**

*If the primary aim of the intervention is to close the ethnicity degree awarding gap then we would firmly suggest you apply for the ethnicity degree awarding gap project. You are asked in the expression of interest form to outline who the intervention is targeted at and any intersectionality with other student groups. Similarly, for supporting disabled students we would encourage you to apply for the Supporting Disabled Students project.*

### **Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap project**

**Is the project intending to develop a Theory of Change for just one activity, or could it be an overarching Theory of Change for a provider's awarding gap strategy (i.e many different activities feed into this overarching Theory of Change)?**

*Both are very welcome, as long as the set of interventions fall under one broader programme so they can be broken down within a Theory of Change.*

**Can you apply to review a project that will commence in September aimed at reducing the awarding gap?**

*Yes. We welcome submissions from both existing and newly developed interventions (i.e., those that may be being rolled out next academic year).*

**Can you apply to review a project aimed at reducing the awarding gap in a specific faculty?**

*Yes we welcome submissions for interventions delivered at all levels, including whole-provider, faculties, and specific student groups.*

**Is it appropriate to submit a bid for a project whereby we have already started to draft a Theory of Change?**

*Yes, we will accept submissions from those interventions that do not have a Theory of Change as well as those that are already developed. For existing Theories of Change, please reference them in the application to show how the intervention has been developed, but do not attach as a separate document. If selected, existing Theories of Change will be used in the development of the Enhanced Theory of Change and evaluation plan by the external evaluator.*

**Can you provide more information about the consideration given to the types of interventions that will be selected? Is there any preference for interventions that directly involve students (e.g., diversifying/decolonising curriculum projects, or student support groups). Will those interventions that seek changes in staff members (and students indirectly) also be considered?**

*Any intervention whose aim is to reduce the ethnicity degree awarding gap will be considered. The 16 approaches outlined in the tender document show the variety of interventions which could be included, for instance those aimed at both staff and students. In the expression of*

*interest form, we also list bullet points to consider, for example, whether the intervention is targeted (specific student groups) or universal (the whole student body).*

**Would TASO prefer that the intervention proposed by the provider falls under one of the 16 types identified in the report, or something not included on the list?**

*Any intervention whose aim is to reduce the ethnicity degree awarding gap will be considered. However, the 16 broad approach types are based on reviewing 249 Access and Participation Plans so interventions are likely to fall into one of these categories.*

**Will there be any support from TASO to implement the evaluation plan later?**

*The project has been set up to produce a Theory of Change and evaluation plan for interventions so no further support will be given within the realms of the current project. However, TASO will work with the external evaluator to ensure that evaluation plans are accessible and can be operationalised by HE providers wherever possible. Future TASO projects may focus on conducting an impact evaluation of interventions.*

**How will you make your selection of HE providers? What criteria are you looking for?**

*The full details and selection criteria are included in the tender document, however, broadly we are looking to capture interventions which have been well thought through by the provider to address the gap in their context (whether they are interventions yet to be delivered or existing interventions). Providers must also demonstrate a commitment to evidence-informed practice and the capacity to meet the key responsibilities shown in the tender document.*

**How soon will the outputs from this project be shared more widely?**

*Final outputs (Theories of Change and evaluation plans) will be delivered in December and we will look to publish as soon as we can after this, likely in early February.*

**How much resource in terms of human resource do you anticipate a HE provider would need (number of staff) to be involved in the project?**

*This likely depends on the type of intervention and whether it is faculty-level, whole-provider level, etc. Broadly we would want the appropriate staff involved that have been instrumental to designing, delivering and evaluating the intervention, for instance, practitioners, academics, those in strategic roles, and evaluation staff.*

**If Theories of Change and evaluation plans have already been developed as part of the OfS's wave 1 cohort who are producing APPs for 2023 (and therefore may be approved by OfS before TASO tender assessment), would TASO consider such applications?**

*Yes, we welcome submissions from those who have Theories of Change already developed, as mentioned in the previous question. Please reference this in the application form.*

## Institutional data use project

**Could the IDU project include use of institutional progression data and activities that are provided as part of careers provision, or pre-entry programmes designed to improve access?**

*The IDU project is specifically designed to look at activities designed to narrow equality gaps in the student experience post-entry. The only exception to this would be a pre-entry programme with a substantial component designed to improve student success post-entry.*

**Could we look at a programme of interventions or does it need to be a standalone project?**

*If it's a set of interventions that would fall under a single Theory of Change, that is, with a specific aim, then it would be fine to submit that programme as part of the ITT.*

**If you have multiple interventions which could be the subject (i.e., the HEP would value the project with any of its interventions or any of several interventions), is there any way to get advice on the best one to select for the tender?**

*Interventions that have the best chance of success are those where:*

- 1. There are clear outcomes that can be measured.*
- 2. The outcome data will be available within the timescale of the project and will give the independent evaluator sufficient time for the analysis.*
- 3. The intervention is not aimed at specific faculties.*

**Given the focus on Type 3 evaluation, does the intervention need to be relatively large scale or would a small-n intervention work as well?**

*While large scale interventions are preferable the outputs of the project are a framework for mapping post-entry interventions/activities, guidance on using the data and an evaluation to demonstrate how to use institutional data. We want to encourage small-n providers to join this project, either separately or in a group, and we recognise that that means interventions are not always large-scale in nature so if the intervention will clearly and effectively demonstrate the use of institutional data in its evaluation then it will be in contention.*

**Would there need to already be an established Theory of Change for the intervention?**

*No, but you would be expected to develop one in the course of the project.*

**Would the intervention have to be well established already or could it be a new or pilot intervention?**

*Either is fine, but the outcome data must be available within the timescale of the project to give the independent evaluator sufficient time for the analysis.*

## Supporting Disabled Students Project

**We are working on how to encourage students to disclose and putting things in place for those who then disclose during the year based on neurodiversity, would this type of intervention count?**

**How fixed are things in terms of definition of "transition"? i.e., would the intention be to focus on the transition from pre-university into university-level study? Some students become disabled whilst at uni, or only become aware of their disability after uni entry.**

*The focus is on developing blueprints for interventions to support disabled students in their transition into HE. We would be interested in learning about interventions which also seek to support students who disclose a disability or become aware they are disabled post-entry, if the HEP believes this is relevant to our focus of transitions support.*

**Is this limited to undergraduate students or can it cover postgraduate students (taught or research)?**

*At this stage, the primary focus is on supporting undergraduate students.*