Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Background – The Communication Trust
The Communication Trust is a coalition of 47 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. We harness our collective expertise to support the children's workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of all children and young people, particularly those who need extra help.

We do this by raising awareness, providing information and workforce development opportunities, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from our members. The Trust is advised by specialist advisors and works with a broader network of partners.

We were founded in 2007 by children's charities Afasic, I CAN, Council for Disabled Children and with support from BT.

Background - The project and the purpose

In 2011 the Trust, in collaboration with City and Guilds, developed a Level 3 award Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication which is on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) (City & Guilds reference number: 4337 and CACHE 600/4257/6). The Communication Trust itself is not a training provider and so does not offer the training, but throughout 2012 we have been working with others including members of our consortium, local authorities and further education colleges to test various models of delivering the qualification. Despite our efforts, demand outstrips supply and over 700 people have told us that they would like to do the award but have been unable to access it.

In November 2012 the Trust applied to the Department for Education VCS grant scheme to test a model of delivering the qualification via e-learning and assessment. In February 2013 we were notified that we had been successful.

The aim of the project is to develop an accessible, cost-effective route for early years practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds to gain the qualification through an online route of learning, assessment and accreditation. This in turn will enable settings, through a better qualified workforce, to provide high quality early education in relation to children's language and communication.

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

The 2 year pilot will:

- Enable practitioners to access the qualification across early years settings via not-for-profit online learning, assessment and accreditation
- Ensure a minimum of 230 pilot learners are enrolled on the award for accreditation
- Deliver a scalable and sustainable approach to nationwide delivery launched by March 2015 with mainstream routes of delivery in place

The current proposed partners in this project are:

- Puffin nursery group
- Lewisham local authority
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- City and Guilds; CACHE and Aptawards (formerly OCNSWR)

The Award

The Award is an existing level 3 qualification (equivalent to A-Level). Learners must successfully complete three units – two mandatory units and one of a choice of four optional units. Each unit is 3 credits, apart from one of the optional units which is 4 credits. The award includes learning outcomes focusing on both skills and knowledge. The Award specification can be found here: http://www.cityandguilds.com/Courses-and-Qualifications/children/children-and-young-people/4337-speech-language-and-communication-for-children/level-3.

To support face to face delivery of the award, we developed a full suite of learning and assessment activities, in the format of PowerPoint presentations with tutor notes, learning activities and portfolio activities. These can be found at http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years/training-and-qualifications.aspx and if you would like to gain access to these materials please click here, where you will just need to register.

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Requirements

The Trust requires the support of an external provider to work with us to provide an online solution to support learning, assessment and accreditation with the following specific criteria. It's important to note that a key requirement from the Department of Education is that the site is not 'completely new' and that it exists within or as part of a current portal.

In your proposal please describe how you would meet the following needs of the learners for our project:

- Online registration of cohorts of students by varying approved centres
- Access to online content
- Learn online with progress checks
- Online Assessment
- Online support from assessor to gain accreditation from an awarding body

Registration

- Learners will register with a training provider (who is linked to one of the three awarding bodies) who will then register their cohort of students onto the course.
- Payment will be taken off line by the training provider
- Cohorts of learners will differ in size and will be starting on varying dates.
- Students will be expected to complete the award in a certain period of time as set by the training provider (allowing for exceptional circumstances). This should not disadvantage students but allow for efficient administration by training providers. The current thinking is around 6 months.

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Learning

- We require an online learning platform where people can go and study their two mandatory units as well as their choice of optional unit.
- The content for the face to face courses has already been developed and this should be utilised where possible. In addition we have content expertise to support joint working on developing the online learning.
- Learning should be based on best practice for online/blended learning including :
  - ✓ Creating a supportive online community
  - ✓ Course discussion and reflection
  - ✓ Activities to allow the learners to apply and test their knowledge, understanding and skill
  - ✓ Accommodating feedback throughout the course
  - ✓ Linking content to learning objectives and outcomes
- We would like to offer flexibility for learners who have already undertaken learning elsewhere to be able to 'top up' their learning and then submit a portfolio of evidence for accreditation – i.e. a way to steer learners to the right content for them.

Assessment and accreditation

- Training providers will link their learners to one or more assessors for the duration of their course
- Learners will be expected to complete assessments throughout the course which need to be marked by their assessor. Students should be able to upload these in connection to an element of the unit they are working on to develop an online portfolio of evidence.
- Assessors may set deadlines to complete work.
- Assessors must be able to provide online support and feedback remotely
- Assessors must be able to communicate with their students through the site (with this information being logged)
- Learners assessments will need to be verified before a learner can pass and be accredited for their award by their awarding body. Therefore verifiers must be able to access the learner's work as required.
- The issue of assessment in the workplace will also need to be discussed

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Administration/Additional information

- As this is a new project, there are some aspects which will require further clarification and therefore flexibility
- Please provide a proposal for maintenance and sustainability of the site during and beyond the project timeline
- Please also state any associated risks that should be taken into account, before and during the pilot, as well as for the mainstream roll out.
- Please indicate where you can provide value added content other than that specified in this project brief.

Branding/ Tone/ Composition

The branding would follow The Communication Trust guidelines, the tone would follow the feel of all our materials and websites, therefore being accessible, easy to navigate and supportive. The composition must be easy to follow and accessible for all users. In the pilot phase, the main audience is people working in early education and care settings (children's centres, nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, speech and language assistants) but this will be extended to other practitioners at a later date.

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

To assist you when putting together your proposal we have determined the following criteria and related this to a points scale to indicate the level of importance we place on each factor.

Requirements	Details	Total points
Experience and knowledge	Evidence of relevant experience and knowledge having delivered similar requirements for vocational training Evidence of how the relevant knowledge will be disseminated through training and support to The Communication Trust team	20
Online learning	Translating, in collaboration with the Trust, current off line content into online learning content demonstrating best practice for learners	15
Administration	Simple easy to use registration system for training providers to be able to register multiple users Accessibility and functionality of "back end" of system for administrators, tutors and verifiers	15
Assessment and Accreditation	Easy to use and effective online assessment and accreditation process	10
Partnership working with our consortium	Details of how consortium members would be considered	5
Branding/ Tone and Composition	How the Communication Trust's brand and tone would be considered and applied	5
Value for money	Cost effective nature of proposal as well as costs involved in updating and amending materials and applicable value added content	15
Sustainability	Evidence of how the platform would be sustainable beyond the pilot and the continuing costs related to this	15
Total		100

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Key Timings – for platform delivery

2013-15		
Planned Activity	**KPIs**	**Completed by**
E-learning platform development and testing	• Development of platform with partners Site shared with testing group • User feedback • Platform refined	September 2013 – January 2014
Delivery to 30 enterprise learners in partnership with Puffin Nursery group	• Progress reports and submissions of evidence monitored online	February 2014 – Dec 2014
E-learning platform live	• Refined product live for pilot group	March 2014
Refinement of site, taking feedback from pilot group	• Report on key findings • Refinement of platform	April 2014
Delivery to 100 learners who have completed the ELDP in Lewisham	• Progress reports and submissions of evidence monitored online	May 2014 – March 2015
Delivery to 100 'language leads' across Central Bedfordshire Council	• Progress reports and submissions of evidence monitored online	May 2014 March 2015
Work with partners on implementing alternative delivery routes to ensure national reach	• Implementation of delivery plans and progress report at quarterly meetings	April 2014 – ongoing
Implement business strategy to financially sustain the platform and support ongoing promotion.	• Dependent on requirements of business strategy	April 2014 - ongoing
Partner accreditation of learners	• Accreditation certification and submission of portfolios	TBC
Sustainability planning, shared learning	• Dissemination plan implementation	April 2014 - ongoing

Brief: Delivering a level 3 qualification in speech, language and communication online

Costs:
The budget is approximately £100,000 including VAT. Please provide a detailed breakdown of costs of development implementation and delivery for this two year pilot.

References
Please provide references for those who would be happy to comment on their experience of your delivery on similar style projects if possible from an organisation working in the voluntary and community sector.

Deadline
Please submit proposals to Emma Hickley ehickley@thecommuncationtrust.org.uk by midday 6th September 2013. Please note that due to time constraints we will not be able to consider any proposals submitted after this time.

All those who submit proposals will be notified whether they have been shortlisted and meetings will be set up with those shortlisted.